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Santa Barbara

Yogic Perception across Indo-Tibetan Traditions

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Religious Studies

by

Jed Daniel Forman

Committee in charge:

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June 2021

The dissertation of Jed Daniel Forman is approved.

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Yogic Perception across Indo-Tibetan Traditions

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by

Jed Daniel Forman

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ABSTRACT

Yogic Perception across Indo-Tibetan Traditions

by

Jed Daniel Forman

Like the terms "karma," "dharma," and "yoga," "yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa, rnal 'byor mngon sum*)" is highly polysemic and widely used across Indo-Tibetan religious traditions. Unlike these terms, however, "yogic perception" does not defy loose definition, such that no description semantically encompasses its myriad instantiations. Generally, it denotes the culmination of yogic, meditative practice, where the yogi is granted some perceptual ability thanks to their austerities. However, various Hindu and Buddhist traditions interpret the content of this perception differently. (1) Some argue that it affords an ability to see far-off or distant objects, a type of remote seeing. (2) Others argue that it affords literal knowledge of all objects, tantamount to omniscience. (3) Lastly, some couch it as a type of spiritual insight, the ability to perceive the truth of reality and its phenomena.

This dissertation uses a polythetic model to represent yogic perception's various meanings, general enough to account for maximum variance but polythetic in being able to capture particularities without the demand they extend to every instance. The three aforementioned themes—yogic perception as remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight—are indicative of this polythetic model: while some descriptions of yogic perception

span more than one theme, many instantiate only one. In addition to this thematic analysis of yogic perception, this dissertation also seeks to account for diachronic factors in yogic perception's intellectual development, showing how these characterizations changed over time.

The dissertation is thus both thematically organized along these three themes as well as chronologically organized. The first three chapters are devoted to each of these three themes in the Indian sources, showing those themes' historical developments during yogic perception's intellectual history. Tibetans received a large portion of this millennium-long Indian discussion on yogic perception *en masse* and were highly synthetic in their approach. Therefore, chapters four and five treat Tibetan interpretations of these Indian materials. Lastly, I offer some speculative explanations as to why these three connotations of yogic perception have been so salient in the primary sources, offering some hypotheses in chapter six as to their particular temporal endurance. Drawing on methodologies culled from the field of cognitive science of religion, I argue that longstanding preoccupation with these themes in the those texts suggest that they are especially intuitive.

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Introduction: Indra's Net

There are several terms in the Indian intellectual tradition that are so polysemic that they escape straightforward definition. *Dharma, karma,* and *yoga* are just some of these terms. *Dharma* can mean everything from spiritual teachings to what exists; *karma,* from the causes of happiness and suffering to the agent of an action; and *yoga,* from spiritual ascetic practice to fixing an arrow on a bow string. Their equivalents in Tibetan—*Chos, las,* and *rnal 'byor*—boast an equally vast number of meanings. This dissertation explores another term that, though not as ubiquitous as these, deserves more in-depth consideration given its semantic breadth and repeated application across differing Indo-Tibetan traditions: yogic perception (Skt. *yogipratyakṣa,* Tib. *rnal 'byor mngon sum*).[1]

Though yogic perception is highly polysemic, unlike *dharma, karma,* or *yoga*, it does not defy definition in broad strokes. Most often, yogic perception describes a type of supersensible ability that is achieved through yogic practice. What exactly that supersensible ability is, however, is a subject of debate. What constitutes yogic practice is perhaps even more complex. But this dissertation will concentrate more squarely on what abilities yogic perception is thought to afford the yogi.

Like *dharma, karma,* and *yoga*, on the other hand, yogic perception is not the provenance of any singular Indian or Tibetan religious tradition, philosophical school, or particular exegete. It seems that by the mid-first millennium, all Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist traditions in India had some explicit theory on yogic perception. Tibetan traditions, which

[1] Throughout this dissertation, if two translations are given, the first term will be the Sanskrit and the second the Tibetan equivalent.

inherited their theories of yogic perception from Indian Buddhists, also had complex, though differing, analyses of yogic perception. This dissertation seeks to cover an intellectual history of yogic perception across different traditions over a millennium of development. In India, I explore from the golden age of epistemological debate beginning in the fifth century CE up until the last glimmers of Buddhism's presence in India in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. I then examine the Tibetan sources where the Indian left off, beginning from the eleventh century CE up until about the sixteenth century.[2]

i. Methodology

The challenge in organizing a dissertation on an idea so broadly construed over such a large swathe of time and space demands the researcher be specific in their approach.[3] If one covers too much, then the object of study dissolves in a sea of details. If too little, then any broad conclusions about yogic perception are based on cherry-picked data. The key is to find a balance that keeps the object of study sufficiently circumscribed so that it maintains its integrity while keeping the dataset sufficiently broad so that the study uncovers as much variation as possible.

To this end, I draw much of my methodological approach from Jonathan Z. Smith's polythetic model. Smith's approach here strikes the necessary balance. He describes his discovery of a

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[2] Please note that translations of all Pāli, Sanskrit, and Tibetan sources are my own, unless otherwise noted. This is the case even when translations of works are cited, since these were sometimes the only works I had access to that also contained the source text.

[3] Throughout this dissertation, I employ the neuter third person pronoun "they" as both a singular and plural.

> self-consciously *polythetic* mode of classification which surrendered the idea of perfect, unique, single differentia—a taxonomy which retained the notion of necessary but abandoned the notion of sufficient criteria for admission to a class. In this new mode, a class is defined as consisting of a set of properties, each individual member of the class to possess "a large (but unspecified) number" of these properties, with each property to be possessed by a "large number" of individuals in the class, but no single property to be possessed by every member of the class.[4]

In other words, if we insist that every instance of yogic perception fit some essential set of properties, we have restricted to much. By expanding that set of properties to include all those sufficient for yogic perception, the scholar can develop its polythetic definition, one that may not fit every case, but serves as a sufficient heuristic for identifying and comparing the object of study across its various instantiations.

In many ways, the goal of this dissertation has been to develop that maximally explanatory set of properties belonging to yogic perception that accommodates its millennium-long history of intellectual development. I proceeded qualitatively in a manner advocated in psychological research championed by Amedeo Giorgi.[5] This included culling as many textual sources I could find, both in Sanskrit and Tibetan, within my chosen time period, that made some mention of "yogic perception."[6] Using the term as a heuristic, I qualitatively assessed the common properties attributed to yogic perception across these different texts. I then used those common properties themselves as a heuristic in examining other texts where there might be discussion of these properties even without explicit mention

---

4 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imaging Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 4.

5 Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2009).

6 I have to add that recent efforts to digitize Sanskrit and Tibetan texts was extremely helpful in this regard, without which this type of project would not have been possible. Please note that because in some instances these digitized texts do not carry pagination, I have cited texts by chapter (c.), verse (v.), or line (l.) number. Thus, v.3.285 would be verse number 285 in chapter 3 of the given text. When the line number is used, it is cumulative across pages, and thus used only for short texts.

of the term "yogic perception." I continued this iterative process—going back and forth between exploring instances of "yogic perception" in the texts and exploring properties said to be indicative of yogic perception—to refine my list of some of the most pertinent properties attributed to yogic perception in Indian and Tibetan literature. For example, I found that yogic perception was often described as an instance of "remote seeing (*dūra-√dṛś*)." Though this term can also be metaphorical—meaning something like "foresight"—in the case of yogic perception, it was often meant literally as an ability to see distant objects. I then searched for independent instances of this term. When I found discussions of remote seeing that fit other polythetic criteria for yogic perception—e.g., the explicit mention of yogis, the notion that remote seeing was afforded by meditative practice, etc.—then I included this instance in my data set. If the instance failed to meet other criteria—e.g., it was not a literal but only a metaphoric instance of remote seeing—it was excluded.

ii. Organization

My analysis revealed three broad features of yogic perception. (1) Yogic perception as remote seeing. This understanding of yogic perception construes it as the ability to see far-removed or occluded objects. It is akin to our modern mythology of x-ray vision, able to see distant as well as covered objects. (2) Yogic perception as omniscience. Omniscience itself is a polythetic term. It can mean both the knowledge of everything necessary to attain liberation and literal knowledge of everything, knowing every single object or fact in the universe. Yogic perception, we will see, is sometimes equated with one or the other and sometimes with both. (3) Yogic perception as spiritual insight. This describes yogic perception in

between full-blown and omniscience and the (comparatively) mundane ability to see afar. It affords a type of spiritual insight that advances spiritual progress but is not tantamount to achieving the final goal. However, the ontological status of what yogic perception perceives in this spiritual insight—as compared to that of what we normally perceive—is highly debated. I describe this ambiguity as the irreality of yogic perception. I use the term "irreal" to bracket this ontological status, since whether this object is real or unreal forms the opposing sides of the debate. While no texts claim that yogic perception has a completely unreal object, some concede it is not real in the same way those objects perceived by normal sense perception are.

The dissertation is thus thematically organized among these three themes. The first three chapters are devoted to each of these three themes in the Indian sources. I also demonstrate how each theme has precedent in the secondary literature and how my analysis builds on this previous scholarship. Chapter one explores discussions of yogic perception as a type of remote seeing. This construal of yogic perception has been explained by David White in different works. I expand his insights to Nyāya and Buddhist literature and also show its roots in debates against the Mīmāṃsā school. Chapter two explores the characterization of yogic perception as omniscience. Here, I build off of the work of Sara McClintock and Jeson Woo, who identify yogic perception *qua* omniscience as originating from eighth century CE Buddhists. I demonstrate some precursors for this characterization of yogic perception in both Jain and Buddhist schools and demonstrate how it continued past the eight century. Chapter three builds on the insights of a debate between John Dunne and Vincent Eltschinger regarding how the famed Buddhist logician, Dharmakīrti (fl. 6th or 7th century CE), understood the reality of yogic perception's object. I demonstrate that not only may

Dharmakīrti have been ambiguous on this issue, but that this ambiguity pre-dates him in the source texts he draws from and furthermore becomes a topic of debate in his successors' works. This analysis reveals two broad categories of yogic perception: Continuous and Discontinuous. I explain in detail the nuances of this distinction in that chapter. For now, I can state simply that while Continuous views understand yogic perception as unique but largely in agreement with the other epistemic instruments, Discontinuous views understand yogic perception as a rupture with normal epistemicity, completely transcending our quotidian ways of knowing the world.

Tibetans received a large portion of these millennium-long Indian debates on yogic perception in a relatively contracted period: between the eight and eleventh centuries CE. Tibetan exegetes, who were highly synthetic in their approach, brought together several disparate elements of Indian thought into a cohesive whole. While Tibetan texts incorporate all three elements of yogic perception—as remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight—the majority of Tibetan ink on yogic perception seems to center on the last of these three: yogic perception as spiritual insight. Therefore, chapters four and five treat Tibetan interpretations of Continuous and Discontinuous views respectively. Chapter four primarily focuses on the Continuous views of the Gelug, who seem the most adamant about championing this interpretation. Chapter five focuses on Discontinuous views. Although we will focus primarily on Sakya articulations of Discontinuous theories, we will also explore the highly novel synthesis by Mikyö Dorje (1507–1554).

As mentioned earlier, I have identified these three themes of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight as particularly salient and recurring in the texts. These themes have also been identified in the secondary literature. The question then

becomes: why these themes? Is there some particular reason that remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight are recurring? I take it on assumption that the presence of these themes indeed begs for an explanation. In keeping with the tradition of qualitative research as a method of hypothesis formation and generation (as opposed to its quantitative counterpart's role in hypothesis confirmation),[7] I offer some hypotheses in chapter six as to why these three themes have their particular endurance. Drawing on methodologies culled from the burgeoning field of cognitive science of religion, I employ cognitive science and evolutionary psychology literature to speculate on the cognitive mechanisms undergirding the prevalence of these three themes. I argue that longstanding preoccupation with these themes in the primary sources suggest that they are especially intuitive, piggybacking off of pan-human cognitive features that have developed through evolutionary processes.

iii. Getting Oriented

The *Avataṃsakasūtra* contains a famous metaphor describing the Buddhist concept of emptiness and dependent arising. This is known as "Indra's net," a gargantuan lattice-like net strung over mount Meru, the massive mountain in the middle of the world. At each intersection between the cords of this lattice there rests a jewel. Each jewel reflects every other jewel in the entire lattice work. Because each jewel reflects every other jewel, they are

[7] For a helpful overview of the features of qualitative research, see Gail M. Sullivan and Joan Sargeant, "Qualities of Qualitative Research: Part I," *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* 3, no. 4 (December 2011): 449–52, https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00221.1.

all interdependent. But because each jewel has no visual form aside from this reflection, each is empty.[8]

This metaphor is apt for my own approach to my research on yogic perception. Given my polythetic model, each textual data point on yogic perception reflects a large portion—though not all—of the properties reflected in other textual nodes. Thus, my dataset is *in toto* like a lattice of relationships between nodes. If we imagine the properties like the cords connecting the jewels, and the jewels themselves as the textual sources, we can foresee how the interactions between these texts quickly become a tangled web. If we cluster the texts based on their relationship and shared properties, then their doxographical and chronological relationships become disorganized. If we organize these textual nodes based on chronology or doxography, the cords representing their relationships become strewn about, sometimes stretched out and sometimes bunched up. In order to mitigate between these two extremes, I have thematically organized chapters around properties—again, remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight—while each chapter retraces chronological developments within that theme aided by doxographic headings.

But even with this organizational structure, it is necessary to have some entry point into this web of relationships, even if arbitrary. The rest of this introduction gives a brief intellectual history of yogic perception's genesis within Buddhism. The Buddhist school forms a certain point of gravity within my study as a whole, given that it's the main point of continuity between the Indian and Tibetan sources and that yogic perception became especially important within Buddhist soteriology. I thus offer a brief introduction to the key

[8] Thomas F. Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 44 and 891–92.

developments of yogic perception within Buddhism to help orient the reader in the midst of an otherwise complicated web of relationships with no *prima facie* focal point. This discussion will focus on three strata of Buddhist textual sources: the earliest Pāli Suttas, the works of Vasubandhu (fl. 4th to 5th century CE) and Asaṅga (fl. 4th century CE) and, and finally those of Dignāga (480-540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (fl. 6th or 7th century CE).

a. Pāli Sutta Precursors

The Pāli Suttas make no specific mention of "yogic perception." Nevertheless, there are polythetic properties found within these texts that we will see become characteristic of yogic perception in later literature, and so these texts were undeniably instrumental in yogic perception's intellectual development. Specifically, these texts describe a direct, unmitigated insight into spiritual truth. The suttas of the Pāli canon, the oldest strata of Buddhist literature available, are rife with conversion narratives that extol direct access to truth as a superior feature of the Buddhist religion. One such story concerns the Brahman Kūṭadanta. Knowing the Buddha to be learned, Kūṭadanta requests Gautama to instruct him on the proper way to perform a sacrifice. Kūṭadanta's plan is to perform a sacrifice according to well-known Vedic customs, including the slaughter of several livestock. But the Buddha suggests instead examples of increasingly more profitable forms of sacrifice, starting with replacing live sacrifices with vegetarian offerings and continuing with making these offerings to Arhats directly (those who have gained nirvana). The highest form of "sacrifice," however is to become enlightened oneself, such that "having realized the clairvoyant forms of knowledge

oneself, one teaches."[9] This stock phrase occurs some 36 times in the sutta canon. Interestingly, it is usually used as an introduction for the Buddha—"the one who teaches having realized the clairvoyant forms of knowledge himself."[10] Here, however, it is used prescriptively. Thus, in lieu of following Vedic injunctions for sacrifices that will ensure a higher rebirth, the Buddha implores the Brahman Kūṭadanta to realize the truth for himself and be liberated from rebirth altogether—to become like the Buddha. Kūṭadanta's response is predictably zealous:

> "Wonderful, O Gautama, Wonderful! Just as what was knocked down would be propped up, or what is covered be uncovered, or the right path be taught to he who has lost his way, or one would bear an oil lamp in the darkness, such that those who have the eyes to see shall see, so too have you, Gautama, made known the dharma in various ways. Thus, I go to you, Gautama, for refuge, as well as to the dharma and community of monks. May you, Gautama, teach me, your lay disciple, who [as long as] he has life has henceforth come for refuge. O Gautama, I shall set free the seven hundred bulls, seven hundred calves, seven hundred heifers, seven hundred goats, and seven hundred rams. I shall give them life so that they may eat green grass, drink cool water, such that no cold wind shall blow upon them."
>
> Then, lo, the Bhagavan gave the progressively sophisticated teaching to the Brahman Kūṭadanta. He gave the talk on giving, on ethics, and on the heavens. He pointed out the disadvantage, uncouthness, and impurity of desire and the profit had by renunciation. When the Buddha knew the Brahman Kūṭadanta to be of sound mind, a good heart, unbiased, with a happy disposition, and pious, he then gave him the condensed teachings of the Buddha, [the Four Noble Truths]: suffering, its cause, cessation, and its path. Just like a clean cloth free of stain may take to dye perfectly, so too did the stainless and clear dharma eye arise to the Brahman Kūṭadanta in his seat thereby [as he realized,] "Whatever arises also ceases." Then, the Brahman Kūṭadanta became someone who saw the dharma, who attained the dharma, who found the dharma, who penetrated the dharma, whose doubt was deflated, whose uncertainty disappeared, who gained confidence, and who need not rely on others [in order to understand] the Master's teaching.[11]

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9 *sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti*

10 See, for example, Dīgha Nikāya (DN) 12, *Lohiccasuttaṃ*, 225 and Majjhima Nikāya (MN) 150, *Nagaravindeyyasuttaṃ*, 291. Note that all citations of the Pāli Canon, including commentaries, use the Pāli Text Society pagination.

11 DN 5, *Kūṭadantasuttaṃ,* 147-8

This last line describing those "who need not rely on others [in order to understand] the Master's teaching"[12] is part of another stock phrase that occurs ten times in the sutta canon and is usually reserved for those disciples who gain a direct realization of the Buddha's teaching. It is also most often associated (as it is here) with the "dharma eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*)," suggesting a direct perception of the dharma over and above mere intellectual comprehension. This insight became codified in the suttas as attaining "Stream Entry" (Pāli *sotāpanna*). Stream Entry is described as a "path" (Pāli *sotāpatti-magga*) attained through "seeing" (Pāli *dassana*).[13] Visionary analogies for Stream Entry are myriad in Pāli texts. It is also achieved through the dharma eye and involves direct insight into the Four Noble Truths.[14] Attaining stream entry earns one the title of "Noble One" (Pāli *ariya*). Like Kūṭadanta's insight, Stream Entry entails no longer doubting or having to rely on the Buddha and his teachings, having directly understood their truth for oneself.[15]

b. Vasubandhu and Asaṅga

The Pāli suttas' discussion of stream entry undoubtedly informed the notion of the path of seeing (*darśana-mārga*), most likely through both Vasubandhu's and Asaṅga's familiarity

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12 *aparappaccayo satthusāsane*

13 See MN 2, *Sabbāsavasuttaṃ*, 7-9 and in English with an explanation in Ñāṇamoli Thera and Bodhi Bhikkhu, eds., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A [New] Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, 4. ed (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 91 and 1169n35.

14 See MN 56, *Upālisuttaṃ*, 380 and in English with an explanation in Ñāṇamoli Thera and Bodhi Bhikkhu, 485 and 1259n588.

15 See MN 7, *Vatthasuttaṃ*, 36-7 with Ñāṇamoli Thera and Bodhi Bhikkhu, eds., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A [New] Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, 4. ed (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 118–19 and 1180n89; MN 47, *Vīmaṃsakasuttaṃ*, 320 with Ñāṇamoli Thera and Bodhi Bhikkhu, 418 and 1245n490; and MN 115, *Bahudhātukasuttaṃ*, 64 with Ñāṇamoli Thera and Bodhi Bhikkhu, 929 and 1326n1088.

with this material in their Sanskrit recension, the *Āgamas*. As we will see, the path of seeing is equally a pivotal point in the adherent's progression, also marked by realization of the Four Noble Truths. The path of seeing is one of five paths (*mārga*) that together form a road map to enlightenment, describing the process of spiritual advancement from complete novice up to a fully realized Buddha: the path of accumulation (*sambhāra-mārga*), of preparation (*prayoga-mārga*), of seeing (*darśana-mārga*), of meditation or habituation (*bhāvana-mārga*), and of no-more-training (*aśaikṣa-mārga*).

First, adherents must *accumulate* the sufficient merit needed to support the meditative acumen cultivated on the path of *preparation.* This meditative preparation gives way to a moment (or moments, depending on the view of different Buddhist schools) of meditative insight on the path of *seeing.* The adherent then must continually return to that insight, entering into deep *meditative absorption* on it, and purifying their minds of successively more subtle mental impediments, until this culminates in Buddhahood, where *no more training* is required. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* gives perhaps the most detailed exposition of both how to achieve the path of seeing and what its realization entails. It is his formulation that is most influential for the texts we will cover.[16] He argues that one realizes directly the Four Noble Truths on the path of seeing. Furthermore, these four truths are realized through sixteen "thoughts" or "moments," four per each truth. Similar to the path of stream entry, the path of seeing culminates in becoming a Noble One (Pāli *ariya,* Skt. *ārya*).[17]

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[16] It is unclear whether Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* or Buddhaghoṣa's (c. 5th century CE) *Visuddhimagga* was the first to formalize the notion of paths (Skt. *mārga,* Pāli *magga*). Nevertheless, Vasubandhu's text is undoubtedly the source text for the traditions we will explore. Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55–56.

[17] Vincent Eltschinger, "On the Career and the Cognition of Yogins," in *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco and Dagmar Eigner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 266 §3.6. Asaṅga's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* also discusses this idea: "The [four] truths are distinctive, since they are unique in being unfathomable, etc. / Their unique quality is fixed upon [in meditation] for sixteen moments." *acintyādiviśeṣeṇa viśiṣṭaiḥ satyagocaraiḥ /*

Vasubandhu's text covers the paths from the non-Mahāyāna point of view, arguing from realist Vaibhāṣika philosophy, occasionally with interjections from the Sautrāntika. In Mahāyāna theology, however, the realization of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) trumps that of the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are thus insufficient for the goal of the Bodhisattva, who seeks not just personal liberation, but full enlightenment. Asaṅga thus presents the paths from the Mahāyāna Yogācāra point of vew.[18] He describes multiple sets of five paths depending on one's goal. Three possible goals are recognized: the goal of Arhatship—i.e., personal freedom from suffering (*nirvāṇa*)—of both Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas,[19] and the goal of full enlightenment (*samyaksaṃbodhi*) unique to the Bodhisattva—who is motivated by the wish to free all beings from suffering (*bodhicitta*). Each goal has its own unique five paths in turn.[20] This makes for fifteen total paths—three goals each with five paths. For the Bodhisattva, therefore, in addition to the five paths, there are also ten grounds (*bodhisattva-bhūmi*). These occur within the paths, from the path of seeing up until no-more-

viśeṣalakṣaṇaṃ ṣaḍbhirdaśabhiścoditaṃ kṣaṇaiḥ // Rāmaśaṅkara Tripāṭhī, ed., *Prajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstre Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛttiḥ Sphuṭārthā* (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1977), v.4.23.

18 Vasubandhu is said to have eventually sided with his brother Asaṅga in his predilection for the more idealist oriented Yogācāra school—in fact, the Kośa is said to have been written as recompense for Vasubandhu's slander of the Vaibhāṣika school upon his conversion.

19 Not all Tibetan commentarial scholars agree, however, that Śravakas and Pratekyabuddhas actually achieve Arhatship.

20 "Śrāvakas," though also a Pāli word for disciple (Pāli *sāvaka*), took on a somewhat pejorative connotation from the Mahāyāna point of view for adherents who have the goal of becoming an Arhat over a Bodhisattva, since they are said to be able to hear the Mahāyāna teachings but not to put them into practice. Pratyekabuddhas have the same goal but are not given a pejorative title. This may be because they are said to realize dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) on their own during a time when no Buddhas are present. In this sense, they cannot be aspirants on a path in a strict sense, since they have no exemplars to follow. In general, the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha's "paths" are usually treated together in Tibetan texts (Tib. *nyan rang*).

training. While Asaṅga describes ten such stages,[21] the advent of Tantric Buddhism further elaborated these, with some lists enumerating as many as twenty-one stages.[22]

Asaṅga makes clear that it is through yogic meditation that one achieves the path of seeing. He further stipulates that this meditative feat occurs through the cultivation of both concentration (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*). These describe two types of meditation in the Buddhist tradition, the ability to fix the mind on a meditative object with clarity and stability and to analyze it with acute discernment, respectively. As I mentioned, Asaṅga's Yogācāra presentation is heavily idealist. Thus, it is not surprising that his formulation of the path of seeing involves a refutation of external objects. He advocates a meditative method that occurs in three steps: (1) questioning the reality of external objects, (2) questioning the reality of the mind itself, and (3) using this discursion to transcend subject-object duality. We will discuss this trifold meditation method more in chapter three. For our purposes in this introduction, it is sufficient to note that it is through this meditative method that one gains the first ground on the path of seeing.

> The bodhisattva engages with the characteristics of these knowable objects as if they were mind only. When they do, they arrive on the [first ground] of superior joy [on the path of seeing]. They realize the sphere of phenomena (*dharmadhātu*) and join the ranks of the Tathāgatas. Being equanimous toward all beings, bodhisattvas, and buddhas: this the path of seeing. Why should one engage with mind only? [Because through that meditation], one abandons all the seeds and their causes in the *alayavijñāna.*[23] This occurs through their consciousness, [honed by] transcendent concentration and insight, and awareness of those various post-[meditative] insights, both of

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21 Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *Bodhisattvabhumi: Being the 15th Section of Asaṅgapāda's Yogācārabhūmi*, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series 7 (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1966), 270 and passim.

22 For an abbreviated list of these from the Rnying ma Gter ma tradition, see Blo gros mtha' yas, "Thugs rje chen po yang snying 'dus ba'i sgrub chen gyi khog dbub gzhan phan bdud rtsi'i chu gter," in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, TBRC W1KG14, vol. 22 (Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2007), 192.

23 In Yogācāra, the *alayavijñāna* is the specific mind that stores all of one's karmic seeds. To rid it of karma is to obtain liberation.

> which know the intention of the various teachings.[24] [That meditator] cultivates the seeds that will bring them to the *dharmakāya*.[25] Transformed thus, all phenomena [in a] buddha's [purview] become pure. In order to gain this omniscient gnosis does one engage [in mind only].[26]

Through meditation on there being mind only, one gains the realization of the path of seeing, discovering the true intent of the teachings. This is in stark contrast to realization of the Four Noble Truths on the path of seeing, which primarily concerns selflessness (Pāli *anatta*) and impermanence (Pāli *anicca*). In a Mahāyāna context, emptiness involves the realization that not only are phenomena without an enduring self or permanent essence: they are not real at all.

c. Dignāga and Dharmakīrti

It is not until Dignāga and Dharmakīrti that these precursors become explicitly codified as yogic perception. Fifth- and sixth-century CE India saw an explosion of intellectual exchange among religious factions. With several religious schools well-established and all vying for influence, the Indian intellectual milieu developed a sophisticated shared language with which to compete, including a system of formal logic, discussions of epistemic instruments, and a copious list of agreed-upon logical fallacies. Dignāga was most likely the earliest Buddhist figure to engage in this language and was undeniably instrumental in its

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[24] I take *'dres pa'i chos* as likely *miśradharma,* and thus "various teachings." John Powers, trans., *Wisdom of Buddha: The Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, Tibetan translation series ; 16 (Berkeley, CA: Dharma Pub., 1995), 343n17.

[25] The *dharmakāya* is one of the three bodies of a buddha, their ultimate essence as emptiness.

[26] Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Theg pa chen po bsdus pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4048, vol. Sems tsam, ri (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 25a.

development. Dignāga is also the first Buddhist figure to create a clear taxonomy of epistemic instruments, the means by which we gain knowledge of the world. His formulation clearly draws from his Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika predecessors. However, unlike those who came before him, Dignāga only accepts two main epistemic instruments: perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). Perception denotes how we learn about the world through our direct experience. This includes things like sense perception, but is not limited to them, as we will see in chapter one. Inference includes things we can know about the world that might be beyond our direct experience. However, these inferences are still based on direct experience. The classic example is inferring fire from smoke. Even if we cannot directly see a fire on the other side of a mountain, we can infer its presence if we see smoke. Because we know smoke is only produced by fire, the presence of smoke entails the presence of fire.

Dignāga further divides perception into four categories.[27] These are sense perception (*indriya-pratyakṣa*)—seeing, hearing, touching, etc.—mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*), yogic perception (*yogi-pratyakṣa*), and reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedanā*). It is here that we find the earliest Buddhist definition of yogic perception. His definition of yogic perception reverberates Pāli descriptions of realization via the dharma eye—again, likely through the *Āgamas*. This shared lineage is also apparent given Dignāga's notion that yogic perception constitutes an insight that no longer relies on others.[28] Thus, his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* verse 1.6 states that "yogis see just the object, *independently from the*

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27 However, there is some debate here. Eli Franco, "Did Dignāga Accept Four Types of Perception?," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (1993): 295–99.

28 Coming almost a millennium after the suttas, Dignāga clearly also drew on Buddhist literature and figures closer to his own era in developing his theory of yogic perception, notably, likely, Asaṅga, and assuredly Abhidharma works. While I do not have the space here to reconstruct that entire lineage of thought, my aim here is to show its continuity from the Pāli sources up to Dignāga.

guru's instructions [emphasis added]."[29] Dignāga thus concurs with the suttas that true realization is marked by independent authority, not relying on others, including the instructions of one's guru.

Dignāga's notion that realization involves seeing "just the object" (*artha-mātra-dṛk*) is also reflected in the Pāli suttas, where there are hundreds of references to realization as "seeing things as they really are with wisdom" (Pāli *yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya √pass* or *√dis*). Both phrases denote a perception with the veil of ignorance lifted, such that the object itself appears as it really is (Skt. *artha-mātra*, Pāli *yathā-bhuta*). But Dignāga also elaborates on what this means epistemologically. He explains that the ignorance that prevents our seeing reality "as it is" is our ongoing conceptual proliferations, which we superimpose on reality. Thus, the "guru's instructions" does not simply denote one's intellectual understanding of the dharma but is a synecdoche for *all conceptualization in general.* Dignāga therefore explains in his auto-commentary that "those very yogis have a perceptual vision (*darśana*) of just the object, disconnected from any conceptual understanding (*vikalpa*) of scripture."[30] His formulation thus also appears to echo Asaṅga, who also noted that yogic meditation is meant to discover directly "the intention of the various teachings."

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[29] *yogināṃ gurunirdeśāvyavakīrṇārthamātradṛk* || Ernst Steinkellner, ed., *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 3; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Pramāṇasamuccaya, Tshad ma kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4203, vol. Tshad ma, ce (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 2a. was also consulted: */rnal 'byor rnams kyi bla mas bstan/ /ma 'dres pa yi don tsam mthong/.*

[30] *yogināṃ apy āgamavikalpāvyavakīrṇam arthamātradarśanaṃ pratyakṣam /* Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā*, 3; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti, Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4204, vol. Tshad ma, ce (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 15b. was also consulted: *rnal 'byor ba rnams kyis kyang lung las rnam par rtog pa dang ma 'dres pa'i don tsam mthong ba ni mngon sum mo/ /*

In this way, Dignāga elevates the mark of self-possessed authority—direct understanding without the need of the teacher—to an epistemological principle: the ability to see reality without the confusion of conceptual overlay. Although the guru may impart some necessary instructions, "seeing without the teacher" denotes both the practice and achievement of spiritual insight, where the adherent strives to see these truths autonomously and thereby become an independent authority.

Buddhists still must explain how this nonconceptual direct realization of the truth can be cultivated. Without a clear delineation of praxeology, the epistemological description of yogis' perception as nonconceptual is inert, since it gives no method by which the Buddhist may come into their own authority. The tradition quickly identified refined meditation as the *sine qua non* of gaining this direct insight. Dharmakīrti, who greatly elaborated Dignāga's system, understood the generation of yogic perception as the result of a meditative practice in which one has a vivid encounter with the meditated object, as if it were "right in front of them." Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttika* (verses 3.281-6)[31] thus writes:

> *As explained before*
> *The wisdom of yogis arises from meditation.*
> *By clearing the web of conceptions*
> *There is a clear appearance.*
> *One is driven crazy by desire, fear, and sorrow*
> *And haunted by dreams, robbers, etc.*
> *They see what does not exist*
> *As if it were right in front of them.*
> *When one is bound to conceptions*
> *There is no clear appearance of the object.*
> *Such is the case when one remembers some object from a dream:*
> *[The object is unclear and has no definite referent.]*
> *Although considered unreal, meditative bases*
> *Like of the repulsiveness [of the body], the earth* [kasiṇa]*, etc.*
> *Can arise in a nonconceptual clear appearance*

[31] Throughout this dissertation, text written in verse or that representing the position of a hypothetical interlocutor will be rendered in italics, as it is here.

Constructed by the power of meditation.
Therefore, whether existing or non-existing,
Whatever one meditates upon intently
Will end up forming a nonconceptual cognition
Once that meditation is perfected.
Whatever corresponds [to an object], like those objects predetermined [to be epistemically warranted], must [itself] be an epistemic warrant (pramāṇa)*. When that arises in meditation it is thus asserted to be [nonconceptual] perception.*
Anything else is unacceptable [as a perceptual warrant].[32]

The transition from intellectual understanding to nonconceptual, direct insight therefore involves intense habituation. By meditating on some object unabatedly, it no longer appears as an idea in the mind's eye, but as a visceral sensorial object. Dharmakīrti gives several examples of similar non-meditative experiences. He cites how intense emotions— namely fear and grief—are known to produce hallucinations.[33] He also cites traditional meditation examples, specifically a meditation practice known as "*kasiṇa*," which involves meditating on one of the elements (i.e., earth, fire, water, or air) until one can control it. Meditation on repulsiveness is a practice meant to cultivate renunciation of worldly life, where the meditator imagines the world as full of bones. Both instances are said to produce vivid appearances of the object of concentration, be it the substance of earth or skeletons. I explain these meditative techniques more in chapter three.

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[32] Yūshō Miyasaka, ed., "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," Acta Indologica, 2 (1972): v.3.282-286; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4210, vol. Tshad ma, ce (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 129–129b; Also see these verses translated in John D. Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti's Theory of Yogic Perception," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34, no. 6 (2007): 516, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10781-006-9008-y.

[33] Dharmakīrti is not wrong here, especially concerning grief. See Oliver W. Sacks, *Hallucinations* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 229–54; A. Castelnovo et al., "Post-Bereavement Hallucinatory Experiences: A Critical Overview of Population and Clinical Studies," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 186 (2015): 266–74, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.07.032.

Dharmakīrti, however, does not assent that just *any* meditative object is accurate simply because it becomes vivid and nonconceptual. While the clear appearance of even illusory objects—like those hallucinations provoked by intense fear—is phenomenologically similar to yogic perception, this does not mean these appearances have the same epistemic status. Thus, he says while objects can appear clearly "whether existing or non-existing," it is only those representations of objects in meditation that "correspond (*saṃvādin*)"[34] with real objects that fit the bill to qualify as objects of yogic perception, since perception is always epistemically warranted—i.e., a valid form of knowledge. Dharmakīrti elsewhere further clarifies what types of meditative appearances do correspond with the world and thus those he argues constitute yogic perception. The following passage is from his *Pramāṇaviniścaya*:

> The yogi gains knowledge of [an object] through hearing about it. Through reasoning about that object, it is made certain, and by fixating upon it, the yogin meditates. When that meditation is perfected, it appears clearly, just like [a hallucination induced by] fear, etc. Whoever has a nonconceptual and unmistaken (**abhrānta*) [meditative object in yogic perception] possesses a perceptual valid cognition, like, for example, seeing the [Four] Noble Truths. I have said as much in the *Pramāṇavārttika*.[35]

In other words, because the Four Noble Truths are first studied, and then conceptually ascertained as epistemically warranted, their clear appearance in meditation constitutes yogic perception. Though any meditative object may become clear in meditation, it is only the clear

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[34] I have chosen to translate "*saṃvāda"*as "correspondance." Though this term is often translated as "nondeceiving," this translation borrows from the Tibetan "*mi bslu ba,"*which is itself a translation of the double-negative equivalent of this term in Sanskrit, "*avisaṃvāda*." I have some suspicion that Dharmakīrti actually uses the double negative form (*a+vi+saṃvāda*) to emphasize *apoha,* which also functions as a double negative. But for our purposes, this is unnecessarily complicated. It is easiest to use the most direct translation "correspondence," since, I argue, that in the Indian texts this term connotes something akin to correspondence theory in the West: the notion that appearances and representations are real to the degree to which they correspond with actual objects in the world. As we will see, however, Dharmakīrti has a nuanced view of what this means.

[35] Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4211, vol. Tshad ma, ce (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 161a.

appearance of those epistemically warranted objects that form yogic perception. We thus see a through line here between the Pāli Sutta's notion of the dharma eye realizing the Four Noble Truths and Dharmkīrti's formulation that these same truths are realized by yogic perception: both involve the Four Noble Truths.

Between these two sources, we can glean four characteristics that Dharmakīrti predicates of yogic perception: (1) it is nonconceptual, (2) it is unmistaken, (3) it is vivid, and (4) it corresponds with an object. Nonconceptuality itself is a defining characteristic of epistemically warranted perception,[36] and just after the section quoted above, Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* notes that perception's nonconceptuality substantiates that it is as unmistaken (a*bhrānta*).[37] Furthermore, Dharmakīrti notes that vividness is also a mark of nonconceptuality, since "By clearing the web of conceptions / There is a clear appearance." Thus, nonconceptuality (*nirvikalpa*), unmistakenness (*abhrānta*), and vividness (*spaṣṭa*) (1-3) are specific characteristics of perception. The fact that yogic perception (4) corresponds with its object is indicative of its status as a valid epistemic warrant (*pramāṇa*) in general, which also requires that the object it cognize is causally effective toward accomplishing desired ends (*arthakriyā*).[38] It is interesting that Dharmakīrti should mention this, since its status of being nonconceptual and unmistaken already substantiates that it is a valid epistemic warrant and thereby corrresponds. Furthermore, inference also corresponds with its object even though it *is* mistaken.[39] However, Dharmakīrti's emphasis that yogic perception

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36 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.123.

37 Miyasaka, v.3.287-90.

38 Miyasaka, v.2.1. Also see Esho Mikogami, "Some Remarks on the Concept of Arthakriyā," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1979): 79–94.

39 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.54-8. I won't elaborate on the details here, but suffice it to say that in Dharmakīrti's system, inference is causally effective at gaining desired objects but distorts the manner in which they exist. This is because inference operates through conceptualization,

is not only nonconceptual and unmistaken but also corresponds—which seems superfluous—will become paramount in chapter three, where the implications of this will become clear.

At this stage, Dharmakīrti's intellectual continuity with the Pāli Suttas—also, likely throught the *Āgamas*—should be clear. The suttas discuss the direct perception of the Four Noble Truths via the dharma eye. Dharmakīrti operationalizes this process through an appeal to meditation. That is, it is through meditative habituation to the truth of the dharma—as Dignāga notes, independently of the teacher—that one eventually realizes those truths directly for oneself. While in the Pāli texts this is described as gaining the dharma eye, in Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's texts, it is identified as the attainment of yogic perception. However, their formulation never explicitly draws on the path literature outlined by Vasubandhu and Asaṅga. Like Vasubandhu (see n18), though Dignāga and Dharmakīrti write their *Pramāṇa* texts from the lens of the realist Sautrāntika school, it is clear that they ultimately subscribe to the idealist Yogācāra view, as we will see in subsequent chapters. It is thus likely that Dharmakīrti, at least, was aware of path and ground literature and that it implicitly informs his theory of yogic perception.

For example, Dharmakīrti's description of meditation as a process of intense habituation leading to a vivid appearance seems to reflect Asaṅga's understanding. Asaṅga agrees that intense and purposeful meditation, supported by concentration and insight, gives rise to clear meditative appearances: "Merely through their attention, objects appear to the yogi who achieves concentration and makes efforts toward insight."[40] Unlike Asaṅga,

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which superimposes an appearance of universals (which are unreal) onto particulars (which are real). Thus, inference can be effective at finding the objects we need, but misrepresents their existence. Thus, it corresponds (*saṃvāda*) with the world but with an error (*bhrānta*).

40 Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Theg pa chen po bsdus pa," 15b. However, it is also noteworthy that according to Asaṅga, these appearances themselves are to be transcended. Tshul khrims rin chen, 24b–25a. Dharmakīrti's position on the status of appearances is less clear, as we will see.

however, Dharmakīrti does not seem to make concentration and insight explicit characteristics of yogic perception. But their necessity is stipulated by his immediate commentators. Prajñākaragupta (750-810 CE) argues that yogic perception "consists of the union of concentration and insight *(śamatha-vipaśyanā-yuganddha-vāhi*)."[41] There is also some circumstantial evidence that Dharmakīrti intends that yogic perception occurs on the path of seeing, though he never says so directly. He argues that when one cultivates "perfect vision (*samyak-dṛṣṭi*)" they destroy false conceptual superimpositions upon the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths.[42] Given that Dharmakīrti understands yogic perception as realization of the Four Noble Truths, and that according to Vasubandhu and Asaṅga these sixteen moments are realized on the path of seeing, these in tandem seem to suggest yogic perception on the path of seeing. Dharmakīrti also argues that "since on the first [path of seeing][43] one relinquishes a false view of self, they should no [longer be in cyclic existence]. But because there is a path, the [view of self] is not relinquished all at once."[44] Again, this suggests that the realization of selflessness occurs on the path of seeing, after which two more paths are left to achieve. Because yogic perception is responsible for realizing the Four

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41 Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana, ed., *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, SARIT: Enriching Digital Text Collections in Indology (Baden-Württemberg, Germany: University of Heidelberg, 2012), 440, https://sarit.indology.info/sarit-pm/works/pramanavarttikalankarabhasya. Prajñākaragupta's statement here is almost verbatim of Vasubandhu's (fl. 4th to 5th century CE), Asaṅga's brother, definition of meditation (*samādhi*) in his Abhidharmakośa: *śamatha-vipaśyanābhyāṃ yuganddhavāhitvā*. Prahlad Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975), 443.

42 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.270-71ab; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 118a.

43 Śākyabuddhi (c. 8th century CE) glosses this "first path" as the path of seeing, since it is the first of the five paths upon which one realizes selflessness. Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi 'grel bshad," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4220, vol. Tshad ma, nye (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 131b.

44 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.199bc-200ab; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 115a.

Noble Truths, which is tantamount to realizing selflessness, we can infer transitively that it must occur on the path of seeing as well.

d. Conclusion

Our discussion of the suttas, Vasubandhu, Asaṅga, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti thus lays the groundwork for the Buddhist conception of yogic perception. (1) Yogic perception is a type of perceptual epistemic instrument akin to seeing. We see this in the Pāli Suttas, where the forerunner for yogic perception is the dharma eye. In Dignāga, yogic perception is described as a type of "vision (*darśana*)" and in Dharmakīrti as a clear appearance similar to a hallucination. (2) Yogic perception is a direct insight into spiritual truth, such as the Four Noble Truths, that transcends the conceptual teachings of the teacher. In the Pāli Suttas, this was expressed in the adherent's no longer needing to rely on the teacher. In Dignāga, realization "disconnected from the guru's instructions" takes on a broader meaning, denoting direct insight no longer involving conceptualization (*vikalpa*) *tout court*. Dharmakīrti thus describes yogic perception as explicitly nonconceptual. (3) It is achieved through concentration and insight and graduates the adherent to the path of seeing. This is not explicitly mentioned in Dignāga or Dharmakīrti's texts, but there is circumstantial evidence alluding to that intention. It is not unlikely that Dharmakīrti was drawing on the work of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga in that regard. In any event, we will see that the later commentarial tradition, particularly Tibetan commentators, make explicit that yogic perception is the means by which one reaches the path of seeing.

With this groundwork in place, I anticipate the reader is now prepared for a wider exploration of yogic perception's discussion across the Indian and Tibetan texts, to, as it were, survey more of the complicated lattice work of yogic perception's net. We start first with those texts that discuss yogic perception in a far different manner than outlined here. These construe yogic perception as a type of remote seeing, the ability to see distant and hidden objects.

Chapter 1: Yogic Perception as Remote Seeing

This first chapter focuses on the first of three major themes surrounding yogic perception. Here, we will examine discussions of yogic perception that construe it as a type of supersensory ability. Specifically, the texts explored in this chapter all discuss yogic perception as a capacity to perceive objects over far distances, or objects that are occluded for normal perceivers due to some physical obstruction. In modern parlance, such an ability is called "telesthesia," or more simply, "remote seeing." My chapter here is, in many ways, an extension of the work of David White, who was first to demonstrate that the earliest descriptions of yogic perception denoted the ability to see distant objects and inhabit foreign bodies. White further and skillfully demonstrates that these earliest notions of yogic perception piggyback on a perceptual theory known as *"prāpyakārin."* In terms of vision, this theory understands sight as the eyes' emitting a ray that contact its object in order to perceive it.[45] A similar theory of perception is also endemic to the West, where it was called "extramission." These two themes—yogic perception as remote seeing and as a type of visual extramission—will be repeated throughout this chapter.

I proceed in two parts. The first explores the intellectual history of yogic perception as remote seeing from its inchoate beginnings up to its more fully formed articulation. I start by explaining some of the precursors to both this notion of remote seeing and *prāpyakārin* in the early Indian sources. I then show how these ideas become codified as yogic perception in

[45] David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 122–66 and passim; David Gordon White, "How Big Can Yogis Get? How Much Can Yogis See?," in *Yoga powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 70.

Patañjali's (c. 2nd to 4th century CE) *Yogasūtras*. Because this text contains the earliest discussion of yogis in general, it is fitting that yogic perception finds its earliest articulation here. Next, I discuss how Patañjali's articulation was elaborated by the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Jain, and Buddhist schools into a fuller theory of yogic perception. In the second part, I examine how these formulations were highly resisted by Mīmāṃsaka scholars, who rejected that individuals could see distant objects, like heaven, directly. According to this school, it is only the Vedas, the oldest Hindu scriptures, that could be authoritative in such matters. No human could see them for themself. This Mīmāṃsā rejection of yogic perception's ability to see distant objects generated a flurry of rebuttal from most Indian philosophical schools. I will explore Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Jain, and even Vedānta rebuttals to the Mīmāṣaka before concluding with Buddhist rebuttals.

i. Yogic Perception as Remote Seeing

The notion of remote seeing is fairly ancient in Indian literature. The oldest reference I have found hails from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This famed epic has existed in various forms from at least the seventh century BCE. The section below recounts how Sampāti, a vulture, was able to see Rāvaṇa and Sīta across the sea over a hundred yojana[46] away.

> *You will see the daughter of King Janaka of Maithila, [Sīta], there*
> *In Laṇkā, concealed on all sides by the sea.*
> *A full hundred yojana away at the end of the sea*
> *Reaching the south bank, you will see Rāvaṇa.*
> *[...]*
> *Standing here, I behold Rāvaṇa and Sīta alike.*
> *Just like the visual prowess of the heavenly eagle,*

[46] A unit of distance about 12-15 km.

So too naturally and because of the virility of our food
Can we always see more than a hundred yojanas away.[47]

The association between vultures and distance seeing (*dūra-darśin*) is also found in the *Narasiṁha Purāṇa*[48] as well as the *Hitopedaśa*,[49] a medieval collection of maxims and sayings. Vultures and eagles, to whom Sampāti likens himself, as foils for remote seeing are repeatedly referenced in the discussions of yogic perception we will examine.

Concerning *prāpyakārin*, Richard King traces the earliest textual instance of this extramissive perceptual psychology to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat* in the eighth century BCE.[50] Verse 4.3.6 reads:

> "When the sun and the moon have both set, the fire has gone out, and speech has stopped, Yājñavalkya, what serves as the light for a man?" "The soul serves as his light. It is through the light of the soul that he sits, goes out, works, and returns." "Just so, Yājñavalkya."[51]

Thus, in the absence of an external light source, the soul (*ātman*) projects its own inner light, allowing the individual to find their way in the dark. Arion Rosu and Jan Gonda claimed to have traced similar passages even back to the Ṛg Veda.[52] This projective light is also often localized in the gaze. The projective and spiritual power of gaze is undeniably ancient in

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47 Muneo Tokunaga, ed., *Vālmīki: Rāmāyaṇa* (Göttingen: Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages, 2020), v.4,57.22-3 and 28cd-29.

48 Siddheswar Jena, ed., *[Śrīnarasiṃhapurāṇam] = The Narasiṃha Purāṇam: Text with English Translation and Notes* (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1987), v.50.147.

49 Narayana Godabole Balakrishna and Kāśīnātha Pāṇḍuraṅga Paraba, eds., *Hitopadeśa*, 5th rev. ed. (Bombay: Tukârâm Jâvajî, 1904), 96.

50 Richard King, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 147–48. King also notes here that in Sāṃkhya and Vedānta schools it is the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) that projects outward to cognize objects. I argue later in the chapter and in chapter six that many Buddhists work with a similar notion.

51 Madhavananda Swami, trans., *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: With the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, 3rd ed. (Mayavati, Almora: Advaita Ashrama, 1950), 599.

52 Arion Rosu, *Les conceptions psychologuqes dans les texts médicaux indiens* (Paris: De Boccard, 1978), 201; Jan Gonda, *Eye and Gaze in the Veda* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1969), 19–20.

India and, as we will see, is often associated with light. For example, the Śiva Purāṇa, whose *terminus post quem* is the fourth century BCE, describes the *darśan* of Śiva: "[The seeker] will gain the gaze (*darśana*) of Śiva and even self-contentedness. That gaze will remove impurities, just like the rays of the sun."[53] The description of Śiva as projecting rays "like" the sun may just be an analogy. However, several field work studies reveal that this notion of projective sight may be literal. Diana Eck's seminal work on *Darśan,* the practice of receiving blessings from seeing sacred images, discusses how the gaze of deities like Śiva are thought to emit such a powerful "force" that it can kill an unwitting bystander.[54] Lawerence Babb discusses the *rāj yog* practice of modern day Radhasoamis, in which disciple and guru stare intensely at each other. As Babb states, this practice is predicated on an understanding of sight as extramissive rather than passive, or intromissive. The projective substance of the guru's sight mingles with the disciple's, affording the adherent's direct insight into the soul.[55] The analogy of Śiva's gaze to the rays of the sun thus may bespeak a long tradition of understanding sight as a projective beam, one that can both impart special spiritual blessings or harm.

There may be evidence in the Buddhist Pāli Canon of similar understandings of luminous spiritual beams, if in analogy only. Descriptions of consciousness, in lieu of the soul*,* as an extending light were prevalent in Buddhist literature. In the *Atthirāgasutta*, the mind of enlightenment is analogized to a sunbeam that does not alight anywhere, but extends

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53 Jwala Prasad Mishra, ed., *Śiva Māhapurāṇa*, vol. 1 (Mumbai: Sri Venkateswar Steam Press, 1920), v.17.100.

54 Diana L. Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7.

55 Lawrence A. Babb, "Glancing: Visual Interaction in Hinduism," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37 (1981): 396–99.

forever, whereas the light of normal minds, by contrast, is obstructed by objects.[56] Alex Watson also gives an excellent history of the association between light and the mind in Buddhism, demonstrating how Buddhist notions of consciousness describe a luminous entity that extends outward to cognize objects, specifically among the idealist Buddhist authors we will be exploring later.[57] This may suggest that Buddhists were marshalling analogies for object cognition familiar within an Indian cultural milieu that associated seeing objects with projective light. However, it is also clear that Buddhists largely, unlike other Indian schools, explicitly rejected projective light as a literal theory of vision, as we will see.

But several other Hindu philosophical schools understood this association between projective light and sight literally, a theory which came to be known as "*prāpyakārin,*" literally, "reaching," as in the eye reaching out in some fashion to sense its object. Particularly, we will discuss how this theory was made explicit by Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas. For example, Akṣapāda Gautama's *Nyāyasūtras* (6th century BCE to 2nd century CE), the root text for the Nyāya school, argues in verse 3.1.35 that perception "apprehends through special contact (*sannikarṣa-viśeṣa*) with its object through a ray (*raśmi*)."[58] David White has described this as a "projective model" of perception,[59] a notion that has a counterpart in Western intellectual history in the extramissive theory of perception.[60] However, Gaurinath Sastri argues that the distinction between *prāpyakārin* and *aprāpyakārin*

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56 Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN) 12.64, *Atthirāgasuttaṃ*, 103.

57 Alex Watson, "Light as an Analogy for Cognition in Buddhist Idealism (Vijñānavāda)," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42, no. 2–3 (2014): 406.

58 Anantalāla Ṭhakkura, ed., *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam* (New Delhi: Bhāratīyadārśanikānusandhānapariṣatprakāśitam, 1997), 154 v.3.1.35.

59 White, *Sinister Yogis*, 125.

60 Dominique Raynaud, "Les normes de la rationalité dans une controverse scientifique:le cas de l'optique médiévale," *L'Année sociologique* 48, no. 2 (1998): 447–66.

more aptly concerns whether the senses come into *physical* contact with their object, whether through this ray (as in sight) or through some other medium (as with the other senses).[61] Whether *prāpyakārin* denotes the sense faculties physically touching their objects or, in a more general sense, extramission, in which something other than the senses may extend out to cognize objects, will be an ongoing question in our discussion.

a. Yogasūtra 3.25

These proto-yogic perception elements—remote seeing and projective light—were incorporated into perhaps the earliest reference to yogic perception hailing from the *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali with his *Bhaṣya.* Portions of this text may have been composed as early as the fifth century BCE, though the text was amalgamated until the second century CE. Particularly, we will focus on verse 3.25.[62] Here, Patañjali explicitly describes the yogi's perception as an ability to see distant objects. The italics are his verse while the normal text is his commentary.

> *Through higher sense activities, there is the knowledge of subtle, separated, and distant objects by casting one's gaze/light* (āloka-nyāsa)*.*
> It is said that this higher sense (*pravṛtti*) is luminous (*jyotis*). The yogi, whose sight/light (*āloka*) comes from the mind (*manas*), obtains those objects that are subtle (*sūkṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), or distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*).[63]

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61 Gaurinath Bhattacharyya Shastri, *A Study in the Dialectics of Sphoṭa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), 92.

62 David White remarks that secondary scholarship in general has failed to acknowledge the role of the Yogasūtras third chapter in forming notions of yogic perception. White, "How Big Can Yogis Get? How Much Can Yogis See?," 61.

63 Svāmi Bālarāma of Saṁvat, ed., *Pantañjali's Yoga-sūtras with the Yoga-bhāṣya attributed to Veda-vyāsa and the Explanation entitled Tattva-vāiçāradī of Vacaspati-miçra and the Brief Explanation of Bālarāma* (Varanasi: Unknown, 1908), 235.

Patañjali thus describes the yogi's unique perceptual ability in terms of the ability to see objects that are hidden for most. "Subtle (*sūkṣma*)" denotes objects that may be too small for most to see. "Separated (*vyavahita*)" denotes objects that are obstructed from view for most. "Distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*)" denotes objects that are removed by a long distance. It is of note that this ability comes from the mind (*manasas*).

The term "*āloka*" here is ambiguous. It can mean "light" or "sight." I have decided to preserve the ambiguity since the term *āloka* could felicitously been rendered by either. We also see both possibilities in popular translation. Rāma Prasāda takes this as a clear instance of projective light*,* arguing the yogi sees those objects "by directing the light of higher sense-activity towards them."[64] Trevor Leggett takes a similar reading, arguing the yogi does so "by projecting the light of supernormal radiant perception."[65] Shyam Ranganathan, on the other hand, does not take the *āloka* as literal light, describing it as a type of "illumination" of those objects, such that yogis see them "by directing effort towards illumination."[66] It is unclear if either reading is necessitated by the text. However, a *prāpyakārin* construal of the yogi's ability to see distant objects seems plausible. If we assume a *prāpyakārin* understanding of vision, Patañjali would seem to suggest that these perceptual abilities are due to especially powerful visual rays. These allow the yogi to focus in on subtle objects, penetrate obstructions (like x-ray vision) that hide objects for others, or project their visual rays farther than others in order to see objects over long distances. If so, then this verse is the earliest reference to yogis as seeing distant objects through projective light. Throughout my

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64 Rāma Prasāda, trans., *Pātañjali's Yoga Sūtras: With the Commentary of Vyāsa and the Gloss of Vāchaspati Miśra* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998), 224.

65 Trevor Leggett, trans., *The Complete Commentary by Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras: A full Translation of the Newly Discovered Text* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990), v.3.25.

66 Shyam Ranganathan, trans., *Patañjali's Yoga Sutra* (London: Penguin, 2009), v.3.25.

dissertation, this *Yogasūtra* (3.25) will be referenced repeatedly, since it is oft cited in the primary sources as a description of yogic perception.

b. The Vaiśeṣika School

It would be several hundred years before the notion of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing was more fully codified. The earliest codification of yogic perception I have found post the *Yogasūtras* hails from the Vaiśeṣika school. As its name suggests—"Vaiśeṣika" derives from "*viśeṣa,"* which can mean "categories" or "distinctions"—this school was highly preoccupied with ontological categories. There was a high degree of exchange between this school and the Nyāya, or "Logic," school, and they eventually became folded into a singular school under the Neo-Naiyāyikas. But even before this amalgam beginning in the tenth century, the two schools clearly shared material, as we will see.

While the Vaiśeṣika root text, the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras,* may be contemporary with the *Yogasūtras,* they make no explicit mention of yogic perception. However, its earliest commentary, Praśastapāda's sixth-century CE *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha,* clearly expands on the notion of yogic perception first articulated in *Yogasūtra* 3.25:

> The yogi is different from us. Absorbed (*yukta*) yogis make use of a mind fortified by yogic-generated practice. That mind gives rise to a type of sight that correctly represents [phenomena]. [These phenomena include three categories:] (1) substances—one's internal soul, etc., and the subtle particles of time and those of wind—(2) [the properties] that [those substances may] possess—their qualities, actions, and universals—and (3) inherence (*samavāya*)—[the relationship between substances and their properties]. Unabsorbed (*viyukta*) yogis apprehend the same type of phenomena as those [apprehended by] the fourfold contact [involved in normal perception]. However, through yogic-generated practice, [yogis] see these same types of

> [everyday] objects. Thereby, there arises the perception of subtle (*sukṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), and distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects.[67]

Praśastapāda describes two tiers of yogis, those who are absorbed (*yukta*) and those who are unabsorbed (*viyukta*). Although he discusses absorbed yogic perception first and then unabsorbed yogic perception, I examine them in reverse order. First, unabsorbed yogic perception makes clear reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. Unabsorbed yogis are able to perceive "subtle, separated, and distant objects." He further notes that unabsorbed yogis are able to perceive the same objects normally perceived by normal people through "fourfold contact." This term denotes normal sensory cognition, where four components are involved: a connection between soul, mind, the senses, and the object.[68] Praśastapāda seems to suggest that yogis see these normal sensory objects, but without this fourfold contact. In other words, they see objects similar (*samartha*) to those seen with the senses (*indriya*), but not with the senses. The notion that yogis do not rely on fourfold contact and the senses to cognize these objects becomes explicit later, as we will see. Praśastapāda's formulation here seems to be the kernel of the later understanding of yogic perception as being *super*-sensory (*atīndriya*) and thereby relying directly on the mind. In fact, we saw the unique role of the mind in this capacity earlier in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, which stated that yogic perception comes "from the mind (*manasas*)." And Praśastapāda agrees that yogic perception involves "a mind fortified by

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67 Vindhyeśvarīprasāda. Dvivedī, ed., *The Praśastapāda Bhāshya, With the Commentary Nyāyakandali of Sridhara*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1984), 187; J. S. Jetly and Vasant G. Parikh, eds., *Nyayakandali: Being a Commentary on Prasastapadabhasya with Three Sub-Commentaries* (Vadodara: Oriental Institute, 1991), 455.

68 Fourfold contact as a condition of sense cognition is also first articulated by Praśastapāda: "Without the connection between (1) the *ātman* and (2) the mind, the mind and (3) the senses, and the senses and (4) the object, there is no perception. Thus, this fourfold contact is the cause [of perception]." See a discussion and citation of the pertinent root verses from the *Nyāyakandalī* in Satkari Mookerjee, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux. An Exposition of the Philosophy of Critical Realism as Expounded by the School of Dignāga* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1935), 152n1.

yogic-generated practice." In other words, in its capacity to see the subtle, separated, and distant objects described in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, the unabsorbed type of yogic perception bypasses the senses and uses the mind directly. These two characteristics—yogic perception as mental cognition and as senses-transcending—will be recurrent going forward.

The first category of yogic perception, absorbed yogic perception, however, seems a novel addition, denoting a more refined form of yogic perception. That is, absorbed yogis are able to see even more subtle forms of phenomena, such as soul, time, and wind. Instead of only quotidian objects that may be otherwise obstructed, absorbed yogic perception perceives more elusive metaphysical entities. This also includes its ability to perceive "inherence." The notion of inherence (*samavāya*) is particular to both the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools. It describes the relationship between a given substance and the properties it instantiates, as well as between particulars and the universals to which they belong. For example, inherence describes the relationship between a red balloon and the property redness. In Vaiśeṣika as well as Nyāya, this relationship is not merely a conceptualization. In addition to the red balloon and its redness, the relationship between these two is itself a robust entity that is perceptible to adept yogis.[69]

There are some interesting precursors to this notion that the perception of inherence is the unique providence of yogis. For example, the Buddhist Saṅghabhadra (fl. 4th to 5th century CE), Vasubandhu's main teacher and eventual philosophical opponent, argues that homogeneity (**sabhāgatā*) is a causal property that inheres between any two similar things

[69] Per the importance of this idea in Nyāya philosophy, see Satischandra Chatterjee, *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge: A Critical Study of Some Problems of Logic and Metaphysics* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939), 209. Per its importance in the Nyāya theory of yogic perception, see Matthew Roe Dasti, "Rational Belief in Classical India: Nyāya's Epistemology and Defense of Theism" (Austin, University of Texas, 2010), 126n24.

ensuring their common membership in a single class. Homogeneity can be known both through inference as well as directly through yogic perception (Skt. **yogi-pratyakṣa*, Chin. *guan xing zhe xian zhen*).[70] Saṅghabhadra argues that we can infer that there must be some property that guarantees discrete objects' common membership in a given class, even if we cannot directly observe that property. Yogis, however, can directly observe homogeneity. This is one distinct feature of their perceptual ability, in contrast to that of the senses.

Homogeneity is clearly not the exact same notion as inherence: rather than stressing the relationship between substance and property, homogeneity is a property that belongs to all members of a single class, ensuring their membership in that class.[71] However, it seems to function similarly: both inherence and homogeneity explain how it is that ontologically (as opposed to just conceptually) particulars instantiate properties—being red, being a chair, etc. Thus, it seems well established before Praśastapāda that yogic perception had the unique ability to perceive directly what guarantees discrete objects' common membership in a given class. Normal people, by contrast, can only know the warrant for this membership inferentially.

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[70] Collett Cox, trans., *Disputed dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence: An Annotated Translation of the Section on Factors Dissociated from Thought from Saṇghabhadra's Nyāyānusāra* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1995), 229–232. Saṅghabhadra's text is unfortunately lost in Sanskrit, but Collette Cox explained to me (April 2, 2019) that *yogi-pratyakṣa or possibly *yogi-abhisamaya is the most felicitous reconstruction from the Chinese.

[71] This is exactly the type of essentialization of particulars that Dignāga attempted to explain away through is *apoha* theory. That is, it is not that there is something about the particular that ensures its membership in a class. Rather, that class is superimposed on a set of particulars as an elimination of everything that is not a member of that class. (However, how to make sense of this theory without some appeal to essential characteristics as the basis of that exclusion still appears philosophically difficult. This would lead to Dharmakīrti's reformulation of *apoha* theory. See John D. Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, 1st ed. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 116 ff. for a discussion of this debate). The belief in essential qualities that inherently ensure particulars' membership in a certain class would seem to be a defining differentiation between Vaibhāṣika and Dignāga's Sautrāntika thinking.

Śrīdhara's ninth or tenth century CE *Nyāyakandalī*, a commentary on Praśastapāda's own commentary, further expands the notion of absorbed yogic perception. It is in this text that David White argues we see the explicit discussion of *prāpyakārin* in relationship to yogic perception. Śrīdhara opens with an analysis of why, under *prāpyakārin,* distant objects do not appear clearly. "Objects are not seen clearly when they are far away. As the rays (*raśmi*) coming from the eyes travel, its parts scatter over distance. Thus, they fail to reach (*prāpti*) the object."[72] In other words, the projective rays of perception cannot reach distant objects because they become too dispersed over long distances. David White argues that Śrīdhara's subsequent discussion of yogic perception is meant to contrast with normal perception, explaining that yogic perception's superior perceptual ability is owed to the increased power of its projective rays.[73] On yogic perception, Śrīdhara continues:

> The yogi makes manifest the distinct objects they want to know through yoga. Their "unshakeable yoga" is then said to be stable […] At that time, they have a vision of supersensible (*atīndriya*) objects and thus are said to be "absorbed." "Absorbed" means true concentration on one's own soul "with a mind developed by yogic generated practice." "Soul" denotes the *ātman,* as it exists within oneself as well as others. [They also perceive] the subtle particles of space, place, time, and wind. The mind has a vision that correctly and without contradiction represents those objects, as well as their qualities and their inherence.[74]

First, we ought note that Śrīdhara makes explicit that yogic perception is able to perceive objects that are supersensible (*atīndriya*). He elsewhere makes clear that this occurs because

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[72] Jetly and Parikh, *Nyayakandali: Being a Commentary on Prasastapadabhasya with Three Sub-Commentaries*, 437. This is the earliest reference that I have found for the description of visual projective rays in perception among Vaiśeṣika texts. But the reference is assuredly much older, as we saw in Akṣapāda Gautama's Nyāyasūtras (6th century BCE to 2nd century CE), the root text for the Nyāya schools. Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 154 v.3.1.35.

[73] For a more in depth discussion of how Śrīdhara connects this notion of exiting the body in yogic perception to prāpyakārin, see White, *Sinister Yogis*, 160–61.

[74] Jetly and Parikh, *Nyayakandali: Being a Commentary on Prasastapadabhasya with Three Sub-Commentaries*, 456.

"the yogi restrains (*pratyāhṛtya*) the mind from the senses."[75] Thus, we see Śrīdhara recapitulate Patañjali and Praśastapāda's gesture that yogic perception perceives objects through the mind without fourfold contact: it can perceive supersensible objects because it does not rely on the senses. Śrīdhara's commentary also expands on Praśastapāda's assertion that absorbed yogic perception perceives the soul. He suggests the absorbed yogi not only perceives their own soul, but that of others. He further makes the appellation "yogic perception" explicit, explaining, "when [Praśastapāda's] texts says 'different from us,' it is talking about yogic perception."[76] Explaining further, he argues:

> When there is continuous meditation on that [intention to know the soul] along with the desire to know the spatio-temporal location of another's [soul], then a practice of inconceivable (*acintya*) power is cultivated, which has the quality of knowing the reality of another soul, etc. And through that power, consciousness comes out of the body and becomes joined with another soul.[77]

Thus, yogic perception not only allows one to apprehend the cosmic soul, but the soul of other individuals. David White argues that both ideas are part of a larger tradition that understands perception as projective. Just as sight must extend rays to see an object in visual perception, consciousness itself leaves the body to apprehend another soul in yogic perception. Thus, White states, "Yogi perception arises when one's own self [i.e., soul] or mind is yoked, via a ray of perception, to another being's self inside that other being's body."[78]

Now, David White's assessment that visual rays mark a continuity between normal perception and yogic perception does seem plausible. Both normal and yogic perception

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75 Jetly and Parikh, 457.

76 Jetly and Parikh, 455.

77 Jetly and Parikh, 457.

78 White, *Sinister Yogis*, 160.

seem to operate under a similar logic. Just as something exits the eye to perceive normal objects, so too does consciousness come out of the body to directly interact with another soul. However, there is a philosophical issue with this interpretation. As Jadunath Sinha points out, the issue of *prāpyakārin* across both the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools only concerns the physical senses—the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and touch. The mind (*manas*) is not considered a sense organ.[79] Even in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, yogic perception *qua* "casting one's light" occurs "from the mind." Śrīdhara further forecloses the possibility that yogic perception occurs through the senses, since it occurs with the senses restrained (*pratyāhṛtya*). So at least within Vaiśeṣika epistemology, to apply *prāpyakārin* to yogic perception, which is mental, would seem to be a category mistake, since it only concerns the physical senses.

On the other hand, the notion of *prāpyakārin* being applied to the "soul or mind" is not unheard of in the larger Indian milieu. Though a later example, the Digambara Jain Amṛtacandra (10th century CE) seems to take this position. Little is known about this figure, except from his commentaries. Below is an excerpt from his commentary on the *Pravacanasāra* (2nd century CE), the *Tattvapradīpika:*

> The eye [sees] physical forms in their own [respective] places (*svapradeśa*) [and not by going out to that place], without entering (*apraviṣṭa*) them or touching (*asaṃspṛśat*) them. However, when one merges with the soul (*ātmasāt kurvat*), one knows and sees aspects [of objects] without entering into them, but not [by staying where it is]. Because the soul is beyond the eyes (*akṣātītatva*), it reaches distant knowable objects unhesitatingly through *prāpyakārin*. [But], it reaches all objects without touching (*asaṃspṛśat*) their own place, since it does not enter into them. Through various powers, [the soul] takes in all knowable aspects of objects like it was ingesting them.[80] It knows and sees them without entering them. Thus, since yogis with their

[79] Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology: Perception* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1934), 16–25. K. N. Hota also argues that the question of *prāpyakārin* in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika concerns the five sense organs. K. N. Hota, "Is Sense-Organ Prāpyakārin in Perception?," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 75 (2015): 255–62.

[80] On this notion of perception as associated with sun rays and ingestion, see White, *Sinister Yogis*, 155.

> various powers know objects without entering them, entrance [alone] is merely devolution into a [banal] *siddhi*.[81]

Amṛtacandra here is in line with general Jain epistemology, which, unlike the Nyaiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas (but like the Buddhists), argues that the visual sense faculty is *not prāpyakārin*.[82] Thus, the eyes see their object without travelling out to reach them.[83] Amṛtacandra, however, argues that yogic perception transcends the senses via the soul. Through merging with the soul, seemingly akin to Praśastapāda's notion of absorbed yogic perception, the soul obtains its objects through *prāpyakārin.* We might understand Amṛtacandra's assessment here as similar to Śrīdhara's that yogic perception involves consciousness exiting the body. If so, White may be correct that when consciousness or the soul exits the body, it can appropriately be described as *prāpyakārin,* or extramissive, even though it does not physically "touch" (as Amṛtacandra notes) its objects, as the senses do. In other words, the soul is extramissive (*prāpyakārin*) even though it does not make physical contact or touch its object (*asamspṛṣa*).

Furthermore, Amṛtacandra's insistence that yogic perception "sees without entering (*apraviṣṭa*)" may suggest another connection to Śrīdhara's thought. David White explains that, building off Śrīdhara, the ability for yogic perception to project outward and perceive the soul of others quickly became understood as a method to take over others' bodies. He again theorizes that this ability is conceptually derivative of *prāpyakārin,* where the

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81 Himmatalāl Jeṭhālāl Śāh and Parameṣṭhīdās Nyāyatīrtha, trans., *Pravacanasāra: Mūla Gāthā, Saṃskṛt Chāyā, Gujurātī Padyānuvād, Śrī Amṛtacaṃdrācāryadevaviracit "Tattvapradīpikā" Nāmak Saṇskṛt Ṭikā aur uske Gujurātī Anuvādke Hindī Rupāntar Sahit* (Songadh: Shri Digambar Jain Swadhyay Mandir Trust, n.d.), 49.

82 Śāh and Nyāyatīrtha, 49; Sinha, *Indian Psychology: Perception*, 21.

83 Parameṣṭhīdās Nyāyatīrtha's Hindi translation is incredibly helpful in penetrating these terse verses. Śāh and Nyāyatīrtha, *Pravacanasāra: Mūla Gāthā, Saṃskṛt Chāyā, Gujurātī Padyānuvād, Śrī Amṛtacaṃdrācāryadevaviracit "Tattvapradīpikā" Nāmak Saṇskṛt Ṭikā aur uske Gujurātī Anuvādke Hindī Rupāntar Sahit*, 49.

projective ability of yogic perception is extrapolated into a means to enter (*pra*+√*viś*) and control the entities it comes in contact with. This *siddhi,* or psychic power, allowed the yogi to even destroy the mind currently inhabiting that other body.[84] Amṛtacandra's effort to differentiate the yogic perception he is describing from "entering" may indicate an attempt to build on the concept of yogic perception as *prāpyakārin* without adopting its connotation as a particularly sinister *siddhi,* through which one may manipulate and destroy others. Instead, the real value of yogic perception was not to overtake the body of some unfortunate victim, but to "look without touching."

On yet the other hand, it may be that Amṛtacandra's use of *prāpyakārin* here is fairly idiosyncratic against the backdrop of his own school. As Jadunath Sinha again points out, Jains generally, like both the Nyaiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas, argue that the *prāpyakārin* designation concerns sense organs.[85] So this all points to two possible interpretations of *prāpyakārin*. (1) If White is correct and *prāpyakārin* denotes extramission and projection *simpliciter*, then it is possible that the mind or soul, though not sense organs, could still be described as *prāpyakārin.* Indeed, this seems to be how Amṛtacandra uses the term. As an exiting of the soul, yogic perception is *prāpyakārin* even though it does not involve the physical "touching" or contact indicative of the senses and fourfold contact. Even though on Jain epistemology the eye does not involve *prāpyakārin*, the soul, in being "beyond the eyes (*akṣātītatva*)," does The Vaiśeṣikas, on the other hand, could assert that both the eye and yogic perception are *prāpyakārin.* (2) If Gaurinath Sastri is correct and *prāpyakārin* denotes

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[84] For a discussion of this mundane yogic perception in contrast to the more elite spiritual ilk, see White, "How Big Can Yogis Get? How Much Can Yogis See?," 72; White, *Sinister Yogis*, 194.

[85] Sinha, *Indian Psychology: Perception*, 3 and 20.

physical contact via the senses, then the notion of the mind or soul being *prāpyakārin* is a category mistake, since it is applied only to the sense organs.

Before moving on from these sources, it is important to recapitulate three key developments in yogic perception at the hands of these Vaiśeṣika authors: (1) The unabsorbed version clearly builds off of the definition of yogic perception in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, demonstrating its intellectual pedigree. But Vaiśeṣika authors made some important intellectual additions. (2) Yogic perception is said not to occur through the senses, and thus is able to perceive those objects that are supersensible (*atīndriya*). This occurs directly through the mind. Lastly, (3) absorbed yogic perception touts additional special abilities that supersede unabsorbed yogic perception's ability to perceive subtle, separated, and distant objects. Absorbed yogic perception perceives the most elusive metaphysical entities—space, place, time, and wind—and also the soul, both of oneself and others. As White notes, this last perceptual ability becomes a method of control in later sources.

c. The Nyāya School

It seems that the Nyāya school developed their understanding of yogic perception through citation of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*. Interestingly, however, they also seem to have explicitly mentioned yogic perception before Vaiśeṣika commentators. This earliest Naiyāyika mention hails from the oldest surviving commentary available on the *Nyāyasūtras,* the root text of the Nyāya school, by Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana (c. 450 CE). Interestingly, this early explicit mention of yogic perception cites the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* as evidence for its claims:

> How many of these epistemic instruments can cognize one valid object simultaneously, or do they cognize each object separately? They are seen in

> both ways. For example, [both ways] occurs when one understands the teaching "that is the soul." Inferentially, [one understands that] "the marks of the soul are desire, hatred, effort, pleasure, pain, and, moreover, consciousness." However, there is a direct perception that joins [with the soul] that is born from yogic concentration. [And thus, *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 6.1.11 says]
>
> *With regard to the soul, it is perceived through a special connection between the soul and the mind.*[86]

Vātsyāyana references the question of the relationship between epistemic instruments (*pramāṇas*) and their objects (*prameyas*). Does each instrument have its own unique object, or can the same object be cognized with multiple epistemic instruments? Vātsyāyana argues that a singular object can be cognized by different instruments. For example, we can both see a fire perceptually when we approach it, or infer it from smoke at a distance. Likewise, the soul can be known both inferentially and through yogic perception. The difference between fire and the soul is, of course, that perception of the soul requires the development of a special kind of perception, yogic perception, while fire can be perceived with the senses. We should recall that Saṅghabhadra offered a similar analysis in the last section. Like Vātsyāyana's position on the soul here, Saṅghabhadra argues homogeneity (**sabhāgatā*) can be cognized both through inference and yogic perception. Later Buddhists, however, came to reject this position. Dignāga's position, as we will see, argues that each epistemic instrument has its own, unique object. Thus, inferred fire is not the same object as directly perceived fire.[87] As I discuss in chapter three, this creates a unique problem for Buddhist in Dignāga's lineage to explain the relationship between inference and yogic perception.

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86 Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 9.

87 Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil describe this difference between Nyāya and Buddhist views as "convergence of the sources of knowledge (*pramāna-samplava*)" versus "differential application of the sources of knowledge (*pramāna-vyavasthā*)." Lawrence J. McCrea and Parimal G. Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 10. But is also interesting to note that both Vātsyāyana and Dignāga contrast yogic perception (*pratyakṣam yoga-samādhijam* and *yogīnām pratyakṣam*) with inferential teachings (*upadeśa* and *nirdeśa*). Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 9; Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the*

What is of particular note here is Vātsyāyana's quotation of *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 6.1.11 in support of his assessment that yogic perception has an ability to know the soul perceptually. This is all the more interesting given that Praśastapāda himself does not seem to mention yogis in connection with this particular *Vaiśeṣikasūtra.* For Naiyāyikas, on the other hand, the use of this verse to describe yogic perception takes on central importance. Thus, it is worth noting that while the earliest Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika commentaries we have available locate yogic perception in the same text—the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*—they do so at completely different places in that text. This aside, however, we can see that Vātsyāyana's description of yogic perception is roughly in line with Praśastapāda and Śrīdhara: it denotes an ability to know the soul perceptually without intermediary physical sense organs, directly through the mind—"a special connection between the soul and the mind."

It would be much later before the Nyāya tradition would make use of *Yogāsūtra* 3.25. The earliest evidence I have found for this citation hails from Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's (fl. 880-890 CE) *Nyāyamañjarī.* In this text, Jayanta offers evidence for the possibility of remote seeing within a section on proofs for the existence of yogic perception (*yogi-pratyakṣa-sādhana*). Like others we have examined, he draws from *Yogasūtra* 3.25 for his description of yogic perception as a type of remote seeing (*viprakṛṣṭa-jñāna*):

> Supersensory seeing is a valid cognition […] Even when a veil of thick darkness has descended over a place, the enemy of mice [cats] can see [distant objects] just as we see a multitude of objects situated close [to us]. It is also said in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that Sampāti, King of the Vultures, saw the daughter [in law] of Daśaratha who was a hundred yojana away […] This superior type of

Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā, 3. This may reflect a shared desire to substantiate yogic perception as the direct realization of scriptural truth against Mīmāṃsā, as we will see in next part.

> vision can see subtle (*sūkṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), and distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects, as well as those in the past and in the future.[88]

Jayanta here gives a couple of interesting additions. First, in addition to the three objects described in *Yogasūtra* 3.25—subtle, separated, and distant objects—Jayanta adds seeing the past and future as an instance of yogic perception. He adds, "It is said that just like one may have the insight, 'My brother will come,' [and their brother arrives the next day], so too do yogis have a perception of future objects that have yet to arise."[89] Anna-Pya Sjödin discusses this specific example pervasive in Indian literature of a girl having a premonition that her brother would return home. Interestingly, she also traces it back to Praśastapāda.[90] Furthermore, we see Jayanta make use of the reference in the *Rāmāyaṇa* we explored earlier, discussing Sampāti, the vulture who was able to see Rāvaṇa and Sīta across the sea. Here, this example's connection to yogic perception is made explicit.

d. A Buddhist Interlude

As an aside, it is worth here to note that Dharmakīrti also references vulture's remote seeing, albeit with a heavy dose of sarcasm. While both the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools explicitly accommodate two types of yogic perception—one supersensory of distant objects and the other more spiritual, such as insight into the soul—Dharmakīrti seemed weary that yogic perception's role in mundane supersensory remote seeing may degrade its status as an

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88 Gaurinath Sastri, ed., *Nyāyamañjarī of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa with the Commentary of Granthibhaṅga by Cakradhara* (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1982), 156–57.

89 Sastri, 162.

90 Anna-Pya Sjödin, "The Girl who Knew her Brother would be Coming Home: Ārṣajñāna in Praśastapādabhāṣya, Nyāyakandalī and Vyomavatī," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 40, no. 4 (2012): 469–88.

instrument of spiritual insight. Thus, he quips, "If you are concerned with the instruments for remote seeing, come, we will approach the vultures!"[91] Being able to spot objects from afar, Dharmakīrti jests, is literally something for the birds. However, although Dharmakīrti seems to want to distance his theory of yogic perception—as the culminating spiritual insight of meditative practice—from its connotation as a mundane superpower, Christian Coseru argues that it is likely that Dharmakīrti developed his soteriological assessment of yogic perception from its earlier, prosaic construal as a supersensory ability.

> [I]t is worth noting that Dharmakīrti's position toward the natural efficacy (*bhāvaśaktī*) of certain forms of meditation indicates that he was indeed familiar with the literature on meditation and ritual practice. It is most likely under the influence of such literature that he developed his proof for taking yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) as a source of reliable cognition. Dharmakīrti's acknowledgment of the possibility and indeed efficacy of supernormal vision (*atīndriyadarśana*) and supernormal knowledge (*atīndriyajñāna*) may indeed have had a definitive impact on his epistemological theories.[92]

Dharmakīrti's quip about vultures, then, may indicate a strategy similar to Amṛtacandra's disavowal that yogic perception involves entering. Both are quick to distance themselves from yogic perception's connotations as a mere psychic ability, even though historically such abilities may have been intellectual precursors to their formulations of yogic perception. As David White points out, this is a common strategy in the intellectual history of yogis in general, where textual traditions increasingly sought to distance their own formulations from

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91 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.33; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 108b.

92 Christian Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46; See also Marco Ferrante, "On Ṛṣis and Yogins: Immediate and Mediate Extraordinary Cognitions in Early Brahmanical Thought," *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Italian Association of Sanskrit Studies* LXXXIX (2016): 42–43; Raffaele Torella, "Observations on Yogipratyakṣa," in *Saṁskṛta-sādhutā: Goodness of Sanskrit. Studies in Honour of Professor Ashok N. Aklujkar*, ed. Chikafumi Watanabe, Michele Desmarais, and Yoshichika Honda, 2012, 477.

earlier prosaic connotations that would threaten to undermine the religious sophistication of their theories.[93]

Later Buddhists, however, also seemed weary that Dharmakīrti's efforts to disambiguate mundane yogic perception from its elite form overcompensated. Dharmakīrti could appear to be denying that remote seeing is had by Buddhist spiritual elites, making them appear less powerful. The tradition was thus quick to clarify that Dharmakīrti meant to emphasize yogic perception's instrumentality toward practical omniscience (*upayuktasarvajña*), the spiritual insight into the nature of reality necessary for liberation, in contrast to omniscience in the sense of literally knowing everything (*sarvasarvajña*), which could be afforded by augmenting one's remote seeing. Both omnisciences, of course, were said to belong to the Buddha.[94] Prajñākaragupta, one of Dharmakīrti's primary commentators, argues in this same fashion. He acknowledges that "being able to see remotely is not tantamount to omniscience, since if that were the case, then even vultures would have it." Nevertheless, "Those *great* beings with remote seeing who have cultivated complete omniscience first perfected their partial knowledge, [that is], they cultivated [insight] into reality."[95] Thus, in place of the seeming antagonism suggested by Dharmkīrti between remote

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93 White, *Sinister Yogis*, 41; Also see David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Here, White explores Abhinavagupta's sanitization of Kaula sex rituals: "Abhinavagupta sought to aestheticize the sexual rituals of the Kaula."

94 Shinya Moriyama, "Pramāṇapariśuddhasakalatattvajña, Sarvajña and Sarvasarvajña," in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*, ed. Helmut Krasser et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akadmie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 329–39; Also see Torella, "Observations on Yogipratyakṣa," 475. Torella explains Dharmakīrti's discussion of this distinction in relationship to yogic perception. I should clarify here that role of remote seeing is liminal throughout the dissertation. Although its antecedents are associated with a mundane *siddhi*, it also becomes a synecdoche for omniscience. In the context of Dharmakīrti's rejection of it, he is trying to shift the issue of omniscience away from knowing literally everything to knowing what is necessary for liberation.

95 Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 76; 'Phags pa shes rab, ed., "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, trans. Paṇḍita skal ldan rgyal po, Blo ldan shes rab, and

seeing and spiritual insight, Prajñākaragupta folds both understandings into a progressive framework, wherein those "great" (*mahat*) remote seers—those not content just with psychic acrobatics—first developed insight into reality before developing omniscience *qua* literal knowledge of all things akin to preeminent remote seeing. Even more compelling is that like Praśastapāda, Śrīdhara, and Vātsyāyana, Prajñākaragupta argues that this remote seeing must be the domain of mental and not sensory perception:

> [Objection:] *Now, whatever object is apprehended proximately and clearly is considered perception by the world, and without a sense organ, there is no proximate apprehension. Thus, there is no perception apart from one's sense faculties.* [Reply:] That's not the case. Rather, [the criterion is] "There is not some other reason for perception other than [a given object's] being present. Otherwise, the remote seeing had by vultures would not be observable." Likewise, what about those men who can see afar? What could their, [men and vultures', cognitions] be if they are something other than mental perception (*samvedanasya pratyakṣa*)?[96]

In other words, remote seeing must be mental perception, because the senses are too limited to accomplish it. Prajñākaragupta here may again reflect an effort to accommodate remote seeing without conflating it with yogic perception, which would threaten to degrade its status as an elite spiritual ability. However, his identification of remote seeing as mental perception and not as a sensory capability may also demonstrate his reasoning mirrors earlier Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika thinkers, who also deny remote seeing is sensorial. Prajñākaragupta's Buddhist contemporaries, Śāntarakṣita (725-788) and Kamalaśīla (740-795), make the connection between yogic perception and the mind explicit, arguing that it is a type of mental cognition

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Paṇḍita Kumāraśrī, Toh. no. 4221, vol. Tshad ma, the (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 46a.

96 Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 595; 'Phags pa shes rab, "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," 1744, 103a.

(*mano-vijñāna*). However, this yogic perception is distinct from remote seeing, encompassing both full omniscience and insight to reality, as we will see in chapter two.[97]

e. Back to Nyāya

Our next key Naiyāyika figure, Bhāsarvajña (c. 950 CE), offers perhaps the clearest synthesis of the key components of yogic perception we have discussed so far. His *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* contains references to *Yogasūtra* 3.25 as well as builds off of Praśastapāda's distinction between absorbed and unabsorbed yogic perception. He also includes Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's assessment that yogic perception includes cognition of past and future objects.

> The perception which grasps either some or all of three different types of remote objects—(1) separated (*vyavahita*) places, such as the True-World [Heaven] (*satyaloka*), etc., and very distant abodes that are far removed, such as that of the Nāgas, etc.; (2) distant (*viprakṛṣṭa)* times, such as the past and the future; and (3) hidden (*viprakṛṣṭa*) natures, such as atoms or space, etc.—is said to be yogic perception. That [yogic perception] has two states: absorbed (*yukta*) and unabsorbed (*ayukta*). In the absorbed state, one engages with the soul, the seat of thought and feeling, along with phenomena, etc., and so [that yogi] grasps all objects (*aśeṣa-artha-grahaṇa*). This describes supreme yogis. But not all yogis grasp all objects.[98]

While Bhāsarvajña mentions separated (*vyavahita*) and distant/hidden (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects reminiscent of *Yogasūtra* 3.25, he does not make any explicit mention of subtle (*sūkṣma*) objects. Bhāsarvajña also seems to expand the provenance of yogic perception to include something akin to omniscience. It is supreme yogis *(parama-yogi*) who are able to grasp all

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97 Dvārikādāsa Śāstrī, ed., *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, vol. 2 (Varanasi: Bauddha, 1981), 2:751; Also see Sara McClintock's lucid explanation of this point: Sara McClintock, "Knowing All Through Knowing One: Mystical Communion or Logical Trick in the Tattvasaṃgraha and Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 239.

98 Śvāmī Yogīndrānanda, ed., *Nyāyabhūṣaṇam*, Prathamasaṃskaraṇam (Varanasi: Ṣaḍdarśana Prakāśana Pratiṣṭhānam, 1968), 170.

objects (*aśeṣa-artha-grahaṇa*). This seems to gesture toward yogic perception *qua* omniscience, a notion that was held by Bhāsarvajña's Buddhist juniors, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. We will explore this construal of yogic perception in chapter two. Also, like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla—and others we have discussed in this chapter—Bhāsarvajña continues on to argue that yogic perception indeed is a type of mental cognition that does not rely on the senses.

> Since [absorbed yogic perception] is engaged with the soul, the seat of thought and feeling, it ascertains an object without connection to a sense organ. But this does not mean that object, [the soul], prevents the simultaneous [cognition of other objects], since [the soul] is said to maintain a connection with phenomena, etc. The reason for why cognition based on a connection between a sense organ and an object can [sometimes] be interrupted has been explored earlier. In that case, when one grasps an object through any [of the senses, such as] taste, sight, and touch, there is fourfold contact, which denotes connection between four things: (1) The soul is joined with (2) the mind, the mind with (3) the senses, and the senses with (4) the object. When an object is apprehended by the ear, there is the contact between three things: the soul, mind, and ear. [But] when an object is apprehended by the mind, there is contact between two things: the soul and the mind. Thus, [the cognition of] *ṛṣis* is characterized by this [twofold contact]. It is not something other than a valid epistemic instrument, since [to be a valid epistemic instrument] is a characteristic of yogic perception. Yogic perception is characterized by the completely present experience (*samyak-aporkṣa-anubhava*) of distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects, such as places, etc.[99]

Here, we see Bhāsarvajña apparently draw on the description of *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 6.1.1—"With regard to the soul, it is perceived through a special connection between the soul and the mind." Bhāsarvajña takes this to mean that yogic perception is exempt from the type of fourfold contact indicative of normal sense perception. Bhāsarvajña's formulation here, however, seems to depart from Praśastapāda's in an important respect. For the latter, absorbed and unabsorbed yogic perception perceived different types of phenomena. While

[99] Śvāmī Yogīndrānanda, 170–71.

absorbed yogic perception perceived the most subtle objects, like soul, time, and wind, unabsorbed yogic perception saw those objects described by *Yogasūtra* 3.25—subtle (*sukṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), and distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects. Bhāsarvajña, however, does not stratify these two functions of yogic perception between absorbed and unabsorbed. Even though absorbed yogic perception is focused exclusively on the soul, "this does not mean that object, [the soul], prevents the simultaneous [cognition of other objects]." Thus, drawing off of *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 6.1.1, even though absorbed yogic perception only involves a twofold (as opposed to fourfold) connection between the soul and the mind, it is still able to cognize objects.[100]

So, again, the contrast between Praśastapāda and Bhāsarvajña concerns their roles for absorbed versus unabsorbed yogic perception. Both agree that yogic perception occurs without fourfold contact and instead directly through the mind. But while Praśastapāda makes no claim about absorbed yogic perception's ability to grasp normal (albeit subtle, separated, or distant) objects—relegating this capacity to unabsorbed yogic perception—Bhāsarvajña seems to include this ability as part of (indeed, made possible by) absorbed yogic perception's grasp of the soul. This debate as to whether more elite forms of yogic perception, such as the absorbed type, accommodate or vitiate cognition of everyday objects is also rampant in the Buddhist texts, a theme we will explore in chapter three.

Before moving on from the Nyāya stratum, we can again summarize some key takeaways. (1) Like their Vaiśeṣika counterparts, Naiyāyikas also heavily rely on *Yogasūtra* 3.25 in describing yogic perception. (2) They also seem to heavily borrow from Vaiśeṣika authors, including the distinctions between absorbed and unabsorbed yogic perception as

[100] It is of note that Amṛtacandra took a similar position.

well as the notion it does not involve fourfold contact, such that the mind bypasses the senses to cognize objects. Unlike other Vaiśeṣika authors, however, they focus on a different section of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* (6.1.1) to build their arguments. We should also note that, unlike Vaiśeṣikas, these Naiyāyikas do not seem to stress the role of *prāpyakārin* in yogic perception. Lastly, (3) absorbed yogic perception touts additional special abilities. In addition to the objects specified by Vaiśeṣika authors, yogic perception perceives the past and future. Bhāsarvajña even suggests that yogic perception is involved in total omniscience of all objects.

f. The Buddhist School

Remote seeing does not seem to be explicitly associated with yogic perception in pre-Dignāgian Buddhist sources, nor among his immediate contemporaries. However, there is an abundance of Buddhist literature that describes similar feats and betray a similar cluster of associated abilities. The capabilities purportedly belonging to yogic perception *qua* remote seeing—the perception of distant objects, times, places (like heaven), and even other minds—appear in the Buddhist notion of the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*). The divine eye is by no means unique to Buddhism and it is clear that it later became associated with yogic perception in the larger Indian milieu. Its description is found in early non-Buddhist works, such as the *Carakasaṃhitā* (c. 100 BCE-100 CE), the seminal text on Āyurveda, where it is said that transmigrating souls are seen with the divine eye.[101] Cakrapāṇidatta's 11th century

[101] Jādavaji Trikamji, *The Charakasaṃhitā by Agniveśa, Revised by Charaka and Dṛidhabala, with the Āyurveda-dīpikā Commentary of Chakrapāṇidatta, Edited by Vaidya Jādavaji Trikamji Āchārya* (Bombay: Satyabhāmābāi Pāndurang, 1941), 305.

commentary on this text, the *Āyurvedadīpikā,* makes explicit that "divine sight is the yogic eye."[102] David White also confirms these passages specifically concern yogic perception.[103] I argued in the introduction that Dignāga's description of yogic perception as a spiritual insight closely resembled the dharma eye (*dhammacakkhu*). However, yogic perception's capacity as a type of remote seeing, as endemic in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika texts, seem encompassed in the early Buddhist stratum by the qualities purported of the divine eye.

The divine eye is actually part of two distinct lists of supernormal powers found in Pāli texts: the five eyes (*pañcacakkhu*) and the five supernormal powers (*pañcābhiññā*). The fives eyes trace back to the Pāli suttas. One of their earliest enumerations occur in the *Sāriputtasuttaniddesa,* which includes the physical eye (*maṃsacakkhu*), divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), wisdom eye (*paññācakkhu*), Buddha eye (*buddhacakkhu*), and all-seeing eye (*samantacakkhu*).[104] Later Theravāda commentaries further identified five types of gnosis eyes (*ñāṇacakkhu*), excluding the physical eye and incorporating the dharma eye with the other four.[105] The standard Mahāyāna list of the five eyes—the physical eye (*māṃsacakṣus*), divine eye (*divyacakṣus*), wisdom eye (*prajñācakṣus*), dharma eye (*dharmacakṣus*), and Buddha eye (*buddhacakṣus*)—replaces the all-seeing eye for the dharma eye. We will revisit these lists of five eyes in chapter five in the work of Mikyö Dorje (1504-1554).

The second list is the five supernormal powers: the divine ear (*dibbasota*), knowledge of other minds (*cetopariyañāṇa*), recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsanussati*), the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), and elimination of karmic propensities (*āsavakkhaya*). My discussion of

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[102] Trikamji, 305.

[103] White, *Sinister Yogis*, 161.

[104] Khuddaka Nikāya: Mahāniddesapāḷi (KN.Nidd I) 16, *Sāriputtasuttaniddeso*, 2:448.

[105] Saṃyutta Nikāya: Aṭṭhakathā (SN.A), *Saḷāyatanasaṃyuttaṃ*, 2:354.

the divine eye is situated within this list, specifically in the works of the famed fifth century Theravādin master Buddhaghoṣa, whose *Visuddhimagga* is a vast compendium of meditation techniques and Buddhist praxes. The *Visuddhimagga* discusses the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*) at several points, discussing its ability (like in the *Carakasaṃhitā*) to perceive the transmigration of beings from death to rebirth, the future, and distant realms.[106]

The seven times the divine eye is described in the *Visuddhimagga*, it is always associated with "extending light (*ālokaṃ vaḍḍhetvā*)." For example, in relationship to perceiving distant worlds, Buddhaghoṣa writes, "Through the divine eye, someone standing in one place extends light and sees the form of Brahma."[107] Buddhaghoṣa also mentions light when giving an etymology of the "divine eye," playing off the polysemy of *"dibba*" as both divine and light: "Because it possesses light, [the divine eye] is exceedingly bright. Thus, it is divine. Because it has a great range through seeing form behind walls, or something of the like, it is divine."[108] Extending light is also associated with the divine eye's telepathic ability. Buddhaghoṣa writes:

> How is it this [ability] culminates in knowledge [of others' minds]? It occurs through the power of the divine eye. Therefore, the bhikkhu extends light, and through the divine eye, they see the color of the blood that moves in the heart of another, and thus investigate their mind.[109]

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[106] Bradley S. Clough, "The Cultivation of Yogic Powers in the Pāli Path Manuals of Theravāda Buddhism," in *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 91.

[107] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, ed., *Visuddhimaggo*, vol. 2 (Igatapurī, India: Vipassana Research Institute, 1998), 32.

[108] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 2:51.

[109] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 2:37.

Buddhaghoṣa's description here seems reminiscent of both Śrīdhara and Amṛtacandra, who described yogic perception as the ability to perceive another's soul *(ātman*).[110] This similarity is further corroborated by the general Indian cultural knowledge of the soul and/or mind's residence in the heart. Thus, Buddhaghoṣa seems to assign abilities to the divine eye that are reserved for yogic perception in these later texts.

It is tempting to read Buddhaghoṣa here as subscribing to a type of *prāpyakārin*. After all, Buddhaghoṣa states the divine eye "extends light" and "possesses light." However, there is some ambiguity here. Buddhaghoṣa's phrase "Because it possesses light, [the divine eye] is exceedingly bright (*ālokapariggahena mahāggahena*)" could be read in different ways. "*Pariggaha*" may mean grasping, as in receiving light, or encapsulating, as in containing light. Thus, while Bradley Clough translates this phrase as "it greatly illuminates with discerning light,"[111] a *prāpyakārin*-suggestive read ("with" suggests an instrument, a light which discerns),[112] Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu opts for "it greatly illuminates by discerning light," as in by taking in light, it illuminates objects.[113]

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110 David White also notes similarities between the divine eye and yogic perception. White, *Sinister Yogis*, 131; He especially notes these similarities in Buddhism. White, 157. He especially notes these similarities in Buddhism. White, 157. It is also worth noting that the division between the divine eye and dharma eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*) mentioned in the introduction may be a similar strategy of soteriologization identified by David White, which differentiates the mere siddhi version of yogic perception from its more elite role in spiritual insight into the nature of reality. Thus, just as Amṛtacandra and Dharmakīrti differentiate yogic perception *qua siddhi* from insight into the nature of the soul or the Four Noble Truths, early Buddhists may have made a similar distinction between the divine and dharma eye: the ability to read minds and see remote objects versus insight into reality. However, the divine eye also clearly has a soteriological function in its ability to comprehend the workings of samsara through its ability to observe the transmigration of beings.

111 Clough, "The Cultivation of Yogic Powers in the Pāli Path Manuals of Theravāda Buddhism," 91.

112 It is interesting to note that even modern-day Hindi speakers colloquially say "Give me the light of your eyes (*āṃkhoṃ ke rośnī mujhe de dījiye*)" as a way to ask for someone's help if they are visually impaired. This may be vestigial of an old *prāpyakārin* cultural intuition that sees the light as containing projective light.

113 Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., *The Path of Purification*, 4th ed. (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), 416.

It is also not entirely clear whether "extending light (*ālokaṃ vaḍḍhetvā*)" suggests something extramissive. Clough again explains that this refers to a mediation method known as *kasiṇa,* where one meditates on an element in order to control it. In the case of the divine eye, the meditator is "extending the light *kasiṇa* in order to see external things. One can see as far as the light can be extended." Furthermore, "the adept will need to enter this level of *jhāna* [meditation] again and again, each time emerging and pervading the directions with light."[114] I discuss the *kasiṇa* method more in depth in chapter three, where extending meditation on bones similarly involves meditatively filling the world with bones up to the ocean and then retracting these bones again until one concentrates only on the bones of one body. This meditative process of extending the light *kasiṇa* is not *prāpyakārin* in any literal sense, such that meditators are literally casting light (*aloka-nyāsa*) in the way suggested by *Yogasūtra* 3.25 or *Nyāyasūtra* 3.1.35's discussion of rays (*raśmi*). However, the isomorphism between extending the light *kasiṇa* (*ālokaṃ vaḍḍhetvā*) and the *prāpyakārin* notion of projective light, both to see distant objects, may be operating with similar cultural intuitions about vision, if even in analogy only. I muse on this speculation more in chapter six.

However, it should be noted that Buddhists have by and large explicitly rejected *prāpyakārin* as a theory of visual perception. By the tenth century, Udayana—credited with uniting the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools—had written a long polemic against the Buddhist rejection of *prāpyakārin*.[115] The Buddhist position may have not been so uniform early on.

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[114] Clough, "The Cultivation of Yogic Powers in the Pāli Path Manuals of Theravāda Buddhism," 92.

[115] Vindhyeśvarīprasāda Dvivedī, ed., *The Aphorisms of the Vaiśeshika Philosophy by Kanada* (Varanasi: Braj Bhushan Das, 1919), 74.

Pilasse Chandaratana discusses the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā,*[116] a text which in the Theravāda tradition is believed to have originated in the third century BCE.[117] The text seems to suggest some sense in which the eye sees its object by reaching out to make physical contact with it.[118] But from at least Vasubandhu in the fourth or fifth century CE onward, who famously wrote from both the realist Vaibhāṣika and idealist Yogācāra points of view, the rejection of *prāpyakārin* has been a mainstay of Buddhist thought. His *Abhidharmakośa,* representing the Vaibhāṣika realist view, states in the autocommentary on verse 1.43b:

> *The eyes, ears, and mind do not reach* (aprāpta) *their objects.*
> It is just like when someone sees objects from afar [by using a magical eye ointment] they do not see the eye-salve placed on the eye. Sounds are heard from afar. And if it were true that those objects were reached, then there would be no meditators on the divine eye and ear. It is just like smell, etc. […] Because the mind is not a type of [physical] form, it cannot reach (*prāptum*) anything.[119]

The first example, the eye-salve (*añjana*), is oft-cited in the epistemological literature. Applied directly to the eye, the eye-salve is said to afford one the ability to see distant objects. While the eye-salve physically contacts the eye, however, it itself is not seen. If something that is known to directly contact the eye is not seen, then there is no good reason to assume that when we do see something there is necessarily physical contact. Vasubandhu next addresses the divine eye (*divya-cakṣus*) directly. He seems to argue that if normal eyes reached their object, then there would be no reason to attempt to achieve the divine eye, since the divine eye would then be no different from normal visual perception. Lastly, he suggests

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116 Chandaratana Pilasse, "Divergent Doctrinal Interpretations on the Nature of Mind and Matter in Theravāda Abhidhamma: A Study Mainly Based on the Pāli and Siṃhala Buddhist Exegetical Literature" (University of Hong Kong, 2011), 310.

117 Pilasse, 40–42.

118 Pilasse, 311.

119 Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, 32.

the mind is not *prāpyakārin,* simply because it is not a type of form. This would seem to corroborate Sastri's construal of *prāpyakārin* over White's, that—at least in Buddhist texts—*prāpyakārin* concerns physical contact through the senses and is not applicable to the mind.

Still, Vasubandhu's explanation seems to leave us with unanswered questions. If the normal eye's being *prāpyakārin* would, according to Vasubandhu, make the divine eye redundant, then does that suggest the divine eye is in some sense *prāpyakārin*? If the divine eye purportedly does what the normal eye would do *if* it were *prāpyakārin,* then we may think so. But Vasubandhu doesn't elaborate. In any event, Buddhaghoṣa explicitly agrees with Vasubandhu that the physical eyes themselves are not *prāpyakārin*. For example, he states, "The eye and ear, among others, grasp their objects without touching them (*asaṃpatta*)."[120] Whether the divine eye is like the physical eye in this regard remains unclear.

In post-Buddhaghoṣa Buddhism there are other more explicit references to *Yogasūtra* 3.25 when discussing yogic perception proper. Most of these, however, involve rebuttals to the Mīmāṃsā polemic we will explore in the next section. Before we proceed to that section, there is one particular quotation from Dharmakīrti worth mentioning. This hails from verse 3.532 of the *Pramāṇavārttika* (in italics, with Prajñākaragupta's commentary for clarity). He writes:

> [Objection:] *Well then, how do yogis perceive others' intellects and subtle forms, etc.?* [Reply:] This is no problem. As [Dharmakīrti] says:
>
> *Instead of an impure mind that perceives form, etc.,*
> *The state of a yogi's [mind] is inconceivable* (acintya)
> *[Even though] it grasps [phenomena] characteristically conceivable [by normal minds].*

[120] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, *Visuddhimaggo*, 1998, 2:72. See other instances of Buddhaghoṣa arguing this in Pilasse, "Divergent Doctrinal Interpretations on the Nature of Mind and Matter in Theravāda Abhidhamma: A Study Mainly Based on the Pāli and Siṃhala Buddhist Exegetical Literature," 310.

> Thus, how yogis sense distant (*dūra*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), etc., objects and others' minds is inconceivable now [for us normal people].[121]

We see Dharmakīrti draw from *Yogasūtra* 3.25 that yogis perceive both subtle (*sūkṣma*) and distant (in this instance, *dūra*) objects. He also mentions the by now consistent theme of yogic perception's telepathy. Lastly, we see his description of yogic perception as "inconceivable (*acintya*)," also echoed in Śrīdhara's formulation. It is possible, then, that Śrīdhara was cribbing from Dharmakīrti here.[122]

Before moving on to the next major subsection of this chapter, here are some key takeaways from our discussion of Buddhist thinkers: (1) While Buddhaghoṣa makes no explicit reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25 or yogic perception in particular, his analysis of the divine eye reflects many of the themes we have examined thus far, including the capacity for remote seeing, seeing heaven, knowing the future, and reading others' minds. Prajñākaragupta makes more explicit reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. We will see other Buddhist authors do so in the next section. (2) The question of whether the divine eye is *prāpyakārin,* however, is complex. Buddhaghoṣa offers several descriptions that lend themselves to a *prāpyakārin* interpretation *prima facie,* but it is clear that both he and Vasubandhu reject *prāpyakārin* as a theory of visual perception. On the other hand, it is also unclear whether the divine eye, in not being the physical eye, could be *prāpyakārin:* to deny it of the physical eye may not be to deny it of the divine eye. For example, our discussion of Amṛtacandra demonstrated that it is possible to reject visual *prāpyakārin* and yet still assert it of the soul. Could the divine eye in Buddhism be a type of *prāpyakārin* of the mind? As we

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[121] Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 460; 'Phags pa shes rab, "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," 1744, 120a.

[122] It Is also of note here that Dharmakīrti does not demonstrate the same hesitancy we saw earlier. Here, he seems to accommodate remote seeing into yogic perception, while earlier, he seemed to keep remote seeing distinct from yogic perception.

will see, later Buddhists do indeed associate yogic perception, like their Naiyāyika and Vaiśeṣika predecessors, with mental cognition. If this is so, the divine eye may be *prāpyakārin* in the same way White understands Śrīdhara's construal of yogic perception: as an extramissive, albeit nonphysical—perhaps mental—entity. Then again, Vasubandhu also explicitly denies that the mind can be *prāpyakārin*—it does not reach its objects explicitly because its nonphysical (*manastvarūpitvāt prāptumevāśaktam*).[123]

We may then have to reconsider White's assessment that yogic perception *qua* an extramissive soul or mind marks an extension of the logic of *prāpyakārin*, since in Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Jain, and Buddhist epistemology, the notion of *prāpyakārin* seems only cogently applicable to the physical senses. On the other hand, there could be some intellectual continuity here between *prāpyakārin* and an extramissive soul or mind if we do not take White's point to be that these authors explicitly and self-consciously applied *prāpyakārin* theory to their formulation of yogic perception. Rather, there could be a sense in which *prāpyakārin* sympathies have subtly informed the language, descriptions, and connotations surrounding yogic perception, even "in the background" and unbeknownst to those authors themselves. These are themes on which I speculate in chapter six.

ii. Yogic Perception Defended Against Mīmāṃsā

[123] However, things here get more complicated still. Jonathan Gold also describes how Vasubandhu's position here is not entirely his own, given that he is arguing from a realist Vaibhāṣika point of view while actually a Yogācārin. In another section, he is openly skeptical about the idea that the mind cannot perceive form because it is nonphysical. Jonathan C. Gold, *Paving the Great Way: Vasubandhu's Unifying Buddhist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 69 ff. Given that the Yogācārin Vasubandhu is more amenable to the mind directly cognizing form, it could be the case that he would also agree that it is *prāpyakārin* in Amṛtacandra's sense. But this requires more research.

a. The Mīmāṃsā Critique of Yogic Perception

In the last section, we saw the earliest descriptions of yogic perception hailing from *Yogasūtra* 3.25 as an ability to see subtle, separated, and distant objects. Naiyāyika and Vaiśeṣika authors soon expanded on the capacities predicated of yogic perception, including knowledge of the heavens, of the past and future, the soul, and others' minds. Barring the soul (which is rejected by Buddhists), Buddhaghoṣa's analysis localizes these same abilities in the divine eye. However, there is a large temporal gap between this original articulation of yogic perception in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, originating before the common era, and the earliest evidence for the expansion of yogic perception's purported powers by Vātsyāyana in the fifth century CE to include things like perception of the soul. Is there anything in this intervening period that might explain why Naiyāyika, Vaiśeṣika, Jain, and Buddhist authors felt the need to afford these additional capabilities to yogic perception?

I argue these developments may have occurred in response to the polemics of the Mīmāmṣā school. The Mīmāṃsā school had good reason to be threatened by the purported powers ascribed to yogis in the *Yogāsūtras,* particulary verse 3.25. This is because Mīmāmṣakas argue that only the Vedas, the earliest Hindu sacred texts, could be authoritative in matters of spiritual concern, especially descriptions of places like heaven. If yogic perception had the ability to see distant places like heaven, and thus human yogis could see directly what they were like, then the Vedas would no longer be the only authoritative source of information about the heavens. If Mīmāmṣakas were to admit that yogis could see heaven directly, then those yogis would be equally authoritative on such matters, and Vedic authoritative monopoly would be undermined. Mīmāmṣakas were thus highly invested in

disproving the possibility of yogi's seeing distant objects, like heaven, in order to maintain their authoritative hegemony.

The root text of the Mīmāṃsā school is the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras* of Jaimini (4th century BCE). The subsequent rejection of yogic perception builds off his verses 1.1.2-4:

> *The meaning of* dharma *is characterized by the [Vedic] precepts* (codana).
> *Now for the inquiry into* [dharma's] *characteristics.*
> *Perception is born from the intellect and is the senses* (indriya) *of man.*
> *[Perception] is not applicable [to* dharma*], since it only perceives that which is present.*[124]

In other words, the Vedas alone describe *dharma*, the deepest metaphysical truths about the world and what we should do in light of them. This is because "perception […] is the senses of man." By conflating perception writ large with sensory perception, Mīmāṃsakas effectively deny the possibility of supersensory perception. Humans, their perceptual knowledge of the world restricted to their senses, thus have no access to these metaphysical truths besides through the Vedas.

It is in Śabara's commentary on this verse that we see reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. Śabara's dates are uncertain, sometime after Patañjali (200-150 BCE) but before Vātsyāyana (c. 450 CE). He comments:

> Only the [Vedic] precepts can bring one to comprehend those types of objects that are past, present, and future, or subtle (*sūkṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), and distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*). The senses cannot do this at all […] Furthermore, inference, analogy, and process of elimination are not suitable [for knowledge of *dharma*], since they rely on perception beforehand.[125]

Again, we see reference to *Yogasūtra* verse 3.25. But rather than the yogi's being the source of such knowledge, it is only scripture—specifically Vedic precepts (*codana*)—which can

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[124] Baman Das Basu, ed., *The Sacred books of the Hindus: The Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini* (Allahabad: Sudhindre Nath Basu, 1923), v.1.1.2-4.

[125] Basu, v.1.1.3.

provide information about subtle, separated, and distant objects. Śabara also includes knowledge of past and future objects. Furthermore, no other epistemic instrument—be it inference (*anumāna*), analogy (*upamāna*), or process of elimination (*arthāpatti*)—is capable of providing knowledge of spiritual matters, specifically *dharma*. This is because perception provides the empirical fodder for these epistemic instruments to function, working in tandem with and based off of perception. For example, in order to infer that there is fire, one must perceive that there is smoke. If all perception is sensory perception, and sensory perception has no access to *dharma* whatsoever—since dharma is literally "beyond the senses (*atīndriya*)"—then no epistemic instrument based on perception will garner any insight into spiritual matters. One must rely on the Vedas.

This position is again reflected in Śabara's commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* verse 5.1.1, "The ritualistic order is based on *śruti,* since it is the epistemic warrant for that." *Śruti,* literally "hearing," describes the hearing of the Vedas, which are said to be dictated to but not authored by human scribes. Here, Śabara situates his analysis as an example of the exegetical format of question (*saṃśaya*), discussion (*vicāra*), and conclusion (*nirṇaya*), where someone raises a question, discusses its implications, and comes to a conclusion.

> As another example of question, discussion, and conclusion: the question is whether the epistemic warrant for *dharma* is *śruti,* or another epistemic instrument. Since perception and the like are occasioned by what can be [directly] understood (*adhigamya*) [without scripture], they are not an epistemic instrument for *dharma*. Since *dharma* is supersensible (*atīndriya*), it is characteristic of the precepts (*codana*). This is the discussion. The conclusion is that, thus, just the precepts have this characteristic [of epistemic warrant toward supersensible objects].[126]

[126] Basu, v.5.1.1.

The reasoning here is fairly straightforward. All epistemic instruments (*pramāṇa*) beside *śruti* rely on perception. But *dharma* is completely beyond perception (*atīndriya*). Thus, only *śruti* as encapsulated in the Vedas can speak on *dharma*. This includes knowledge about discrete objects beyond the senses—as described in *Yogasūtra* 3.25, including past and future objects—as well as spiritual matters—*dharma*.

It is key to note that Śabara's rejection that the objects described in *Yogāsutra* 3.25 are perceptible predates Vātsyāyana, who provided the earliest evidence we have of yogic perception as an insight into *dharmic* matters—specifically, direct perception of the soul. We also see Śabara include knowledge of past and future objects with that of the objects described by *Yogasūtra* 3.25. This is the earliest association I have found between the triad of objects in *Yogasūtra* 3.25 and objects of the past, present, and future. Although this grouping of *Yogasūtra* 3.25 with past and future objects is commonplace among the authors we explored in the last section, who mostly argue that all those objects are perceptible by yogic perception, it is notable that it first appears in Śabara's text, who denies it of yogis. Śabara may then have been responding to an earlier articulation of yogis having the ability to see the past and future as well as occluded objects. Whatever the case, there are three important takeaways so far. (1) Śabara was in conversation with *Yogasūtra* 3.25 and invested in refuting its claim that yogis had access to such objects, arguing that only Vedic scripture is authoritative in such matters. He includes objects of the past and future, which suggests (perhaps) some figure predating him who argued that yogis also had some type of precognition and retrocognition. (2) He is also specific that only the Vedas are authoritative toward *dharma* and that no perception can be. This is because there is no perception beyond that of the senses. This correlates with his claim that (3) *dharma*—and conceivably the

objects of *Yogasūtra* 3.25—are supersensible (*atīndriya*). Whatever is supersensible is inaccessible to epistemic instruments other than revealed scripture (*śruti*).

b. The Vaiśeṣika Rebuttal

The earliest Vaiśeṣika response I have found to Śabara is by Vaiśeṣika's earliest surviving commentator, Praśastapāda. In his text, however, the reference to Mīmāṃṣā is not explicit. However, his stated position appears directly opposed to Śabara's critique. Again, making use of *Yogasūtra* 3.25, he argues these subtle, separated, and distant objects are perceptible, as is *dharma* as well. Furthermore, Praśastapāda agrees with Śabara that *dharma* and *adharma* are supersensible (*atīndriya*), that is, beyond the senses.[127] However, he argues that this does not exclude them from perception's reach:

> The attainment of special vision is not an altogether different type of knowledge [different from perception]. Why? Through previous effort—whether through eye or foot ointments,[128] the sword, or the pill[129]—[otherwise occluded objects] become visible. Those [who use these methods] have a vision of subtle (*sūkṣma*), separated (*vyavahita*), and distant (*viprakṛṣṭa*) objects, and that is perception. When [one uses those methods], insight into how the *dharmic* and *adharmic* actions of living beings ripen—be they in the heavens, atmosphere, or earth—[…] is only inferred. However, the vision of things like *dharma*, etc., without relying on an [inferential] sign is included either in perception or *ṛṣi* cognition.[130]

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127 Dvivedī, *The Praśastapāda Bhāshya, With the Commentary Nyāyakandali of Sridhara*, 96.

128 The reader may recall that we saw Vasubandhu discuss the eye-ointment in a previous section.

129 These items are all said to grant magical powers or *siddhis* when imbibed with the proper ritual procedure. For a discussion of these in the Śaiva tradition, see Somadeva Vasudeva, "Powers and Identities: Tantric Śaiva Traditions," in *Yoga powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 287.

130 Dvivedī, *The Praśastapāda Bhāshya, With the Commentary Nyāyakandali of Sridhara*, 258–59; Jetly and Parikh, *Nyayakandali: Being a Commentary on Prasastapadabhasya with Three Sub-Commentaries*, 602; Although ṛṣi cognition is categorically distinct from yogic perception in Vaiśeṣika literature, there is undeniable overlap and fuzziness. See Sjödin, "The Girl who Knew her Brother would be Coming Home: Ārṣajñāna in Praśastapādabhāṣya, Nyāyakandalī and Vyomavatī."

Indicative of both Amṛtacandra and Dharmakīrti earlier, we again see a type of stratification of yogic perception, this time between remote seeing *à la Yogasūtra* 3.25 and the ability to see the *dharma* of other's actions and its karmic effects. While magic rites using ointments, pills, and the sword provide the mundane psychic power of remote seeing, it is the perception of adept *ṛṣis.*[131] that can penetrate the spiritual truth of *dharma*. Praśastapāda's formulation here is thus in line with his earlier distinction between unabsorbed and absorbed yogic perception. *Dharmic* insight also allows a glimpse into the actions of beings of heaven. Śabara, by contrast, denies the perception of both: the sight of subtle, separated, and distant objects as well as *dharma*.

Praśastapāda insists that both types of objects are perceptible, despite that fact that *dharma* is indeed supersensible (*atīndriya*). Similar to Vātsyāyana's position that the soul can be both perceived in yogic perception and inferred, Praśastapāda also argues that *dharma* can be both inferred and perceived—a direct confrontation against the Mīmāṃsā position that it can *neither* be inferred nor perceived. Therefore, although Praśastapāda does not directly mention Mīmāmṣā by name, his position is in direct opposition with Śabara's. While Śabara argues anything that is supersensible is not perceptible—since only the senses can perceive—Praśastapāda accommodates perception of supersensible *dharma*—again, not with the senses, but through the mind. It is not impossible that Praśastapāda simply formulated his position here independently of any thought to reject Śabara's claims. But given his pointed use of

[131] Dvivedī, *The Praśastapāda Bhāshya, With the Commentary Nyāyakandali of Sridhara*, 258–59; Jetly and Parikh, *Nyayakandali: Being a Commentary on Prasastapadabhasya with Three Sub-Commentaries*, 602. Although ṛṣi cognition is categorically distinct from yogic perception in Vaiśeṣika literature, there is undeniable overlap and fuzziness. For a discussion, see Sjödin, "The Girl who Knew her Brother would be Coming Home: Ārṣajñāna in Praśastapādabhāṣya, Nyāyakandalī and Vyomavatī."

both *Yogasūtra* 3.25 and *dharma* as objects of perception, as well as the fact he post-dates Śabara, it is more likely that he is responding to the Mīmāṃsā position here.

c. The Nyāya Rebuttal

The Naiyāyikas also gave their own lengthy rebuttal to the Mīmāṃsā critique of yogic perception. Naiyāyikas locate their debate with Mīmāṃsā as concerning authority, particularly the epistemic warrant of testimony (*śabda*). Naiyāyikas by and large accept testimony—that is, the reports of a reliable person—as epistemically warranted. The question, then, is what guarantees that someone's testimony is reliable and that their account thus can be trusted? Naiyāyikas situate trustworthiness as a function of direct perception. In other words, someone's report is reliable if they have a first-hand experience with the object in question. Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana's commentary on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7 states:

> *Testimony* (śabda) *is the instructions of reliable persons*
> Whoever has the quality of being informed by direct experience is reliable, just like someone who points something out when impelled by the desire to make known an object unseen [by others]. Direct experience is the reason for [someone's] being reliable about some object.[132]

One can anticipate how this definition might apply to yogic perception, even though that term is not used explicitly. If yogic perception provides the yogi with privileged knowledge through direct perception, it is based on this privileged knowledge that they become a reliable authority. We can also understand why the Mīmāṃsaka would be threatened by this notion, since it makes something other than the Vedas a source of valid testimony. Uddyotakara's (6th century CE) *Nyāyavārttika* greatly expands on verse 1.1.7, making the

[132] Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 14.

connection to yogic perception more apparent by bringing in the by now familiar Mīmāṃsā opponent.

> [Mīmāṃsā objection:] *Teachings on the divine* Apūrva *heaven are not gained [by perception], since they are supersensible* (atīndriya)*. Thus, if by reliable you mean direct knowledge, then*, *since [just] anyone could see the divine* Apūrva *Heaven [if it were perceptible], there would be no [need for] teachings about those [heavens]. Therefore, it is right to say that there are teachings which are reliable [i.e., the Vedas], but there are no instructions from* someone *who is reliable.* [Reply:] There is no fault in [our position]. We do not say that people like *us* have perceptions of things like heaven. Rather, the person who has such perceptions is the one who gives the teachings.[133] [Mīmāṃsā objection:] *What reason is there to believe that the heavens, etc., are perceptible?* [Reply:] We answer that because it has both universals and particulars [like all knowable objects] that they are perceptible. This is because it has a [material] substratum, and whatever has a substratum is likewise perceptible. It is also because [knowledge of the heavens] is for the sake of others, and whatever is for the sake of others (*parārtha*) is perceptible. It is also because [heaven] is a real object and the topic of scripture. An object discussed by others must be a percept which has been seen, just like a jar, or whatever.[134]

Like Śabara, we see the Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor here appeal to supersensibility (*atīndriya*) to substantiate why the heavens cannot be grasped by perception. The interlocutor argues via *reductio*: if anyone with direct perception is reliable, and the heavens are perceptible, there would be no need for teachings about things like the heavens, since they would be universally perceptible. This is also an argument from conflation: if perception is the basis of

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[133] It is not unlikely that Uddyotakara's formulation here informed Candrakīrti's own definition of testimony. He writes in the Prasannapadā, "Testimony (*āgama*) is the speech of those people who are authoritative, having direct knowledge of things beyond the senses (*atīndriya*)." Anne MacDonald, trans., *In Clear Words: The Prasannapadā, Chapter One 1: Introduction, Manuscript Description, Sanskrit Text*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akad. der Wiss., 2015), 275, §121; We can see how Candrakīrti appears in agreement with Uddyotakara's assessment that valid testimony is grounded in direct perceptions of realized yogis. But also see Sonam Thakchoe, "Candrakīrti's Theory of Perception: A Case for Non-Foundationalist Epistemology in Madhyamaka," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 11, no. 1 (2010): 93–98. There is debate how much Candrakīrti is really aligning himself with Nyāya here.

[134] Anantalāla Ṭhakkura, ed., *Nyāyabhāṣyavārttikam* (New Delhi: Bhāratīyadārśanikānusandhānapariṣatprakaśitam, 1997), 54.

testimony, then everyone becomes an authority simply by virtue of having perceptual capacity, and testimony is no longer a distinct epistemic instrument.

Uddyotakara clarifies, however, that he does not mean that just anyone's perception is a basis for valid testimony, but special perceptions that afford direct knowledge of things like heaven, likely a gesture toward yogic perception. The Mīmāṃsaka then takes a different a tack. If we grant that supersensible perceptions are possible, what guarantee is there that the heavens, etc., are percepts, or perceptible? Uddyotakara counters that the heavens are constituted by universals and particulars, just like any other percept.[135] Thus, they should be accessible to perception. Uddyotakara also draws on a pan-Indic epistemological classification—also found in Buddhism—between epistemic instruments for oneself (*svārtha*), with which one independently forms knowledge, and those for others (*parārtha*), which are probative. His point seems to be that because teachings on the heavens—made by the Mīmāṃsaka or whoever else—are probative, they must be experiential. The Mīmāṃsaka might counter, "Yes they are experiential, but only when one passes on and attains heaven. But this is not to say they are perceptible, which concerns *human* sense faculties, not the experience of those in the godly realms." If this is the case, then the argument between Uddyotakara and his Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor is really definitional, and both sides are question begging to a certain degree. If by perception we mean only the sense faculties (as per Mīmāṃsā), then heaven is indeed not perceptible, despite being populated by universals

[135] It should be noted that the Nyāya school, unlike the Buddhists (with whom they were in constant debate about this very issue), see both universals (*sāmānya*) and particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) as perceptible (*pratyakṣa*). This is vastly different from the Buddhist Pramāṇa tradition, that argues only particulars are perceptible. For a discussion, see McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion*, 10.

and particulars. If, on the other hand, we are more generous toward perception's abilities (as per Uddyotakara), then heaven is perceptible despite being supersensible.[136]

Uddyotakara does not explicitly reference yogic perception in his commentary. But the reference is made clear by Vācaspatimiśra (c. 900-980 CE). Vācaspatimiśra is perhaps one of the most eclectic and prolific figures in Indian philosophical history, writing expansive commentaries on Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, and Advaita Vedānta works. In chapter three, we will see his sophisticated arguments *for* the Mīmāṃsā rejection of yogic perception. But in his commentary on Uddyotakara's work, he gives a lengthy analysis supporting yogic perception, making the connection to *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7 and testimony explicit. The phrases from Uddyotakara's original text are in **bold**.

> [Mīmāṃsaka Objection:] ***Again, what** is the reason for the perception of the heavens? Yogic perception does not [behold] the domain of the heavens, etc., since it is a perception like ours, or whoever's*. [Reply:] Here's the answer; **we give** this reason: **because it is associated with universals and particulars, [the heaves] are perceptible.** […] If perception born from yoga is substantiated, then based on that valid epistemic instrument, heavenly objects, etc., are also substantiated. Thus, the argument of the Mīmāṃsakas—[which rejects yogic perception and] contradicts the authentic apprehension of property-bearing entities—is untenable and poses no opposition. But if [you argue that perception] born from yoga is unsubstantiated, that argument's reason has [yogic] perception as an unsubstantiated subject, and thus it is mere sophistry. [On the other hand], our reasons [in support of yogic perception] are plentiful and consistent.[137]

Like Uddyotakara, Vācaspatimiśra argues that the heavens are populated by universals and particulars and so are perceptible. Likewise, yogic perception is the epistemic instrument that substantiates those perceptible objects—we know they exist because they are seen by yogic

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[136] It is interesting to note that this is also a wider debate in Indian texts. That is, whether perception (*pratyakṣa*) denotes the senses, literally "before the eyes (*prati-akṣa*)," or the object, as in a percept. Śabara argues the former while Uddyotakara argues the later. I explore this debate more in chapter two.

[137] Anantalāla Ṭhakkura, ed., *Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā* (New Delhi: Bhāratīyadārśnikanusandhāna Pariṣatprakāśitā, 1996), 167–68.

perception. Furthermore, the Mīmāṃsaka has no ability to make arguments about the limitations of yogic perception. This has to do with a technical dimension of Indian debate, that if the subject (*pakṣa*) is taken by the person making the argument to not exist (*prasiddha*), then the reason is faulty. In other words, one cannot make arguments about objects which one posits do not exist.[138] Thus, the Mīmāṃsā attempt to predicate nonexistence of yogic perception presupposes yogic perception as a subject and thus undermines itself.[139]

Between Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara, and Vācaspatimiśra, we can garner some key takeaways. (1) The Naiyāyikas we have explored center their rebuttal to the Mīmāṃsakas around the issue of testimony (*śabda*), arguing that perception can be a basis of valid testimony. (2) This is because perception can have access to supersensible (*atīndriya*) objects. Unlike the Vaiśeṣikas we examined, who discuss *dharma* as supersensible, the authors in this section center heaven as the exemplar of a supersensible object. (3) Also unlike the Vaiśeṣikas of the previous section, the Naiyāyika authors here make no explicit mention to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. However, given the close association between the ability to see distant objects and the ability to see heaven in both Mīmāṃsā and Vaiśeṣika sources, it is not unlikely that the Naiyāyikas explored here are in dialogue with those texts that make explicit mention of *Yogasūtra* 3.25.

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138 For example, see Musashi Tachikawa, "A Sixth-century Manual of Indian Logic (a Translation of the Nyāyapraveśa)," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1971): 140.

139 These types of arguments, however, are themselves sophistic. They emulate Anslem's ontological argument which attempt to prove God's existence by virtue of his being taken as the subject of a syllogism in the first place. Despite Descartes's attempt to resurrect the ontological argument, and Hegel's attempt to defend it against Kant's critique, the circularity of such arguments is hard to deny.

d. A Jain Rebuttal

I will touch briefly on one rebuttal against the Mīmāṃsā critique from the Śvētāmbara Jain school, which closely follows the authors we have discussed so far. This comes from the polymath Hemacandra (1088-1173 CE), who wrote on grammar, philosophy, history, mathematics, as well as became renowned as an accomplished poet. In his *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā,*[140] he writes, "Whoever perceives subtle, hidden, and far-off objects (*sūkṣma-antirita-dūra-arthāḥ*) perceives a knowable object (*prameya*), like a jar, or whatever. Thus, since it is impossible to deny that this luminous gnosis (*jyotir-jñāna*) corresponds with its object, [that gnosis'] existence is established."[141] Here, we see Hemacandra invoke Uddyotakara's argument that such hidden objects must be perceptible by someone, since they are "just like a jar." Furthermore, Hemacandra's reference to "subtle, hidden, and far-off objects (*sūkṣma-antirita-dūra-arthāḥ*)" is again likely a crib from *Yogasūtra* 3.25.

Hemacandra's gesture to luminous gnosis (*jyotir-jñāna*) is also reminiscent of *Yogasūtra* 3.25, which described yogic perception in the same manner (*jyotirmat*). This is also reflected in Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's description of yogic perception, whom we will discuss shortly. They describe yogic perception as "the pure and unwavering light of gnosis (*jñāna-dīpa*)" and as "a blazing lamp (*pradīpa*) [that illuminates] the darkness."[142] It is

[140] "Mīmāṃsā" here has nothing to do with the eponymous school. Rather, it just means "analysis" or "investigation." The title is thus "Investigation of Epistemic Warrant."

[141] Sukhlalji Saṅghavi, ed., *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā: With the Commentary Pramāṇamīmāṃsāvṛtti* (Ahmedabad: The Sañcālaka-Siṅghī Jaina Granthamālā, 2016), v.1.1.16.

[142] Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:2719 v.3268 and 2:869 v.3338; See Dipali Bandyopadhyay, "Yogic Perceptions and Omniscience: Some Indian Theories" (University of Calcutta, 1998), 275; Jeson Woo, "Kamalaśīla on 'Yogipratyakṣa,'" *Indo-Iranian Journal* 48, no. 1–2 (2005): 117. Although

of course not possible to say for certain that Hemacandra drew this construal of luminous gnosis directly from these Buddhist sources. Nevertheless, given the repeated clustering of these themes—the reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25, the argument that such objects must be perceptible "like a jar," and the association between luminous gnosis and yogic perception—Hemacandra is clearly part of an intersectarian lineage that is highly intertextual in its discussion of yogic perception.

e. A Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta Rebuttal

Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Jain thinkers were not the only schools invested in countering Mīmāṃsā. A rather lengthy rebuttal comes from Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, or "Qualified Nondual Vedantans." This school was founded by Rāmānujā (c. 1017–1137 CE). Philosophically, it could be considered a compromise between the nondualist and dualist approaches of Śaṅkara (c. 700-750 CE) and Madhva (1238-1317) respectively, though historically Rāmānujā was only in dialogue with Śaṅkara. Rāmānujā agrees with Śaṅkara that all of reality is monist, the great spirit of Brahma. However, he qualifies this nondualism by adding this does not necessarily mean that reality is completely homogenous. Even though all reality is Brahma, it is not undifferentiated, and so it can accommodate multiplicity and distinctions.

This school's defense of yogic perception against Mīmāṃsā comes from Veṅkaṭanātha's (a.k.a. Vedānta Deśika, c. 1269-1370 CE) *Nyāyapariśuddhi*. Veṅkaṭanātha

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla do not use the term "yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) directly in these verses, the reference is clear from context.

was incredibly prolific, composing over a hundred works, and considered seminal in Vaiṣṇavist thought. Compared to the other texts we have explored, his is quite late. However, it succinctly brings together several of the elements we have explored thus far and so is worthy of examination. I will first provide the translation of the relevant section from the *Nyāyapariśuddhi* and then offer a discussion:

> Perception is of two kinds: yogic perception and non-yogic perception, [in other words], the perceptions [of those yogis who are not like us and the perceptions] of people like us. Yogic perception has the special characteristic [of being able to see] distant (*prakṛṣṭa*) and hidden (*adṛṣṭa*) objects. [There are also two types of yogic perception. One], remaining in a state of absorption (*yukta*), occurs through the mind only. The other, however, occurs through the sense faculties (*indriya*) and is directed at external objects. It remains unabsorbed (*viyukta*).[143]

First, we see Veṅkaṭanātha divide perception in a fashion reminiscent of Praśtastapāda. There is normal perception, that sensory perception of "those like us," and that of the yogis. Also like Praśtastapāda, yogic perception itself is divided into absorbed and unabsorbed types. While Praśtastapāda seems to suggest that yogic perception in general is mental, since it bypasses fourfold contact, Veṅkaṭanātha interestingly argues that it is only absorbed yogic perception that occurs exclusively through the mind. Unabsorbed yogic perception "occurs through the sense faculties (*indriya*)." However, this is complicated further by the fact that mind (*manas*) itself *is* considered a sense faculty in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school.[144] So, it is not entirely clear what distinction Veṅkaṭanātha is making when he says that unabsorbed

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143 Vidyabhuṣana Lakṣmanācārya, *Nayâyaparishuddhi by Venkatnath Vedântâchârya: Nyāyapariśuddhiḥ. With a Commentary Called Nyayasar(a) by Niwâsachârya [Nivāsa ācārya]. Edited with Notes by Vidyabhushan Laksṅmanàchàrya* (Varanasi: Chowkhambâ Sanskrit Series Office, 1918), 72.

144 The term here is "*indriya*," but it should be noted that in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school this term does not have the same meaning as in Buddhism, within which it is narrowly construed as the five sense faculties. For Viśiṣṭādvaita, *manas* is a subcategory of *indriya*. For a discussion, as well as a comparison to Buddhism, see R. Savithiri, "Consciousness in Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita" (Pondicherry, Pondicherry University, 2016), 40–42, 53–54, and 89–90.

yogic perception sees with the senses, which includes the mind, while absorbed yogic perception sees with the mind only (*manas-mātra*). This could mean that in the former the physical senses function in tandem with the mind, while in the latter, it is through the mind exclusively. But, again, it is not entirely clear. Also, Veṅkaṭanātha's definition of yogic perception as able to cognize both distant (*prakṛṣṭa*) and hidden (*adṛṣṭa*) objects may bespeak a reference to *Yogasūtra* 3.25, but this is also unclear.

Veṅkaṭanātha continues on to discuss the relationship between yogic perception and scripture, also reminiscent of previous arguments we have explored concerning yogic perception's role in spiritual authority.

> The object of [yogic] perception is dictated by what one desires to know, etc. That object [must] also be established in some scripture. [Yogic perception] arises merely through the power of meditation (*bhāvanā-bala-ja*). [The meditator] projects their perception toward the creator of the world, [the Godhead], who is the source of commentary. The recitation of commentaries is a verbal expression of what yogic perception has seen directly, [that is, perceptually]. Otherwise, if it were the case that even when someone developed [yogic perception] they were unable to [better] explain that root [text], which contains scriptural knowledge of God, then what would be the point [of studying the text at all]? [145]

I have a suspicion that Veṅkaṭanātha is strongly cribbing from Dharmakīrti here. As I will explain in chapter three, the role of meditation in producing yogic perception—particularly the use of the term "*bhāvanā-[bala]-ja*"[146]—becomes central to debates surrounding Dharmakīrti's formulation. Also, Veṅkaṭanātha's point that yogic perception is a direct perception of something that must be first substantiated in scripture is another cornerstone of Dharmakīrti's argument. We will explore these formulations more in chapter three. For now,

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[145] Vidyabhuṣana Lakṣmanācārya, *Nayâyaparishuddhi by Venkatnath Vedântâchârya: Nyāyapariśuddhiḥ. With a Commentary Called Nyayasar(a) by Niwâsachârya [Nivāsa ācārya]. Edited with Notes by Vidyabhushan Laksńmanàchàrya*, 72.

[146] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.286c.

it is enough to understand Veṅkaṭanātha's *reductio.* That is, the whole point of learning scripture is to have a direct encounter with what that scripture describes. If after learning about the phenomena described in scripture there were no way to experience them, then what would be the point? This, in some ways, seems a reverse version of the arguments we saw in the Nyāya stratum. There, Naiyāyikas sought to derive the authority of scripture from those yogis who had directly and perceptually seen what scripture discusses. Here, Veṅkaṭanātha argues scripture serves as an authoritative guide to what one can experience directly through yogic perception. If scripture cannot lead to such an experience, because yogic perception is impossible, then what would be the utility of scripture?

So far, Veṅkaṭanātha has made no explicit mention of the Mīmāṃsā critique of these positions. Immediately after, however, Veṅkaṭanātha identifies the Mīmāṃsakas explicitly.

> Phenomena and the like can be apprehended by anyone's faculties (*indriya*), since they are knowable objects, like a jar. [Consider the following syllogism: *Take hidden objects* (prameya adṛṣṭa)*. They are only perceptible by some], because [those objects] are not perceived by the Mīmāṃsaka*. *It is just like one's own happiness, [which is perceived by oneself, but not by someone else].* It is a fallacy to think there is a dissimilar case (*vipakṣa*) in this inference, since there is no opposing instance, [such as there being something perceived by no one]. Given that this would undermine scripture, [we must infer that the existence of] scripture necessitates [that someone] has ascertained its meaning [directly and perceptually].[147]

Veṅkaṭanātha is clearly cribbing from Uddyotakara here. First, like Uddyotakara, he invokes the example of a jar to say that even supersensible objects should be perceptible. Although they may be far removed, and thus not accessible to the senses, those supersensible objects are still the kinds of objects that *could* be apprehended by perception—again, they are comprised of universals and particulars, and thus not inherently inaccessible to perception.

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147 Vidyabhuṣana Lakṣmanācārya, *Nayâyaparishuddhi by Venkatnath Vedântâchârya: Nyāyapariśuddhiḥ. With a Commentary Called Nyayasar(a) by Niwâsachârya [Nivāsa ācārya]. Edited with Notes by Vidyabhushan Laksńmanàchàrya*, 72.

They are only adventitiously out of range of the senses. The second example is rather technical. The rather odd syllogism he cites is found in Bhāsarvajña's *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*, a text we explored earlier. There, Bhāsarvajña uses it as an example of the fact that there are some syllogisms which function only with positive concomitance (*kevala-anvayin*). Furthermore, Ernst Prets illustrates that Bhāsarvajña is building off Uddyotakara in his discussion.[148]

Consider this simple syllogism as an example: *Take a human. They are an animal, because they are a mammal.* The positive concomitance (*anvaya*) is the relationship between the reason—"because they are a mammal"—and what is being predicated of the subject—"being an animal." In this case, the positive concomitance is that anything that is a mammal must be an animal. There is also a negative concomitance (*vyatireka*) between the reason and the predicate: whatever is *not* an animal is *not* a mammal. How do we prove negative concomitance? We have to substantiate that everything that is *dislike* the predicate is not the entity expressed by the reason. That is, everything that is *not* an animal must also *not* be a mammal. Thus, in order to prove negative concomitance, there must be something that is dislike the predicate, a dissimilar example (*vipkṣa*), which is also not the reason. In this case, something *not* an animal and *not* a mammal, like a ficus.

However, as Bhāsarvajña points out, some sound syllogisms posit predicates that do not have dissimilar examples. This is true of the syllogism posited by Bhāsarvajña and cited by Veṅkaṭanātha: *Take hidden objects* (prameya adṛṣṭa)*. They are only perceptible by some, because they are not perceived by the Mīmāṃsaka*. The logic seems to be that these hidden objects must (1) be perceptible, because they are epistemically warranted (*prameya*), and

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148 Ernst Prets, "Dharmakīrti's Refutation of kevalānvayin and kevalavyatirekin Reasons," in *Dharmakīrti's Thought and Its Impact on Indian and Tibetan Philosophy: Proceedings of the Third international Dharmakīrti Conference, Hiroshima, November 4-6, 1997*, ed. Shōryū Katsura (Vienna: Verl. der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 336.

must (2) be perceptible to some (but not all), since Mīmāṃsakas deny their being perceptible to them. Thus, they cannot be perceived by everyone, but must be by some. Here, the predicate is to be "only perceptible to some people (*kasyacit pratyakṣāṇi*)" and the reason is "because it is imperceptible for the Mīmāṃsaka (*mīmāṃsakānām apratyakṣatvāt*)." But we can anticipate there would be no dissimilar case to this predicate. The dissimilar case would have to be *something perceptible to no one* (*na kasyacit pratyakṣāṇi*). But this is impossible, given that if something exists, it is epistemically warranted, and thus must be perceptible. Furthermore, assuming the syllogism is sound, if a dissimilar case existed, then the negative concomitance would necessitate something perceived by no one but perceptible to the Mīmāṃsaka (*na mīmāṃsakānām apratyakṣa*). Just as the dissimilar case in the animal syllogism was something *not* an animal and *not* a mammal, so too here would there have to be something *not* perceptible and yet *not* imperceptible to the Mīmāṃsaka. This is a contradiction. Thus, there is no negative concomitance in this syllogism; it only has positive concomitance (*kevala-anvayin*).

This is a rather circuitous route to make the point, but it is rather effective. In essence, Veṅkaṭanātha uses Bhāsarvajña to argue another *reductio* against the Mīmāṃsaka. If the Mīmāṃsaka argues that there are hidden objects that are perceived by no one, then they essentially assert the dissimilar example described above. But assuming the original syllogism is correct, then the introduction of this dissimilar example would absurdly prove through negative concomitance that the Mīmāṃsaka perceives that hidden object. If, on the other hand, the Mīmāṃsaka denies the dissimilar example, then they have jettisoned their claim that no one perceives hidden objects.

This *reductio*, of course, is predicated on the claim that to be an epistemically warranted object (*prameya*) necessitates that object be perceptible. The Mīmāṃsaka could deny this, and indeed they do: supersensible objects are those that exist but are imperceptible. But Veṅkaṭanātha counters that this would "undermine scripture." If there were no one who perceived supersensible objects, then how do we have scripture that accounts for them? Śrīnivāsadāsa's (14th-15th centuries CE) *Nyāyasāra* commentary makes this point explicit:

> If there were no perception of [supersensible] phenomena, etc., then we would have to absurdly reject scripture, which entails a person with perceptual knowledge produced by yoga who [perceptually] grasps things beyond the senses (*atīndriya*).[149]

The Mīmāṃsaka again has resource. Because they argue the Vedas are authorless, the Mīmāṃsaka claims those humans who scribed the Vedas had no direct access to the phenomena about which they took dictation. In other words, they have merely heard the Vedas, just like anyone else; they do not have any greater insight. But this also appears to be a philosophically dodgy position. If the original Vedic scribes simply heard the Vedas from the ether and wrote them down, how did they know they were authoritative? If they had no epistemic resource to differentiate them from psychotic inner voices, then scripture truly is undermined, since there is no way to establish its validity. If, on the other hand, those scribes did have some way of knowing these scriptures recorded the truth, then this seems to suggest some direct experience on their part that would allow them to corroborate the authority of the Vedas. Again, this is the reason we saw Naiyāyikas argue that scriptural authority must be derivative of the direct experience of its original scribes. We will see such an argument made by Buddhists forthcoming.

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[149] Vidyabhuṣana Lakṣmanācārya, *Nayâyaparishuddhi by Venkatnath Vedântâchârya: Nyāyapariśuddhiḥ. With a Commentary Called Nyayasar(a) by Niwâsachârya [Nivāsa ācārya]. Edited with Notes by Vidyabhushan Laksńmanàchàrya*, 74.

Veṅkaṭanātha thus brings together several different currents of argumentation against the Mīmāṃsaka rejection of yogic perception. (1) He draws heavily on Praśtastapāda, differentiating absorbed from unabsorbed yogic perception, construing the former as an exclusively mental enterprise, and perhaps drawing on *Yogasūtra* 3.25. (2) He also seems to crib Dharmakīrti, insisting that yogic perception is meditation on an otherwise hidden object garnered from scripture. We will explore this aspect of Dharmakīrti's formulation more in chapter three. Lastly, (3) Veṅkaṭanātha relies heavily on Uddyotakara to prove that yogic perception has access to supersensible objects by appealing to his argument that by virtue of being objects, supersensible objects must be perceptible by someone. All this suggest that Veṅkaṭanātha was highly versed in the literature we have discussed thus far defending yogic perception against Mīmāṃsā critique.

f. The Buddhist Rebuttal

Dharmakīrti directly confronts the Mīmāṃsā rejection of yogic perception as well. This hails from his autocommentary on the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. As I alluded to in the section on Veṅkaṭanātha, Dharmakīrti argues that in order for the Vedas to have been dictated, there must be some humans who have supersensible abilities.

> *[The Vedas] do not say this is the meaning and this is not.*
> *The conceit that they mean this or that is constructed by men, who are endowed with passion, etc.*
> *What difference does it make if you say there is one [group who] knows reality but no other?*
> In this way, if [dictation of the Vedas] occurs by men, how could [one definitively say] that one person knows [spiritual truth] while no one [else] can? Thus, if this person [who hears the Vedas] experiences perceptible and knowable [objects] with superhuman abilities, why can't no other? Why is it that only *he* has the power to know supersensible (*atīndriya*) objects? If one

> person can see [the objects described by the Vedas], why it is impossible that someone else could see those objects that are far removed in space, time, and nature (*deśa-kāla-svabhāva-viprakṛṣṭa*)? There are no premises that contradict this, which would establish that this is not perceived [by someone else]. In the same way, if it is possible to establish this for one person, that he is special, then it must be so for another. Thus, only refraining from committing [to either the existence or nonexistence of such superhuman abilities] (*anabhiniveśa*) is permissible.[150]

Dharmakīrti first argues that the Vedas are ambiguous, their hymns are not always definitive. If someone truly understands their meaning, they must do so through Vedic-extrinsic means. We thus have to assume some supersensible abilities on the part of the original Vedic scribes, else how could they decipher the Vedas' meaning? How could they have even written them down? They must have had some supersensible ability to hear them in the first place. If the Mīmāṃsaka concedes but argues that it was *only* the original Vedic scribes who had such abilities, and thus it is only the Vedas that are authoritative, then this restriction appears arbitrary. What good reason is there to assume that only these people were able to develop such capacities, and for evermore? Like our preceding authors, Dharmakīrti says, on the other hand, if the Mīmāṃsaka denies anyone has such abilities, then they have effectively undermined the Vedas, since their authority depends on such abilities. Furthermore, if no supersensible seers exist, then there is no authority from which to definitively prove their non-existence. There would be no way to definitively disprove the existence of such yogis, since this question itself concerns a supersensible object.[151] Thus, at best, we have to remain agnostic (*anabhiniveśa*).

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[150] Raniero Gnoli, ed., *The Pramanavarttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Autocommentary* (Roma: Instituto italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente, 1960), 165; See Margherita Serena Saccone, "Of Authoritativeness and Perception: The Establishment of an Omniscient Person (Against the Mīmāṃsakas)," in *Wind Horses: Tibetan, Himalayan and Mongolian Studies*, ed. Giacomella Orofino (Napoli: Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale," 2019), 462. Śubhagupta (8th century CE), likely inspired by Dharmakīrti, makes a similar argument.

[151] See n139. Again, such an argument (also reminscient of Uddyotakara) seems undeniably circular.

In essence, the Mīmāṃsaka is not being parsimonious if they claim that their texts—as scribed by humans—contain knowledge of supersensible objects (*atīndriya*) while others' cannot. Śākyabuddhi (c. 700 CE) identifies this person who purportedly has knowledge of the Vedas, as Jaimini, the author of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras,* and these "others"—of whom is denied such authority by the interlocutor—as Buddhists.[152] Thus, Dharmakīrti is part of a lineage of thinkers that question how it is that Vedic scribes have access to supersensible objects (*atīndriya*) where others do not. It is also worth noting that Dharmakīrti's description of the ability to sense distant objects is again strikingly close to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. While Dharmakīrti discusses the ability to "see those objects that are far-removed in space, time, and nature (*deśa-kāla-svabhāva-viprakṛṣṭa*)," *Yogasūtra* 3.25 discusses "knowledge of subtle, separated, and far-removed objects (*sūkṣma-vyahita-viprakṛṣṭa*)." On the one hand, despite his earlier quips about remote seeing, Dharmakīrti here is thus more in line with traditional argumentation about yogic perception, that it affords knowledge not just about the reality of things—a spiritual truth—but also about objects themselves in different times and places. On the other hand, it is notable that, unlike previous authors, Dharmakīrti refrains from the explicit use of the moniker "yogic perception" in his discussion, perhaps, again, to reserve that term specifically for spiritual insight that transcends mere seeing of the heavens.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were also thoroughly versed in the Mīmāṃsā critique of yogic perception. The 24th chapter of Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* on "The Examination of *Śruti*" (Śrutiparīkṣa), including Kamalaśīla's commentary, or *Pañjikā*, contains a lengthy recapitulation of the Mīmāṃsaka argument. The *Pañjikā* quotes Jaimini's verse 1.1.2—"The

[152] Vincent Eltschinger, *Can the Veda Speak? Dharmakīrti Against Mīmāṃsā Exegetics and Vedic Authority: An Annotated Translation of PVSV 164,24-176,16*, ed. Helmut Krasser and John Taber (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012), 34n11.

meaning of *dharma* is characterized [only] by the [Vedic] precepts"—as well as Śabara's definition of *dharma* in his commentary on this section—"*Dharma* is that which produces welfare."[153] The *Pañjikā* later summarizes the familiar Mīmāṃsaka argument against yogic perception: "Nor does yogic perception have the scope of supersensible objects (*atīndriya*), since it is perception, just like any other perception, [which only involves the senses]."[154] Again, because the Mīmāṃsaka considers perception as coextensive with the senses, super-sensible perception (*ati-indriya*) is precluded by definition.

Śāntarakṣita retorts, in simpatico with Dharmakīrti, that yogic perception is in fact *necessary* to understand scripture:

> *Thus [Vedic] precepts are not epistemic warrants for establishing* dharma*, since its meaning is unascertainable by oneself or others, whose faculties are dull.*
>
> *Best you find someone who can give advice on the different meanings of* śruti*: a man whose inner darkness has been dispelled by the light of gnosis.*[155]

In other words, if there is anyone who understands the Vedas, it must be yogis, who have some direct perceptual insight into what those texts discuss. Kamalaśīla comments on this verse, "The fault in the notion that phenomena, etc., are not understood by the *samādhi* of yogic perception is demonstrable by inference, as will be proven later." The forthcoming explanation of yogic perception to which he alludes comes in chapter 26, "The Examination of Those who have a Vision of Supersensible Objects (Atīndriyārthadarśiparīkṣā)."[156] In that

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153 Basu, *The Sacred books of the Hindus: The Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini*, v.1.1.2.

154 Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:498.

155 Śāstrī, 2:631.

156 Śāstrī, 2:692; Although related, the intricacies of these proofs does not directly concern the historical argument I am attempting to make, so I will not waylay us with them here. But for those who are interested, see their careful analysis in Woo, "Kamalaśīla on 'Yogipratyakṣa,'" 116.

same chapter, Śāntarakṣita again argues supersensible perception is presupposed by scripture. He argues:

> *The ability of* mudrās*,* maṇdalas*, and mantras, to free us from demons, and* ḍākinīs*, and to neutralize poison, etc., is known supersensibly.*
> *If the sages, eagles* (garuḍa)*, etc., did not have stainless direct [perceptual] understanding [of these things] without having heard of them or inferring them [prior], then how could they be taught?*[157]

Again, Śāntarakṣita seems to be drawing on a long Indian tradition of arguing yogic perception is necessary for the authorship of scripture. There has to be someone that saw these things directly without having heard about them or inferred their existence prior (*śruta-anumāna-bhinna*). This again relates to the understanding that the epistemic instruments rely on perception. Without perception, there can be no inference. Śabara argues that scripture can be valid without the corroboration of perception, but every rebuttal we have examined denies this possibility. Śāntarakṣita says that if we have teachings about the efficacy of these practices—*mudrās*, *maṇdalas*, and mantras—then someone must have had the necessary supersensible insight to develop these practices, without having just heard about them prior, else how could they ever have been created? There would have been no *ur*-perception undergirding their development and thus no base for subsequent teachings about them. We also see Śāntarakṣita draw on eagles (*garuḍa*) as the classical example of remote seeing, to whom Sampāti likened himself in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

In this section we saw Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla defend the cogency of yogic perception against the Mīmāṃsā critique. A few pieces of evidence demonstrate that they are in dialogue with the earlier defenses we examined. (1) Dharmakīrti clearly draws off of *Yogasūtra* 3.25, although he is hesitant to equate this with yogic perception, for reasons

[157] Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:760 v.3451–52.

we discussed earlier. Śāntarakṣita references the example of eagles, which we have seen is a classical example of the remote seeing indicative of yogic perception. (2) Both Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita employ an argument we saw first adumbrated by Vācaspatimiśra: perception undergirds the epistemic warrant of scripture and testimony.[158] If no one was first to perceive those things discussed in scripture, how could they ever have been taught? Without yogic perception, the Mīmāṃsaka has no way to corroborate the authenticity of their scripture. (3) Both Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita center the issue around the perception of supersensible (*atīndriya*) objects. The notion of supersensible object's being imperceptible was first introduced by Śabara. In arguing for their perceptibility, Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita are in a long lineage of thinkers who similarly defend yogic perception against the Mīmāṃsaka conflation of perception with sense perception.

iii. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to trace the intellectual lineage of yogic perception as a type of remote seeing. I centered the discussion on *Yogasūtra* 3.25, which proved to be a recurrent theme in the majority of the texts we explored. I showed that *Yogasūtra* 3.25 likely united two notions of perception that predated it: (1) the possibility of remote seeing as evinced by the example of the vulture Sampāti and (2) the perceptual theory of *prāpyakārin,* which appears equally ancient. Following David White's theory that much of the discussion of yogic perception marshals *prāpyakārin* theory, I traced its presence in yogic perception

[158] Of course, it must be noted that for the Nyāya school, testimony (*śabda*) is a distinct epistemic instrument, while for Dharmakīrti and Dignāga, it is reducible to inference.

literature. While indeed there are notions of yogic perception that seem extramissive, such as consciousness or the soul exiting the body, it is not clear that this is appropriately *prāpyakārin,* which technically concerns only the physical sense organs. There was no clear presence of this theme in Nyāya sources. Buddhism may also reflect notions of light spreading (the divine eye) or luminous consciousness extending outward, but it is unclear if this is piggybacking off of any *prāpyakārin* notions, especially since Buddhist explicitly reject *prāpyakārin* as a theory. I muse on how *prāpyakārin* theory may still be working "in the background" of Buddhist thinking in chapter six. More importantly, all of the schools we discussed accommodate some form of remote seeing, which—even if they do not mention yogic perception by name—invariably include a central cluster of related ideas, such as the ability to see the objects described in *Yogasūtra* 3.25 and the soul, the ability to do so without the senses but directly with the mind, and thereby the ability to read others' minds.

In the second part, I demonstrated how these discussions surrounding yogic perception as remote seeing appear to be a response to a Mīmāṃsā critique of yogic perception. The Mīmāṃsakas had good reason to be threatened by remote seeing yogis. If they could see as far as heaven, the Vedas would no longer be the sole authority in such manners. Thus, they also cite *Yogasūtra* 3.25, only to deny that such objects are perceptible—they are only described in the Vedas. Subsequent authors offered rebuttals. These mainly included an attempt to demonstrate that although the objects of *Yogasūtra* 3.25 may be supersensible, they are not imperceptible. This is because they are objects, and all objects must be percepts. We also saw a common strategy to argue that scripture depends on perception. That is, without perception of the objects scripture discusses, that scripture could

never have been written, nor its validity corroborated. By undermining yogic perception, the Mīmāṃsaka undermines the validity of their own scripture.

The next chapter, chapter two, will actually build off of the themes we have discussed here. We will see that the argument that remote seeing is possible becomes further proof of omniscience. Thus, omniscience is substantiated as the pinnacle of yogic perception's ability to see remote objects—the ability to see all objects.

Chapter 2: Yogic Perception as Omniscience

In the previous chapter, I discussed formulations of yogic perception as a type of remote seeing. We saw that this characterization was not localized to any single tradition or time period. Rather, it was a repeated intertextual theme. This chapter explores a closely related description of yogic perception as the means by which one gains knowledge of all objects, or omniscience. It appears in many texts that yogic perception *qua* omniscience is an extension of the logic of remote seeing. That is, if yogic perception has the capacity to see distant and occluded objects, then the ability to see *all* objects is merely the ultimate form of remote seeing, where no object is too distant or too deeply hidden. However, this is not the only connotation of omniscience attributed to yogic perception. Instead of literal knowledge of everything, omniscience can also mean having the knowledge necessary for liberation. Which type of omniscience is afforded by yogic perception is a matter of debate in these texts. This is further complicated by the fact that sometimes the knowledge necessary for liberation is not at all associated with omniscience, even in cases when yogic perception is still considered instrumental in gaining it. I will treat yogic perception's capacity for spiritual insight in chapter three. This chapter will focus more squarely on mentions of yogic perception's capacity for "omniscience (*sarvajña*)," regardless of its many connotations.

My research in this chapter is in many ways an extension of the insights of Sara McClintock and Jeson Woo. Both authors identify Śāntarakṣita (725–788 CE) and Kamalaśīla (740-795 CE) as the *locus classicus* for Buddhist descriptions of yogic perception as omniscience. McClintock gives a lucid analysis of how Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla build

off of Dharmakīrti's description of yogic perception in their theorization of omniscience.[159] This assessment is echoed in an article by Jeson Woo, where he argues, "Dignāga and Dharmakīrti counted *yogipratyakṣa* as a type of direct perception, but neither of them gave us even a hint what they thought about the relationship between the bodhisattva path and their epistemology."[160] Kamalaśīla, by contrast, is said to have filled in the gaps: "Here, the underlined passage [in Kamalaśīla's text] […] is based on Dharmakīrti's definition of yogic perception […] We can therefore confirm that Kamalaśīla intentionally adopted the definition of *yogipratyakṣa* in the context of the All-Knowing Buddha."[161]

Woo and McClintock are undoubtedly correct that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla offer the earliest explicit description of yogic perception in the capacity of omniscience. However, there are undoubtedly precursors. This chapter will explore those in chronological order. We will also go beyond Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, exploring how debates concerning yogic perception and omniscience were criticized by Vācaspatimiśra (c. 900-980 CE), this time in the capacity of a Mīmāṃsaka, and later defended by Jñanasrimitra (fl. 975-1025 CE), a famed gatekeeper at the great monastic instution of Vikramaśilā.

i. Simultaneous Yogic Perception

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159 McClintock, "Knowing All Through Knowing One: Mystical Communion or Logical Trick in the Tattvasaṃgraha and Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā."

160 Toru Funayama, "Kamalaśīla's View on Yogic Perception and the Bodhisattva Path," in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis: Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakirti Conference, Vienna, August 23-27, 2005*, ed. Helmut Krasser (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 100. Of course, I argue they do give *some* hints, as discussed in my introduction.

161 Funayama, 105.

A key feature of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's characterization of omniscience is not only the ability to see any given object at will but to see all objects simultaneously (*yugapad*). Kamalaśīla specifically defends simultaneous omniscience at length against a Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor.[162] This debate about whether yogis can perceive many objects simultaneously, however, appears much older. Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana (c. 450 CE), our earliest extant commentator on the *Nyāyasūtras,* situates the discussion of simultaneous cognition in the context of the yogis' ability to inhabit many bodies simultaneously. Commenting on *Nyāyasūtra* 3.1.19, Vātsyāyana argues:

> *Objects are not cognized simultaneously* (yugapad)*, but [when they are] it cannot be done by the [normal] mind.*
>
> The "but" means that, on the other hand, yogis *do* know objects simultaneously. Indeed, when their powers become manifest and free of the sense organs, yogis produce several bodies (*nirmaya*) that each have those internal sense organs, within each of which there is simultaneous knowledge of those knowable objects. And this could only be if there is an omnipresent knower and not a localized mind.[163]

In a Buddhist context, the powers that Vātsyāyana describes here are more commonly (but not exclusively) associated with Buddhas, specifically the ability to create many emanations of oneself, a special aspect of the Buddha known as the emanation body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*).[164] But more pertinent to the discussion at hand: Vātsyāyana argues that the yogi has simultaneous cognition of objects because their magically emanated bodies, each with their own senses, can cognize different objects at once. Vātsyāyana does not relate this omniscience specifically. However, it is of note that debates on whether yogis, omniscient or

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[162] Sara L. McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 182.

[163] Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 185.

[164] The notion of yogic perception's ability to emanate several bodies may in fact be derivative of the idea of yogis' ability to possess several bodies simultaneously. See White, *Sinister Yogis*, 151 ff.

not, perceive their objects simultaneously has a long pedigree in the Indian milieu. It is not unlikely that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are tapping into this debate when they pose the same question of omniscient yogis.

ii. Bhartṛhari on Practical Omniscience

In the previous chapter, I discussed Dharmakīrti's differentiation between practical omniscience (*upayuktasarvajña*), knowledge sufficient for liberation, in contrast to omniscience in the sense of literally knowing everything (*sarvasarvajña*).[165] It is in this context that Dharmakīrti makes his quip about vultures: "If you are concerned with the instruments for remote seeing, come, we will approach the vultures!"[166] The even broader context of this quip is Dharmakīrti's analysis of what it means for the Buddha to be an epistemic warrant. He points out that some think that in order to be a valid teacher, one must literally know everything. Dharmakīrti argues that this type of omniscience affords the disciple no special benefit: "What use is it to us if he knows the number of insects [in the world]?"[167] Instead, omniscience is only useful to the degree it show us what we must do to become liberated: "[The teacher] is an epistemic warrant for knowledge of how to abandon what is to be given up and to seek was it to be taken up, not for knowledge of [literally]

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[165] Going forward, I use "omniscience" or "total omniscience" in its more widely understood sense of literally knowing everything, while "practical omniscience" denotes the qualified type of omniscience denoted by knowledge sufficient for liberation.

[166] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.33; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 108b.

[167] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.32; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 108b.

everything."[168] It is at this point that Dharmakīrti makes his quip about vultures: if you want to be able to know every detail about the universe, whether it will help toward liberation or not, go study with the vultures![169]

Dharmakīrti's verses establish two things: (1) he demonstrates the connection between remote seeing and total omniscience of all things via the example of vultures. (2) He contrasts practical omniscience from literal knowledge of everything in that the former concerns knowledge of "what to take up" and "what to give up." We will explore omniscience *qua* (1) in subsequent sections. But it appears that (2), knowledge of what we ought to pursue and abandon, was attributed to yogic insight even before Dharmakīrti. The example comes from the grammarian Bhartṛhari (c. 5th century CE), whose influence on Dignāga's epistemology is well-documented.[170] Dignāga was especially taken with Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya,* from which he developed much of his theory of universals. But another passage from this work is particularly pertinent to our discussion here:

> *The mind that knows the past and future is unafflicted.*
> *It is clear and manifest and not distinct from perception.*
> *Supersensible objects* (atīndriya) *exist but are not intelligible* (asaṃvedya) *[to normal people]. [But] they are seen with the* ṛṣi*'s eye, whose words are not contradicted by inference.*
> *How can someone else invalidate that person, who, rooted in perception,*
> *Cannot doubt his own knowledge he has seen for himself?*

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168 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.33; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 108b. See these verses discussed in Richard P. Hayes, "On the Buddha's Authority: A Translation of the Pramāṇsiddhi Chapter of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika" (Unpublished Manuscript, 2004), 35–38.

169 Based on Dharmakīrti's remarks here, there is some debate about whether he understands omniscience as restricted to this practical sense or also as the capacity to know all things. For a lucid summary of this scholarship, see McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 135–38.

170 For a summary of this scholarship, see Harold G. Coward and K. Kunjunni Raja, *The Philosophy of the Grammarians* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 27–28, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400872701.

There is little use for commentaries for men and untouchables,
When [they can say] these pair of sentences: "This is meritorious," and "This is sinful."
Scripture is like consciousness: it goes on uninterrupted.
The person devoted to it will not be contradicted by logicians.[171]

Here we see common elements of the arguments we explored in chapter one. There is an assertion—again, likely contra the Mīmāṃsaka—that supersensible objects (*atīndriya*) can be perceived by spiritual elites, in this case, *ṛṣis.*[172] These include, just as before, cognition of both the past and future. Again, we see the common rebuttal to the Mīmāṃsaka that supersensible objects are not beyond perception even though they are beyond the senses. Furthermore, Bhartṛhari, like our chapter-one authors, agrees that supersensible seers are primary to the text. That is, the scriptures are a record of what one realizes in yogic perception. If one knows directly what one ought do and ought not do, "there is little use for commentaries."[173] This position also seems reflected in Dignāga's description of yogic perception we explored in the introduction, where he defined it as "yogis see just the object, independently from the guru's instructions."[174] Bhartṛhari and Dignāga seem both to

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171 Wilhelm Rau, trans., *Versuch einer vollständigen deutschen Erstübersetzung nach der kritischen Edition der Mūla-Kārikās* (Mainz: Steiner, 2000), 12 v.1.36; Ferrante, "On Ṛṣis and Yogins: Immediate and Mediate Extraordinary Cognitions in Early Brahmanical Thought," 51.

172 As I mentioned in chapter one, although ṛṣi cognition is considered distinct from yogic perception, there is undeniable overlap and fuzziness. See Sjödin, "The Girl who Knew her Brother would be Coming Home: Ārṣajñāna in Praśastapādabhāṣya, Nyāyakandalī and Vyomavatī."

173 As an aside, it is perhaps interesting to note that this construal of the text—as secondary to direct experience—its antithetical to Derrida's notion of the written text as primary. Derrida seeks to reconceive the text as not the report of a direct experience—such that the spoken word is primary and the written text a mere facsimile—but as generative and world-disclosing, the creation of a discourse space rather than merely the report of some truth *post facto*. Jacques. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Of course, these religious traditions would resist a deconstructionist agenda: rather than subscribe to a postmodernist worldview in which truth is a superimposition created by the text, these religious traditions understand spiritual discourse as authentic to the degree they capture a state of affairs, truths which transcend discourse. According to Derrida, by contrast, nothing is beyond the text.

174 Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments*

predicate yogic perception on independence, a realization of the truth that obviates the need for instruction from others. Bhartṛhari also seems to offer the Mīmāṃsaka an olive branch: although such yogis no longer depend on scripture, their insights will always confirm scripture. There seems to be a sense in which yogis defend scripture against logicians (*hetuvāda*): because no amount of sophistry can undermine what they have seen directly, yogis remain devoted to scripture (*āgama-upāsina*).

Indeed, these verses from Bhartṛhari would have been appropriate for part two of chapter one, where I focused on common rebuttals to the Mīmāṃsaka rejection of yogic perception. But there is an additional flavor here that appears simpatico with Dharmkīrti's assessment that yogic perception is uniquely involved in practical omniscience. In chapter one, the discussion of supersensible objects orbited the question of heaven, whether yogic perception affords knowledge of those remote *places* described in scripture. Here, supersensibility more appropriately concerns those actions that will lead to liberation. Just as Dharmakīrti argues that—in contrast to remote seeing—the essence of the teacher's wisdom encompasses "what to take up" and "what to give up," Bhartṛhari construes yogic perception in terms of knowledge of what is meritorious (*puṇya*) and what is sinful (*pāpa*). To be sure, Bhartṛhari's assessment here also mirrors the discussion in chapter one of yogic perception's ability to perceive *dharma* and *adharma*—again, what we should do in light of metaphysical truths. Thus, I am not arguing that Bhartṛhari is *sui generis* in ascribing this ability to yogis. Rather, this serves as a data point to illustrate that Dharmakīrti, and later Buddhists, were likely drawing on earlier connotations of yogic perception's soteriological function when he

and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā, 3; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇasamuccaya, Tshad ma kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," 2a.

emphasized this aspect over its supposed feat of knowing a plethora of hidden, but quotidian, objects. This predecessor, reflected in Bhartṛhari, is the understanding of yogic perception as able to see moral objects: what is to be avoided and pursued. In Dharmakīrti's works, however, this becomes elevated to a discussion of omniscience, the distinction between practical omniscience, akin to knowledge of *dharma,* and total omniscience, akin to a superlative remote seeing.[175]

iii. Dignāga on Total Omniscience

Although Bhartṛhari and Dharmakīrti seem to emphasize yogic perception in the capacity of practical omniscience and seem to downplay its role in total omniscience, this is not to say with certainty, however, that there are no Buddhist texts contemporary to Bhartṛhari and Dharmakīrti with any construal of yogic perception as literal knowledge of all things. It is possible that even Dignāga described yogic perception's capacity for total omniscience. This characterization is not found in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya,* the *locus classicus* of Buddhist articulations of yogic perception, which we explored in the introduction. The text we will consider is the *Yogāvatāra,* a short text attributed to Dignāga, translated here in full:

> *Having listened to vast scriptures and being certain about ultimate reality,*
> *Sitting on a comfortable cushion with devotion, a yogi must begin yogic [practice].*
> *There is no subject and object, nor is there neither: "There is just me engaging in nirvana." Knowing the many snares of conceptualizations, the mind engages in meditation.*[176]

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[175] For a discussion of both of these types of omniscience in relationship to yogic perception in the context of Dharmakīrti's work, see Torella, "Observations on Yogipratyakṣa," 475.

[176] The Sanskrit here reads "*manaḥ-samāpattiḥ*," which is ambiguous: mind (*manaḥ*) could either be the object of meditation (*samāpatti*) or the agent which meditates. While the former gives a much more reflexive flavor, which, as we will see, is favored by some theorists, the Tibetan (*yid ni mnyam par gzhag*) opts for the latter, which is how I've rendered it here.

After having observed all knowable objects, stop engaging with appearances.[177] *One must then investigate the body with the vajra gnosis of reality.*[178]

Nonconceptuality is free from all mental images and the distinction of beginning and ending, just like how the thousand, stainless lights [of the sun] rise in the entire sky.

[Yogis] see their own mind, the sole appearance remaining, itself unborn from the beginning. They observe exactly that by which they see—[the mind].

That nonperception is mindless, the gnosis of reality, and the culmination. Thus, by practicing ignorance, one obtains the cessation of what was known.

Endowed with these [qualities], the yogi behaves in accord with the various goals of others. The yogi stays in the perfected nature continually for the time intended.

The body, like a vajra, is unperturbed by afflictions, maras, etc. And therein, [the yogi] is always engaged in the perfection of wisdom.

They have many of those other powers that are attained: samādhi*, yoga, generosity, passion, etc.*[179]

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[177] There are several discrepancies between the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the text in general. I have consulted both but prioritize the former. Here, for example, the Sanskrit reads "*jñeyaṃ vilokya sakalaṃ mā yogameva nirbhāsam*." While "knowable objects (*jñeyam*)" is in the singular, this is still likely "all knowledge objects" when construed with "*sakalam*,"since "*jñeya*" is usually treated as an abstract known. Kamalaśīla also uses the term "*jñeyam sakalam*" in this fashion to denote omniscience, illustrating perhaps another through line between Dignāga and Kamalaśīla. McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 241. My reading is also attested in Radhika Herzberger, *Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists: An Essay in the Development of Fifth and Sixth Century Indian Thought* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1986), 189; Paramananda Sharma, trans., *Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2004), 33. The Sanskrit, therefore, seems to emphasize both omniscience (*jñeyaṃ vilokya sakalaṃ*) as well as spiritual insight qua the absence of appearances (*mā yogaṃ nirbhāsam*). It is possible that in the Sanskrit the *nirbhāsam* is an adverb of *vilokya*. If this is the case, then the Sanskrit would render something like, "Having seen all knowable objects as [fallacious] appearances…" But there are a couple problems with this reading. First, it takes no account of the *mā*, which is a negation particle. Secondly, the verse's *anuṣṭubh* rhythm forms a natural break between the gerund *vilokya* and the second *pāda*. While it is not impossible to read the *nirbhāsam* construing with *vilokya* across *pādas*, it is thus more natural to read these as separate subclauses. Thus, "Having seen all knowable objects, stop engaging (*mā yogam*) in appearances (*nirbhāsam*)." This reading also anticipates the section on nonconceptuality in subsequent verses. We will also see this division of yogic perception with and without appearances in the Tibetan sources. The Tibetan translation, by contrast, does render this verse to denote seeing things as (false) appearances, but does not make any gesture toward omniscience: "Seeing all knowable objects as if an illusion or a city of spirts (*sgyu ma dri za'i grong khyer lta bu ni/ /shes bya ma lus rnam par bltas nas su/ /*)." The Tibetan appears to crib from the Laṅkāvatārasūtra in citing the analogy of "a city of spirits." 'Gos chos grub, "*Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Lang kar gshegs pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, Toh. no. 107, vol. Mdo sde, ca (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 260a.

[178] This gesture toward yogic meditation on the body may be part of a longstanding tradition which considers yogic meditation as gaining facility with the ability to change one's bodily size. See David Gordon White, "On the Magnitude of the Yogic Body," in *Yogi Heroes and Poets: Histories and Legends of the Naths*, ed. David N. Lorenzen and Adrián. Muñoz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 79–90.

[179] Janārdana Pāṇḍeya, Thākur Sain Negī, and Wangchuk Dorje, eds., "Yogāvatāraḥ," *Dhih: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Project* 4 (1987): 21–22; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Yogāvatāra, Rnal 'byor la

In many ways, this text suggests the reverse of the process advocated by Prajñākaragupta in the last chapter. There, in hedging Dharmakīrti's quip about vultures, Prajñākaragupta argued that one first gains insight into the nature of reality and then later extends their insight to all objects once they obtain omniscience: "Those *great* beings with remote seeing who have cultivated complete omniscience first perfected their partial knowledge, [that is], they cultivated [insight] into reality."[180] Here, however, one first gains omniscience—"seeing all objects (*jneyaṃ salakṃ vilokya*)"—only to supersede that knowledge by transcending appearances entirely, seemingly the culmination of insight into reality (see n177). There is also an undeniable idealist Yogācāra flavor to this text, where these realizations occur through a complete understanding of one's own mind.

The *Yogāvatāra's* description of yogic perception appears different than what we encountered in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. There are some reasons to suspect that Dignāga is not its true author.[181] Nevertheless, both Radhika Herzberger[182] and Vittorio van Bijlert[183]

'jug pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4539, vol. Sems tsam, hi (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 126a–27.

180 Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 76; 'Phags pa shes rab, "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," 1744, 46a.

181 The original Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript employs Old Newari, which dates from the 11th century. The manuscript had two more texts written on it, Aryadeva's *Svādhiṣṭhānaprabheda* and Anaṅgavajra's *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi*, both Tantric works. The Sanskrit also attributes the *Yogāvatāra* to Nāgārjuna. Pāṇḍeya, Negī, and Dorje, "Yogāvatāraḥ," 21. This all suggests that this text was understood by the editors of its Sanskrit recension to be within the orbit of the Ārya school of the *Guhyasamājatantra* during the eight century CE. On Āryadeva and Anaṅgavajra respectively, see Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 22–44; Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Two Vajrayāna Works*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1929), xi–xiii. Nevertheless, the Tibetan text attributed to Dignāga in the Tibetan Tangyur is undoubtedly a translation of a text similar, if not exact, to this Sanskrit version. Its Tibetan Dege recension was translated by Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055 CE) and Dharmaśrībhadra. This puts the *terminus post quem* of the Sanskrit as roughly contemporary to the Tibetan version.

182 Herzberger, *Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists: An Essay in the Development of Fifth and Sixth Century Indian Thought*, 165.

183 Vittorio A. van Bijlert, *Epistemology and Spiritual Authority: The Development of Epistemology and Logic in the old Nyāya and the Buddhist School of Epistemology with an Annotated Translation of Dharmakīrti's*

insist that this text is not only authored by Dignāga, but that it exemplifies Dignāga's general theoretical framework. Andrea Arci also notes a commentary on this text by Dhamendra, who was allegedly a contemporary of Dignāga.[184] Furthermore, Hajime Nakamura explains, "The teaching of yoga as was set forth in Dignāga's *Yogāvatāra* was elaborated on in Ye-śes-zla-ba (Jñānacandra?)'s *Yogācāryā-bhāvanā-tātparyārthanirdeśa* and and Ye-śes-sñiṅ-po (Jñānagarbha?)'s *Yoga-bhāvanāmārga* and finally culminates in Kamalasila's *Bhāvanāyogāvatāra*."[185] I explore these latter three meditation texts in the next chapter. There, I delve more into this Yogācārin lineage of yogic perception theory, as well as its continuity with Dignāga's text here.

But on the question of omniscience, it serves to show how Dignāga's thinking here closely resembles another one of Kamalaśīla's text. There, Kamalaśīla's gesture toward yogic perception as a type of omniscience becomes more explicit and extends Dignāga's description in the *Yogāvatāra*. This hails from Kamalaśīla's most well-known text on meditation, the *Bhāvanākrama.* Kamalaśīla writes:

> Through the reification of existence, etc., there is a pervasion of that error in [the cognition of] all things. When that is destroyed, there is destruction of this error in [the cognition of] all things. And thus, the obscurations to knowledge are completely destroyed by [the destruction of that reification], because those obscurations are characterized by this error. When the obscurations to knowledge are destroyed, since it is no longer hindered, just like a ray of sun in a cloudless sky, yogic perception, the light of knowledge, spreads out everywhere unimpeded. In the same way, consciousness is naturally luminous toward objects. But even though [consciousness] is connected [with those objects], [consciousness] cannot illuminate them due to

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Pramāmavārttika II (Pramāṇasiddhi) vv. 1-7 (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1989), 86n13.

184 Andrea Acri, *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons* (Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), 76.

185 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, 1st Indian ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 281; Also see Acri, *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons*, 76.

> the hindrance of true existence. If there is no hindrance, since one obtains a special and inconceivable power, why shouldn't all objects be illuminated in this way? Thus, omniscience is gained through complete knowledge of all objects. In that way, [omniscience understands] the form of [both] conventional and ultimate objects. Thus, to gain omniscience, this destruction of obscurations is the supreme path.[186]

Both Dignāga and Kamalaśīla give the same assessment of the obstacles to omniscience and the manner of their eradication. The mind is naturally luminous, and this luminosity is prevented by types of ignorance, either notions of duality or ontological reification. Once these obstacles have completely dissolved through extensive meditation, the mind naturally and spontaneously knows all things. Also striking in these two texts is the use of sun rays[187] as analogy for omniscient yogic perception. Both texts also seem to construe this omniscience as only penultimate to a realization that is beyond appearances. Elsewhere in the *Bhāvanākrama,* Kamalaśīla explains

> Say [to yourself], "There is nothing to think about." Knowledge regarding existing [objects] should be discarded. Because that [knowledge] is the root of seeing existing [objects], then that supreme worldly knowledge, which belongs to that perfect gnosis (*samyak-jñāna*), should be discarded. When that is discarded, omniscience [of all objects in] all [their] aspects (*sarva-ākāra-jñātā*) should be discarded.[188]

Just as Dignāga advocates that the yogi contemplate that "There is just me engaging in nirvana," so too does Kamalaśīla instruct the yogi to verbally reinforce (*bruvat*) that "There is nothing to think about." From there, both authors also argue that this omniscience must be overcome with appearanceless wisdom. As Kamalaśīla discusses slowly discarding one's

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186 Gyaktsen Namdol, ed., *Bhāvanākramaḥ of Ācārya Kamalaśīla* (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1984), 187.

187 It is also notable that omniscience here is likened to sun rays that extend without obstacle, much like the *Atthirāgasutta* we explored in chapter one, where wisdom was also associated with unobstructed sun rays. Again, there seems to be a logic here that extends that of remote seeing. If remote seeing is afforded by powerful projective rays, then omniscience is simply an instance of these rays' being completely unobstructed.

188 Namdol, *Bhāvanākramaḥ of Ācārya Kamalaśīla*, 231.

acquired knowledge of existing objects (*prajñā pratikṣiptā*), including omniscience (*sarv-ākāra-jñatā pratikṣiptā*), Dignāga argues that eventually "one obtains the cessation of what was known (*prajñā-vedita-nirodham āpnoti*)*."*

It is not impossible, then, that Dignāga the Yogācārin is coming through the *Yogāvatāra* while the Sautrāntika Dignāga of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*—who inspired Dharmakīrti's discussion of yogic perception in the *Pramāṇavārttika*—was more circumspect in his discussion of yogic perception. While in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* yogic perception is equated with spiritual insight into the nature of reality, here, Dignāga equates it with full-blown omniscience and final realization beyond appearances. If this is so, then Kamalaśīla's formulation of yogic perception is highly indebted to Dignāga. Even if the author of the *Yogāvātara* and the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* are not the same Dignāga, the *Yogāvātara,* whoever its author, seems an undeniable predecessor to Kamalaśīla's construal of yogic perception *qua* omniscience (see n177).

iv. Jains on Total Omniscience

There is also some evidence that other Indian scholars understood Dignāga to be describing omniscience in his formulation of yogic perception. Śāntarakṣita's Digambara Jain contemporary, Akalaṅka (720-780 CE), who was famed for his works on logic, criticizes Dignāga's theory of yogic perception directly in his *Tattvārtharājavārtika.*

> *If [the Buddhist] says that yogic perception transcends the senses* (atīndriya)*, then this is wrong because it has an unreal object.*
> It is thought that yogis have perceptual knowledge that transcends the senses as well as the conceptuality of scripture, and therefore *he perceives all objects* [emphasis added]. And it is said [in Dignaga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.6], "Yogis see just the object, independently from the guru's instructions," but

> this is not so. Why? Because the object is unreal. [As it says in Dignaga's *Nyāyamukha*], "Perception is what occurs for each of the senses (*akṣam akṣaṃ prati vartate*)." Thus, there is no such object for the yogi since the senses do not exist [in yogic perception].[189]

Akalaṅka's criticism here is riff on a theme we saw in chapter one. That is, since yogic perception perceives supersensible objects (*atīndriya*), it cannot be limited to the senses. Thus, we saw defenders of yogic perception in the previous chapter argue against Mīmāṃsakas that perception is not coextensive with sensory perception. However, Dignāga, Akalaṅka argues, has construed perception in a manner that does not allow him to accept non-sensory perception, since he defines perception in his *Nyāyamukha* as "that which occurs for each of the senses (*akṣam akṣaṃ prati vartate*)."[190]

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189 Mahendra Kumar Jain, trans., *Tattvarthavartik: With Hindi Translation* (Varanasi: Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha, 1953), 54.

190 Interestingly, Candrakīrti (600-650 CE) makes this same argument against Dignāga. He argues that perception cannot be restricted to sense organs in the way Dignāga construes in the *Nyāyamukha* because perception is defined in terms of its object, the percept, and not in terms of perception's instrument: "[Dignāga], who derives the word 'perception' as 'what occurs for each of the senses (*akṣam akṣaṃ prati vartate*)' [in the *Nyāyamukha*], does not give a suitable derivation (*vyutpatti*), since [perceptual] knowledge does not come from an [exclusively] sensory object, but from the object itself." MacDonald, *In Clear Words: The Prasannapadā, Chapter One 1: Introduction, Manuscript Description, Sanskrit Text*, 2015, 1:269; Anne MacDonald, trans., *In Clear Words: The Prasannapadā, Chapter One 1: Introduction, Manuscript Description, Sanskrit Text*, vol. 2 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akad. der Wiss., 2015), 276. In other words, Candrakīrti understands perception as defined not by the instrument—i.e., the senses, which is too restrictive a definition—but by the *percept*. This definition, we might say, gives a phenomenological description of perception based on its apparent immediacy in contrast to an epistemological analysis of the structures that allow perception to occur. If Dignāga really made this foible, it is fairly egregious and a major problem for taxonomy of perception, since sense perception is only one of the four types of perception he recognizes.

Writing roughly in the same period as Śāntarakṣita, Dharmottara's (740-800) commentary on the *Nyāyabindu* of Dharmakīrti reveals this critique as something of a strawman. He states that this criticism confuses an etymological explanation of perception—literally *prati-akṣa,* before the eyes—with its definition. "If it were the case that perception was characterized solely in terms of percepts' (*āśrita*) being dependent on the senses (*akṣa*), then one would have to say that sense consciousness alone was perception, and not the mind, etc., [since it is the mind that perceives]. [Take the sentence] 'The cow goes.' It is derived (*vyutpādita*) in relation to the action of going. The word 'cow,' [however], signifies (*pravṛtti-nimittī-karoti*) cow-ness instantiated in a singular object characterized by the action of going. Likewise, the [presence of the thing denoted by] the word 'cow' is substantiated when the cow is coming and going." Dalasukha Bhāī Mālavaṇiyā, ed., *Paṇḍita Durveka Miśra's Dharmottarapradīpa: Being a Subcommentary on Dharmottara's Nyāyabinduṭīkā, a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1971), 39.

The relationship between Dharmottara's cow example and the definitional question of perception is not immediately clear, but he seems to use it as an example to differentiate derivations (*vyutpatti*) and

For our discussion, it is of particular note that Akalaṅka equates yogic perception with omniscience—i.e., perceiving all objects (*sarva-arthān pratyakṣa*). Furthermore, he argues that Dignāga's (by now familiar) verse in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* intends this yogic perception *qua* omniscience. *Prima facie,* it is unclear whether "all objects (*sarva-artha*)" refers to discrete, perceptible objects, or "all meanings," as in that the yogi understands every meaning of the scriptures. Indeed, the Buddhist Śubhagupta (720-780) uses the term "*sarva-artha"* to denote textual meaning, arguing against a Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor that direct insight into "all meanings" is possible and thus proves practical omniscience, the realization sufficient for liberation.[191] However, Professor Mahendra Kumar Jain's (1938-2017) Hindi "translation" of this text argues that Akalaṅka does intend all objects as in perceptible objects. I put "translation" in scare quotes because Professor Jain's rendering of the text is much more interpretive and expository then a conventional translation and does not preserve the ambiguity in the original Sanskrit.[192] However, his analysis is still illuminating. He comments on the section translated above:

> However, [according to Buddhists] objects cannot arise without being self-caused, caused by something else, or both. [Furthermore], according to their

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signification (*pravṛtti-nimitta*). While the sentence "the cow goes" is a derivation of going, the word "cow" signifies the cow itself, which is characterized by going. Therefore, just as when one says "the cow goes" one is referring to the action of going (*gamana-kriyā*), and not just the cow, so too does "being before the eyes" (*prati-akṣa*) refer to the action of perception as oppose to those eyes alone. In short, the charge is that Candrakīrti (and Akalaṅka) misunderstand what Dignāga is saying. Dignāga is not claiming that the eyes are the sole locus of perception but is citing the eyes' ability to cognize objects as derivative of perception. Similarly, one can illustrate coming and going through the example of a cow without claiming that cows are the only things that do so. Dharmottara's commentator, Durvekamiśra (970-1030), confirms that Dharmottara's goal is to expand the *denfiendum* of "perception" to include "mental, reflexive, and yogic perception"—i.e., the three types of non-sense perception accepted by Buddhists. Mālavaṇiyā, 39. Also see Yūichi Kajiyama, trans., *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy: An Annotated Translation of the Tarkabhāṣā of Mokṣākaragupta* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1998), 29.

191 Saccone, "Of Authoritativeness and Perception: The Establishment of an Omniscient Person (Against the Mīmāṃsakas)," 463.

192 Professor Jain calls his translations "interpretative translations" for this very reason. Mahendra Kumar Jain, *Affirmative Reasoning: Nay, The Jain Nyay(a)* (Hira Publications, 2007), 7–8.

> commentaries, it is problematic [to posit] universals and particulars as being either singular or multiple. For these reasons, mere objects cease to exist [when one has gained gnosis]. In gnosis alone, there is no percept. Thus, knowledge of all objects is not possible for the yogi.[193]

In other words, Dignāga claims both that yogis have spiritual insight into the nature of reality and knowledge of all discrete objects. But these two realizations are mutually contradictory, since a realization of reality vitiates external objects. It is a bit odd that Professor Jain brings Madhyamaka thinkers to bear on Dignāga's formulation of yogic perception. Specifically, he cites Nāgārjuna's (c. 150-250 CE) argument in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* that things cannot be caused by themselves, other things, or both,[194] as well as Śāntarakṣita's famed argument that no entity can be either singular or multiple.[195] These arguments comprise two of five main arguments recognized across Tibetan literature as Madhyamaka arguments for emptiness—the "rejection of four possibilities for causation" (*mu bzhi skye ba'i gtan tshigs*) and the "neither-one-nor many argument" (*gcig du 'bral ba'i gtan tshigs*). This seems an affront to our modern doxographic sentiments that sharply distinguish Madhyamaka from Pramāṇavāda.[196] On the other hand, if the *Yogāvatāra* is in fact authored by Dignāga, Jain appears to give a fair characterization of Dignāga. That is, yogic omniscience is vitiated by appearanceless wisdom (*jñeyaṃ vilokya sakalaṃ mā yogameva nirbhāsam*).

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193 Jain, *Tattvarthavartik: With Hindi Translation*, 301–2.

194 Richard Mahoney and Jan Willem de Jong, eds., *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās of Nāgārjuna: Sanskrit Text* (Oxford: Indica et Buddhica Publishers, 2003), v.1.1.

195 Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Madhyamakālaṃkārakārikā, Dbu ma rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3884, vol. Dbu ma, sa (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 53a.

196 On the other hand, Christian Lindtner convincingly illustrates through an examination of Kambala's (fl. 525 CE) *Ālokamālā* that in this period of Buddhist development current with Dignāga, that the works of Nāgārjuna were not seen as comprising a separate school and were considered perfectly in line with what would later be the Yogācāra ultimately championed by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Christian Lindtner, trans., *A Garland of Light: Kambala's Ālokamālā* (Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2003).

Furthermore, if we look at Dignāga how employs the term "*sarva-artha*" in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya,* it is clear that it denotes perceptible objects and not textual meanings. For example:

> *If all objects* (sarva-artha) *[were seen] together [by any one sense faculty], then the consciousness that sees form [could be aware] of different various things [simultaneously], such as sound. But this is refuted [by the fact] that [form and sound are cognized] in quick succession.*
> If all objects could be cognized with [all of] the senses, then the senses could apprehend two different objects, such as form and sound, and give rise to more [than one perceptual object]. But this is not the case, since when there is successive sensory [cognition between sight and, for example], smell, [the eyes] do not see both [the smell and form].[197]

In other words, each sense faculty must sense different objects—the eyes, form; the ears, sound; etc.—independently, else the *absurdum* that one could see smells. Interestingly, the phrase "*sarva-artha"* to denote the different objects of perception has a long history in the Indian intellectual milieu. Dignāga's point here is also found in Vātsyāyana's commentary on the *Nyāyasūtras:* "The senses are not operative in the cognition of all objects (*sarva-artha*), [since they are limited]. It is [only] the mind—the seat of thought and feeling—that has the scope of all [objects]."[198] Dignāga's commentators appear to agree with Vātsyāyana here that it is mental perception that can cognize the various objects of sensory perception together, while each sense perception is restricted to its object. Indeed, sense perceptions feed their individually cognized objects directly to mental perception.[199] Again, this is another reason

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[197] Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti, Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel pa," 25b. I borrow also from Ernst Steinkellner's Sanskrit reconstruction in reading the Tibetan "*kun tu don*" as "*sarva-artha*." Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā*, 21.

[198] Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 15.

[199] Zhihua Yao, "Dignāga and Four Types of Perception," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32, no. 1 (2004): 67; Zhihua Yao, *The Buddhist Theory of Self-Cognition* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 139, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203445280.

why in both schools the mind is the instrument of yogic perception in lieu of the senses, since only it has the capacity to perceive all types of objects.

The use of "all objects (*sarva-artha*)" in these texts thus most often denotes the scope of perception. It is used to emphasize that that scope extends beyond any of the five senses individually or the senses entirely (see n190), again in order to counter the Mīmāṃsā conflation of perception with sense perception. According Akalaṅka, the ability to perceive all objects is indicative of yogic perception, since it is specifically the perception responsible for perceiving supersensible objects. But if is this case, Akalaṅka may not be gesturing to omniscience at all. He may mean "all objects" not to denote every *single* object, but every *type* of percept. That is, Dignāga says that yogic perception can perceive supersensible percepts as well as sensory ones—*all types* of percepts. Akalaṅka counters that Dignāga is unable to substantiate this because he defines perception—yogic or otherwise—in terms of the senses.

If this is what Akalaṅka means, it would have been clearer to say, "he perceives supersensible objects (*atīndriya-arthān pratyakṣam*)" instead of "he perceives all objects (*sarva-arthān pratyakṣam*)."And even if Akalaṅka does mean "all" simply to denote *both* supersensible and sensory objects, then this would still be a compelling interpretative addition to Dignāga's formula. As we explored in the introduction, the Buddhist commentarial tradition of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* interprets verse 1.6 to denote yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths, something supersensory but not a discrete sense object. At minimum, Akalaṅka appears to insist that Dignāga means yogis perceive both sensory objects and their supersensory, ultimate truth. But this ability—to see both discrete objects and their ultimate truth—is, at least according to Dharmakīrti, only reserved for omniscient

Buddhas. We will examine Dharmakīrti's comments on this point forthcoming. But on either interpretation of Akalaṅka here—whether "*sarva-artha*" means literally all objects or every type of percept—he seems to construe Dignāga as understanding yogic perception to encompass greater capabilities then those expressed in verse 1.6 of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. Is Akalaṅka drawing from Dignāga's other texts, maybe the *Yogāvatāra*, in making this exegetical leap?

There are also other texts in which "*sarva-artha*" is defined as the scope of yogic perception in a manner that suggests omniscience. Another example comes from Yāmuna's (967–1038) *Īśvarasiddhi.* Yāmuna is another key figure of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school we explored in the last chapter. He opens this work with a *purvapakṣa,* explaining the position of his Mīmāmṣaka opponent.

> Mīmāṃsakas have said, "It is unsuitable to claim there is a man who is able to see all objects (*sarva-artha*). There is no ground from which there can be definitive epistemic warrant [like perception] for all transcendental (*atipatita-sakala*) [phenomena]. It is also not possible that various [phenomena] could [appear] clearly [at once]. [You say such an ability exists, but then] is it substantiated by perception or something else? If it is perception, is it worldly perception or yogic [perception]?"[200]

Yāmuna's articulation of the Mīmāṃsā position is by now familiar. The Mīmāṃsaka argues that there is no epistemic instrument that can know objects beyond the senses. As we explored in the previous chapter, this is because human knowledge is restricted by the senses. Like Akalaṅka, Yāmuna articulates this issue as primarily concerning objects: "the ability to see all objects (*sarva-artha-darśana-śakti*)." Yāmuna's response to this charge is equally revealing.

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[200] Reinhold Grünendahl and Maximilian Mehner, eds., "Īśvarasiddhi," in *Siddhitraya*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (GRETIL), 2020), v.2.1.

> One gains a [level of] realization that has the power to see all objects, which enjoys [the ability to observe] distant (*viprakarṣa*) and separated (*vyavadhāna*) places, times, and natures. Thus, those objects, along with [the ability] to see them and [to form] a connection with them, should enter one's purview (*gocarayitavya*). This [ability] does not make use of worldly perception, which is directed toward its limited objects by engaging in contact between the sense organ and what is present.[201]

Here again we see a seeming gesture to *Yogasūtra* 3.25, the ability to see distant and separated objects. Here, however, this reference is used to substantiate yogic perception's ability to perceive all objects (*sarva-artha*). It is key to note then that Yāmuna's construal of "*sarva-artha*" does not seem restricted to types of percepts, but denotes discrete objects strewn across space and time. Like his predecessors, Yāmuna confirms that yogic perception owes this ability to the fact it does not depend on contact (*sannikarṣa*) between the sense organ and the object. Yāmuna's logic here thus appears to be simpatico with Bhāsarvajña's in the previous chapter, who also stated that yogis are able to perceive all objects because they have relinquished their reliance on the fourfold contact (*catuṣṭaya-sannikarṣa*) between sense organ and object. Although Yāmuna has no direct connection to Akalaṅka, it is not unlikely that their shared use of "*sarva-artha*" denotes a common understanding of yogic perception as omniscience.

Akalaṅka's text is not the only Jain work in which yogic perception's ability to perceive supersensible objects is equated with omniscience.[202] This connection is even more evident in the works of another Jain thinker, Haribhadrasūri (c. 700–770 CE), another

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[201] Grünendahl and Mehner, v.2.2.

[202] But also see Piotr Balcerowicz, "Extrasensory Perception (yogi-pratyakṣa) in Jainism, Proofs of Its Existence and Its Soteriological Implications," in *Yoga in Jainism*, ed. Christopher Key Chapple (London: Routledge, 2016), 87.

contemporary of Śāntarakṣita. Though incredibly prolific, little is known about Haribhadrasūri's life. The following verses hail from his *Śāstravārtāsamuccaya*:

> *[Spiritual recognition* (pratyabhijñā)*] never is in error, since there is nothing that contradicts its truth. The proof of the existence of yogis also gives no reason for the presence of such [an error].* [538]
>
> *Yogis know objects individually and not in an undifferentiated matter. But there is no proof* (pramā) *for this. This teaching is disseminated in accordance with the merits of the trainee.*[203] [539] *[...]*
>
> *And things like* dharma *and [*adharma*] are perceptible because they are knowable objects that exist, like a jar, or whatever. No reason can be found that proves no one is omniscient.* [593] *[...]*
>
> *We can infer the existence of those who know about supersensible things* (atīndriya) *from scripture. Otherwise, there would be no consolation for the common person.* [596][204]

Again, we see many of the tropes common to our analysis of yogic perception. First, yogis are able to perceive not just spiritual truths—what *dharma* and *adharma* are—but also objects in their individuality (*nānā*). Secondly, Haribhadrasūri argues that spiritual truths and objects are equally perceptible, just like a jar, and thus can be an object of yogic perception. We saw the genesis of this argument in Uddyotakara in the previous chapter, who also used the example of a jar to prove that supersensible objects should be perceptible to yogic perception. Thirdly, and most importantly for this chapter, we again see the charge that the opponent who denies yogic perception is making a fallacious argument from ignorance. In this case, "No reason can be found that proves no one is omniscient." We saw Dharmakīrti

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[203] The meaning is opaque from the Sanskrit alone, but Diksita's Hindi translation is helpful. "The yogi can see various different worldly objects. They do not [see them] in an undifferentiated manner. There is no epistemic warrant on this point [for us]. As for the teachings [on this topic]—that is, the teachings about true yogis in which it is said that [they see] various different worldly objects—these can be given to special disciples and those for whom its suitable, provided one bears in mind [the aptitude of each student]." Jitendra B. Shah, ed., *The Śāstravārtāsamuccaya: With Hindi Translation, Notes and Introduction*, trans. Krsna Kumara Diksita, Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Series 22 (Ahmedabad: Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Bharatiya Sanskriti Vidyamandira, 1969), 172.

[204] Shah, 190–91; Also see Piotr Balcerowicz, "The Authority of the Buddha, The Omniscience of the Jina and the Truth of Jainism," in *Scriptural Authority, Reason and Action: Proceedings of a Panel at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, September 1st-5th 2009*, ed. Vincent Eltschinger and Helmut Krasser (Vienna: Verl. der Österr. Akad. der Wiss., 2013), 357–58.

make this same argument against the Mīmāṃsaka in the last chapter, where he stated that in the absence of proof or disconfirmation, "only refraining from committing [to either the existence or nonexistence of yogic perception] (*anabhiniveśa*) is permissible."[205] But unlike Dharmakīrti, however, Haribhadrasūri squarely centers this agnosticism around the existence of *omniscient* yogis. The stakes of proving yogic perception no longer only concern yogic perception's ability to perceive supersensible objects, but its capacity for omniscient knowledge of all objects.

Thus, we can see that yogic perception's ability to see various distant and otherwise occluded objects is only a conceptual hairbreadth away from omniscience, which simply takes this ability to its logical extreme. Given that Dignāga seemingly suggests yogic perception's capacity for omniscience in the *Yogāvatāra* and that Śāntarakṣita's Jain contemporaries, Akalaṅka and Haribhadrasūri, also equate yogic perception with omniscience, it is not unlikely that yogic perception *qua* omniscience intellectually predates Śāntarakṣita. At the very least, we can see that Śāntarakṣita's formalization of yogic perception as omniscience was not *sui generis* and perhaps made explicit several of the inchoate elements explored here.

v. Dharmakīrti Revisited

Up until this point, we have taken it for granted that Dharmakīrti wanted to distance the spiritual insight indicative of yogic perception from omniscience of all objects, which he

[205] Gnoli, *The Pramanavarttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Autocommentary*, 165; Saccone, "Of Authoritativeness and Perception: The Establishment of an Omniscient Person (Against the Mīmāṃsakas)," 462.

construed as no more than vultures on steroids. However, in another work by Dharmakīrti, the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*, he appears to close this gap, describing yogic perception of other minds as a type of omniscience. As we explored in chapter one, there is a long history of defining yogic perception as a telepathic ability. In the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*, Dharmakīrti discuss this ability in the context of "proving the existence of other minds," the titular goal of the work. He first articulates the position of an interlocutor, who raises a problem concerning yogic perception of others' minds:

> [Objection:] *Even though an inference of another person's mind cannot apprehend the nature [of that other person's mind], let's grant that because [the inference of other minds] is accurate* (*avisaṃvāda, mi slu ba) *that [their existence] is credible* (prāmāṇya). *But how then can one know another's mind perceptually [without an inference]? If [you say that yogis] know the nature of* someone else's *mind directly, then they are apprehending another object. [Thus, they cannot know it perceptually, since if they knew it perceptually, it would be no different from knowing one's* own *mind]. On the other hand, if they don't know it [perceptually], then how can they have [perceptual] knowledge [of it]? Wouldn't we have to say that there is no perceptual apprehension of its nature? And since there is no apprehension, how then could [yogic perception of others' mind] be considered a valid epistemic warrant* (pramāṇa)*?*[206]

Shinya Moriyama draws on similar debates in the *Pramāṇavārttika* to show that this debate in the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* essentially concerns reflexive awareness and its relationship to yogic perception. In Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's system, reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) is the foundation of perception. During perception, the mind first represents the world in the form of mental images (*ākāra*). However, the mind then has to become aware of those images. When this occurs, it is essentially the mind's cognizing itself. Thus, reflexive awareness makes perception possible. However, if the yogi apprehends another person's

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[206] Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Saṃtānāntarasiddhi, Rgyud gzhan grub pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4219, vol. Tshad ma, ce (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 359a; J. S. Negi, ed., *Santānāntarasiddhi kārikā ṭīkā* (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1997), l.87.

mind, then their cognition is not reflexive—i.e., it is of *another's* mind—and so it cannot be said to be known perceptually. On the other hand, if they do not know it perceptually, it cannot be yogic *perception*. Reflexive awareness is also responsible for the affective content of experience. In the case of yogic perception of other minds, this becomes a particularly thorny issue. If yogis perceive other minds through reflexive awareness, then they should also *feel* what others feel. But this would undermine the idea that yogis are beyond afflictive emotions. On the other hand, if yogis do not know other minds with reflexive awareness, then, again, that knowledge cannot be perceptual.[207] This objection is fairly intuitive: what would it mean to *know* someone else's emotions perceptually without *feeling* them oneself?[208]

Dharmakīrti's responsive strategy is essentially to hedge on the meaning of "other minds." The problem presented by the opponent argues that yogic perception of other minds cannot keep two entities discrete: the existence of other minds—the probandum of the work—and their perception. If they are perceivable, they cannot be other. If they are other, they cannot be perceivable. Dharmakīrti answers that even though we conventionally call telepathy perception of "other" minds, ultimately this separation between minds in unsustainable, exactly because all cognition is fundamentally reflexive.

> [Response:] Because [their meditation] is not yet stable and the yogi has yet to destroy the subject-object distinction, [we conventionally say their telepathy] knows "other minds." Thus, it is an accurate epistemic instrument that beholds forms, etc., conventionally. [But] because the mind has yet to be purified (**āśraya-aparivṛtti*),[209] the power of yoga [appears] to produce knowledge of

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207 Shinya Moriyama, "On Self-Awareness in the Sautrāntika Epistemology," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (2010): 261–77.

208 For example, the fictious race of Betazoids on the show *Star Trek: The Next Generation* were telepathic, but at the price of undergoing the very suffering they sensed. This, I argue, is a much more intuitive way to understand telepathy, one which the interlocutor employs here.

209 Although this is not in the Tibetan, it appears in the Central Institute for Higher Studies reconstructed Sanskrit version. Furthermore, I made an emendation to that reconstruction, since it reads "*āśrayāparāvṛteḥ*" and would be better as "*āśrayāparivṛteḥ*." Dharmakīrti often uses this term, "transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparivṛtti*)" to denote the mental transformation that occurs through

> those ["other" minds] in which there is a clear appearance of what seems to be the various mental images [inherent in] other minds. [There are various other examples of when clear mental appearances seem to be external objects.] [For example], through the power of karma and gods, one can see their dreams come true. But even in these cases, [although it appears that one's] awareness [of their dream coming true is the intervention of, say, a god's mind], it is not the case that there is some object [that has been produced] by another mind. [Actually, in all these cases], one is only cognizing the effulgence (*pratibhāsa*) of their own mind, which *resembles* mental images [representing external objects or subjects]. Thus, there is a conventional determination of this [telepathy] as "knowledge of other minds." [Furthermore], because this image, which seems [to represent external phenomena], manifests vividly, it is perception; and because it is accurate, it is known as "an epistemic warrant (*pramāṇa*)." The omniscience of the Bhagavan is inconceivable because he is completely beyond objects of knowledge or linguistic designations. [The Buddha thus knows all objects even though ultimately no object is external to reflexive awareness.][210]

Dharmakīrti's discussion here of yogic telepathy as both vivid and accurate—such that its vividness substantiates it as a perception while its accuracy substantiates it as an epistemic warrant[211]—is almost identical to his definition of yogic perception in his *Pramāṇaviniścaya*.[212] Dharmakīrti bites the bullet that perception of others' minds via reflexive awareness ultimately vitiates their otherness. In fact, he turns this potential *absurdum* into a strength, since Dharmakīrti *cum* the Yogacārin idealist wishes to undermine the cogency of external objects in the final analysis, which reveals all phenomena as reflexive awareness. Even though it is true ultimately that there is no "other" mind—nor

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spiritual practice. Eli Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1997), 82 ff. I am unsure whence the editors of the Sanskrit reconstruction thought to add this term, but it does seem felicitous to Dharmakīrti's overall meaning.

210 Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Saṃtānāntarasiddhi, Rgyud gzhan grub pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," 359a; Negi, *Santānāntarasiddhi kārikā ṭīkā*, l.88.

211 *mngon sum du ni de'i rnam pa'i rjes su byed pa gsal bar snang ba'i phyir dang/ mi slu pa'i tshad ma zhes bya bar 'dod do/*

212 *gsal bar snang zhing rnam par rtog pa med pa phyin ci ma log pa'i yul can gang yin pa de yang mngon sum gyi tshad ma yin no/* Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," 161a–161b; This similarity is also attested in Moriyama, "On Self-Awareness in the Sautrāntika Epistemology," 272.

anything other, actually—Dharmakīrti insists this does not equally undermine his proof of other minds, since the question of other minds is only pertinent at the *conventional* level. Conventionally other minds exist. It is only ultimately that everything is the luminosity of reflexive awareness. The question then becomes how it is that Buddhas can have knowledge of external objects, and thereby be omniscient, if they realize that there are no external objects to cognize. Indeed, Professor Jain understands Akalaṅka to have brought this same charge against Dignāga: how can yogis both know all objects and be in a meditative state which vitiates their existence? Dharmakīrti argues that this ability is inconceivable (*acintya*). The realization of ultimate truth and omniscience of all objects only appear in conflict from our dualistic, concept-bound perspective.

Dharmakīrti never directly equates yogic perception with omniscience here. Because "the [telepathic] yogi has yet to destroy the subject-object distinction," they have yet to gain full omniscience. If we take Dharmakīrti's text here as simpatico with Dignāga's *Yogāvatāra,* this still ignorant stage of yogic perception may denote the point at which yogis see all objects (*jñeyaṃ vilokya sakalaṃ*) but before which they transcend appearances entirely (*mā yogameva nirbhāsam*). The important distinction, however, is where each text places omniscience. Dignāga seems to suggest that the yogi sees all objects and then transcends them. Dharmakīrti seems to suggest that only once one transcends those objects does one become an omniscient buddha and see all of them. However, both texts suggest that the ability to transcend the subject-object duality inherent in external objects occurs through a type of self-cognition. Dignāga asserts that once "[yogis] see their own mind, the sole appearance remaining," they "obtain the cessation of what was known," that is, the cessation of external objects. Dharmakīrti argues that the buddha's omniscience occurs once they have

realized all external objects are really reflexive awareness. Again, the ability to both know external objects (and thus be omniscient) and realize their cessation is inconceivable (*acintya*).

However, even though *some* yogis may not have yet gained this inconceivable omniscience, this does not necessitate that Dharmakīrti intends that omniscience is beyond the pale of yogic perception. Elsewhere, Dharmakīrti explicitly predicates this inconceivable power to yogis. The following section comes from verse 3.532 of the *Pramāṇavārttika* (in italics). This verse was also explored in chapter one, but here I add more of Prajñākaragupta's commentary for clarity (in normal text). They write:

> *The state of a yogi's [mind] is inconceivable* (acintya)
> *[Even though] it grasps [phenomena] characteristically conceivable [by normal minds].*
>
> Thus, how yogis sense distant (*dūra*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), etc., objects and others' minds is inconceivable now [for us normal people]. We say that up until the tenth [*bhāmi*], there is still the [incorrect] characterization of there being [external] objects to be apprehended. [Objection:] *But how does the completely pure mind stream of the* lord *of yogis [cognize these objects]?* What [is the use] in pondering this? Let it go. [Whatever] could be thought about it, [such as], "It is like this," would only be a fraction [of the actual experience]. Assuredly, [it is enough to say that] if the mind itself is apprehended, then all things should be apprehended.[213]

If Prajñākaragupta is to be believed, then Dharmakīrti differentiates yogic perception before and after the tenth *bhūmi.* Before this stage, yogis cognize "distant (*dūra*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), etc., objects and others' minds" in a manner that still clings to subject-object duality. But it is the *lord* of yogis, the Buddha, whose yogic perception perceives these objects without duality. Again, this ability is inconceivable, since even asking, "What is that like?" is futile.

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[213] Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 460; 'Phags pa shes rab, "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," 1744, 120a.

Prajñākaragupta's commentary also softens the places in which Dharmakīrti seems to deny omniscience as the capacity to literally know all objects. As I mentioned earlier, Dharmakīrti's quip about vultures seems not only to emphasize practical omniscience, but even causes some scholars to question if Dharmakīrti accepted that buddhas literally know everything.[214] Prajñākaragupta, however, made sure to hedge Dharmakīrti on this point, arguing that Dharmakīrti only meant to stress the importance of omniscience *qua* spiritual insight over knowledge of all things but not reject the latter. Prajñākaragupta was thus quick to diffuse Dharmakīrti's seeming dismissal of total omniscience. Commenting on verse 2.33 of the *Pramāṇavārttika,* where Dharmakīrti invokes the futility of vulture's remote seeing, Prajñākaragupta first introduces an interlocutor:

> [Objection:] *Well, then, is knowledge of all things impossible and useless? Does the seeker only have one aim: knowledge of those things that can benefit the [spiritual] elite* (pradhāna-puruṣa)*?* [Reply:] That's not the case, since it is said.
>
> *Let there be knowledge of everything.*
> *Nothing in this negates those who sense all things.*
> *We [just] do not desire the [simple] satisfaction*
> *of being able to know [everything].*
>
> Indeed [practical] omniscience is not to know everything, since [knowing everything] has no utility [in bringing beings to liberation]. Similarly,
>
> *Thus, "knowing everything* (sarvasya vedaka)*" means knowing what should be known.*
>
> *This entails that that knowledge is consciousness of a portion [of everything that could be known].*
>
> Things like [what types of] trees [exist], etc., or the common knowledge of women and servants, are known by others. We do not seek [after knowledge of those things, since other people can speak to them]. Our interests lie elsewhere than knowledge of such things. [However], if these [mundane facts] could not be known on one's own, [without the need of the report of others], then this would be tantamount [to the Buddha's] having no method. Thus, those *great* beings with remote seeing who have cultivated complete

[214] For a summary of this scholarship, see McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 135–38.

> omniscience (*sakala-jñatā*) first had perfected their partial knowledge, [that is], they cultivated [insight] into reality.[215]

Prajñākaragupta thus argues that Dharmkīrti does not mean to reject total omniscience, but simply give it secondary importance to knowledge of reality. He admits, however, that if buddhas could not literally see all objects, then this would be a deficiency in their method (*upāya*). Thus, we must conclude that Buddhas do in fact see all objects. It is not unlikely that Prajñākaragupta's read here is a felicitous interpretation of Dharmakīrti's position and not just an attempt to quell the repercussions of a controversial denial of total omniscience. Historically, Dharmakīrti's reasons for demeaning total omniscience was intended as a critique of the Jains, specifically, Samantabhadra (150-250 CE), whose description of omniscience Dharmakīrti felt was insufficient, since it accounted for knowledge of minute details but not the spiritual insight necessary for liberation.[216]

This all suggests that while Dharmakīrti may in some places have emphasized yogic perception as a type of spiritual insight distinct from knowledge of all objects, in other sections, he seems to also admit its role in omniscience. That is, yogic perception is also the means by which a buddha has knowledge of all discrete objects. His discussion about vultures, along with Prajñākaragupta's commentary, admittedly makes no direct mention of yogic perception. However, as we explored in chapter one, discussions of yogic perception as a type of remote seeing and the invocation of vultures as an example of remote seeing have

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[215] Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 76; 'Phags pa shes rab, ed., "*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, trans. Paṇḍita skal ldan rgyal po, Blo ldan shes rab, and Paṇḍita Kumāraśrī, Toh. no. 4221, vol. Tshad ma, te (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 46a.

[216] Fujinaga Sin, "Determining Which Jaina Philosopher was the Object of Dharmakīrti's Criticisms," *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3 (2000): 382; See also Pradeep P. Gokhale, "Omniscience: A Discussion Across the Schools of Indian Philosophy" (Unpublished Manuscript, University of Pune, n.d.), 4.

been longstanding in the Indian milieu. Dharmakīrti also clearly uses the example of vultures as a proxy for total omniscience. Given that Dharmakīrti describes both omniscience and yogic perception's ability to see discrete objects as "inconceivable*,"* it is not unlikely that his discussion of vultures admits yogic perception's capacity to see all objects. This special omniscient type of yogic perception, however, only comes with Buddhahood, when the ignorance of subject-object duality has been lifted.

Other immediate commentators on Dharmakīrti, besides Prajñākaragupta, also appear to equate yogic perception with omniscience. Dharmottara's (c. 740-800) only surviving Sanskrit work is his commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu*. In that work, Dharmottara expands on Dharmkīrti's argument that it is impossible to know who is omniscient based on that person's behavior. Because omniscience is supersensible, normal people have no resource to judge whether someone is omniscient. Even observation of another person's behavior offers no epistemic warrant for the presence of omniscience.[217] Dharmakīrti states this directly in the *Nyāyabindu*, an assessment that appears similar to his argument that the buddha's omniscience is inconceivable. Dharmottara comments in his *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*:

> *[Whether someone is] omniscient and free from the passions is occluded. Whether it is present cannot be deduced* (sandigdha) *from what someone says, etc.*
> "[Someone] omniscient and free from the passions," is the similar case (*sapakṣa*). "[Whether any given person is omniscient and free from the passions] is occluded," meaning, supersensible (*atīndriya*). "Whether that," ["that" meaning] omniscience and freedom from the passions, which are supersensible objects, "is present [in a given individual] cannot be deduced from what [that person] says, etc.," such as something [they could do our say] that would be understood by [the observer's] senses [and serve as an epistemic warrant for their omniscience]. Thus, who [is omniscient and free from passion] is unknown. [However], if you say that [based on] what one says

[217] See my article that explores this facet of Buddhist thought in relation to Gelug theologies of authority. Jed Forman, "Double Hiddenness: Governmentality and Subjectivization in Gelug Buddhism," *Critical Research on Religion*, 2021, 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303220986985.

> (*vaktṛtva*) one can deduce the absence of omniscience, this would be [an example of] an inconclusive assertion (*anaikāntika*).[218]

Dharmottara's charge of "inconclusive assertion (*anaikāntika*)" invokes a formal logical fallacy, which occurs when a disputant has failed to show the absence of the quality to be disproven in a dissimilar case (*vipakṣa*).[219] We discussed the importance of establishing both the similar case and dissimilar case in a syllogism in chapter one. Here, although it is not possible to determine if any given person is similar to a person who is omniscient, that failure does not prove that person is necessarily dissimilar from an omniscient person either. In fact, elsewhere, when Dharmottara explains inconclusive assertions in more detail, he again offers an example resembling the passage above: "For example, we might conclude someone is omniscient based on what they say, [such as when they claim they are omniscient]. [But in that case], there is doubt (*sandighda*) as to whether their expression (*vaktṛtva*) [of being omniscient] is limited to the similar case [of those who are actually omniscient]."[220] In other words, both omniscient and non-omniscient individuals can *say* they are omniscient. Thus, their expression of being omniscient neither determines their omniscience nor falsifies it. In fact, we, as normal people, have no epistemic resource to substantiate either.

Dharmottara's invocation of an inconclusive assertion mirrors both Haribhadrasūri's and Dharmakīrti's arguments about the existence of yogis in the previous section. All three

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[218] Mālavaṇiyā, *Paṇḍita Durveka Miśra's Dharmottarapradīpa: Being a Subcommentary on Dharmottara's Nyāyabinduṭīkā, a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu*, 214; Also see Takashi Iwata, "The Pramāṇaviniścaya on the Purpose of the Division of Reasons into Nine Types in the Hetucakra," *Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 46 (2002): 237; Fedor Ippolitovič Ŝerbatskoj, *Buddhist Logic*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1962), 207–8.

[219] The earliest articulation of this fallacy is most likely Nyāyasūtra verse 1.2.5. Ṭhakkura, *Savātsyāyanabhāṣyaṃ Gautamīyaṃ Nyāyadarśanam*, 42. But there has been long debate between and within Indian schools about what makes an argument inconclusive.

[220] Mālavaṇiyā, *Paṇḍita Durveka Miśra's Dharmottarapradīpa: Being a Subcommentary on Dharmottara's Nyāyabinduṭīkā, a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu*, 94.

of these authors acknowledge that although it is difficult to prove the existence of their supersensible abilities, there is no conclusive argument that disproves their existence either. This, again, has historically been a line of argumentation against the Mīmāṃsakas. Dharmottara, however, makes no explicit mention of yogis here; he only discusses the existence of omniscient individuals. But the famed scholar on Buddhist logic, Fyodor Stcherbatsky (1886-1942), makes the relationship between Dharmottara's discussion here and yogic perception clear. His analysis is worth citing in full:

> The origin of this strange-looking inference [about inconclusive assertions by Dharmottara] is probably the following one. The Buddhist Saint, the ārya, the Bodhisattva, is credited with the faculty of apprehending the Universe *sub specie aeternitatis*.[221] When he has reached the *dṛṣṭi-mārga* all his habits of thought are changed and he directly intuits by mystic intuition (*yogi-pratykṣa*) that condition of the world which reveals itself to the monistic philosopher. This is called omniscience (*sarva-ākara-jñatā, sarva-jñatā*).[222] But this outlook is something beyond verbal expression (*anirvacanīya*). Therefore, whosoever puts his teaching into words cannot be omniscient in this sense of the term.[223]

As Stcherbatsky attests, Dharmottara's definition of yogic perception as the cognition of supersensible objects means that these objects cannot be expressed in normal language and are thus ineffable. This inconceivable ability is attributed to both yogis and buddhas in

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[221] Coined by Spinoza, this term denotes a view of the universe in relation to what is universally true, or eternal. I understand Stcherbatsky to be gesturing to the view of emptiness or nonduality here.

[222] I am admittedly suspicious of Stcherbatsky's assessment that this omniscience occurs on the path of seeing (*dṛṣṭi-mārga*). In early Prajñāpāramitā literature, both "*sarva-jñatā*" and "*sarva-ākara-jñatā*" denote the omniscience of a Buddha, not the realization of an *ārya* who has just reached the path of seeing. Later, in the Maitreya tradition, "*sarva-jñatā*" did come to denote the limited wisdom of the *śravaka* in comparison to the bodhisattva buddha, who was "*sarva-ākara-jñatā*." See the "*sarvajñatā*" entry in Robert E. Jr. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 779. But Stcherbatsky seems to be construing these two terms as synonyms. Thus, I think that he is right that Dharmottara is discussing yogic perception as a type of omniscience here, but I disagree with his assessment that Dharmottara intends that omniscient yogic perception occurs on the path of seeing. As we have seen, yogic perception does indeed occur on and is in fact requisite for the path of seeing. But that is distinct from yogic perception *qua* omniscience under discussion here, which appears reserved for buddhas.

[223] Ŝerbatskoj, *Buddhist Logic*, 2:56n1.

Dharmakīrti's texts, and it is for these reasons that normal humans have no ability to judge who is and who is not a buddha. The inability to make these judgements about omniscient yogis was also attested in Haribhadrasūri's work, where he argued "there is no proof (*pramā*)" for the fact that "yogis know objects individually and not in an undifferentiated matter." All three authors point to omniscient yogis and the paucity of our epistemic instruments to evaluate who is such a person.[224]

vi. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Total Omniscience

Up until this point, I have been discussing possible precursors to the understanding of yogic perception's capacity for omniscience. As McClintock and Woo attest, however, it is clear that this position is most clearly and explicitly stated by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. The most pertinent verses on this topic come from Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha*. Here, Śāntarakṣita also gives a detailed account of the relationship between yogic perception, omniscience, and mental cognition.[225]

> *Mental consciousness* qua *omniscience is the only thesis intended.*
> *It arises from [meditative] practice on reality along with all objects.*

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[224] However, we need to differentiate Haribhadrasūri's position from his Buddhist counterparts slightly. Invoking realism, Haribhadrasūri does not argue that the *objects* the yogi perceives are beyond our quotidian epistemic keen, and thus inconceivable. Those objects are, like Uddyotakara noted, "like a jar." Rather, it is *who* is a yogi that is beyond our epistemic resources to determine. Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, and Dharmottara, however, mean something more than this. Invoking an anti-realist idealism, they argue those objects *themselves* are beyond our normal epistemic instruments; they are emphatically not "like a jar," indeed the object of omniscient yogic perception is beyond our ability to describe. This debate—whether the object of yogic perception is something that completely transcends those types of objects held by non-yogic epistemic instruments—will be in the forefront of the next chapter.

[225] Though Śāntarakṣita does not use the term "yogic perception" in this section, its reference is clear from the topic of *atīndriya-darśin*, i.e., those who have supersensible sight. For a discussion of how this position links to Kamalaśīla's understanding of yogic perception as mental cognition, see Funayama, "Kamalaśīla's View on Yogic Perception and the Bodhisattva Path," 105, especially n.30.

Therefore, it is not at all asserted that [omniscience] is visual consciousness, or something else of that type. If that were the case, all [sense objects], like taste or whatever else, would be understood with the eye.

Why do we say this? It has been established that the experience of form, etc., is mental cognition. Even the opposition has no objection to this.

If you think about it, this is the reason that memory encompasses form, sound, etc. And when you are dreaming, mental cognition alone experiences all objects.

And thus, if by omniscience we intend a mind whose objects are unlimited, how could it be the case that [we would mean] one understands things such as taste, etc., with the eye?

If you say that [form] is realized [only] through vision, there would still be this fault, [since] one knows those things that one has tasted through mental functions.

Therein, that superior sight is in relation to objects which are distant, subtle, etc., (dūra-sūkṣma-ādi) *since it does not skip over objects that may benefit oneself.*

When there is form, [its cognition] does not come from the functioning of the ears.

Such untenable positions purported by others are not said by us. Therefore, a superior [cognition occurs] in connection with the mind without skipping over its own object.

Whatever is cognized by general epistemic instruments—whatever is seen as a general object—by the world now, so too do we see later [in yogic perception].[226]

Like our authors in the previous section, Śāntarakṣita seeks to broaden perception beyond the senses. In other words, perception is not done only with the senses; the mind can perceive objects directly. Omniscient perception also cannot be visual, since then one would see tastes, sounds, etc. Instead, this perception is mental. This is a strategy we saw throughout chapter one as a way to prove against the Mīmāṃsaka that yogic perception can sense supersensible (*atīndriya*) objects. We also see Śāntarakṣita invoking *Yogasūtra* verse 3.25—the perception of distant, subtle, and hidden objects. His formulation that such discrete objects are perceived by the mind would seem novel if not for our earlier analysis of Praśastapāda's theory of yogic perception, in which he, several hundred years prior,

[226] Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:750–51 v.3370–88.

described yogic perception as a direct mental perception of myriad objects, also in relation to *Yogasūtra* 3.25. We also saw how in Praśastapāda that absorbed (*yukta*) yogic perception gave insight into both discrete objects and spiritual objects like the *ātman.* Śāntarakṣita similarly argues that yogic perception includes cognition of "reality along with all objects (*samasta-vastu-sambaddha-tattva*)." Kamalaśīla's commentary on these verses expands on the connection between yogic perception, mental cognition, and omniscience:

> If it were the case that all knowledge of all things was apprehended by the sense consciousnesses, the eyes, etc., then, as you say, there would be a problem in what we have said. But in the culmination of that intense practice [of meditation] on reality in its entirety, including all objects marked by their impermanence, [selflessness, emptiness], etc., one gains a perception that appears clearly and corresponds to its object through a mental cognition. The scope [of that mental cognition] also includes all objects. Therefore, we assert this omniscience sees all objects simultaneously. But it does not occur through visual consciousness, or some other sensory perception.[227]

This "intense meditation" is clearly a gloss on Dharmakīrti's description of meditation in cultivating yogic perception in his *Nyāyabindu*.[228] As we also explored, the resulting simultaneous cognition of objects also seems similar to Vātsyāyana's position, who described an "omnipresent knower" that cognizes several objects simultaneously with the help of several emanated (*nirmaya*) bodies. Furthermore, the emphasis on mental cognition over the other senses resonates with the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika doctrine that yogic perception occurs through the mind independent of the sense faculties.

The notion of yogic perception as a simultaneous cognition of all objects was also advocated by one of Kamalaśīla's rough Naiyāyika contemporaries, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (fl. 880-

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227 Śāstrī, 2:741.

228 *bhūtārthabhāvanāprakarṣaparyantajaṃ yogijñānaṃ ca /* Mālavaṇiyā, *Paṇḍita Durveka Miśra's Dharmottarapradīpa: Being a Subcommentary on Dharmottara's Nyāyabinduṭīkā, a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Nyāyabindu*, 67 v.1.11.

890 CE). The following excerpt comes from a section of his *Nyāyamañjari* "on the debate over whether yogis are omniscient."

> It is said [by the Mīmāṃsakas] in order to deny omniscience:
>
> *Whether by those epistemic instruments for universals* (jāti) *or [directly] seeing an object [connected with] a universal, this occurs in the present.*
>
> *It does not happen in the world at some other time.*
>
> This is rejected. Their [argument] goes like this: [Objection:] *Is yogis' omniscience a singular cognition or a multiple one? It cannot be singular, since mutually exclusive objects, like hot and cold, cannot manifest in a singular cognition. Nor can it be multiple. [If it were multiple, objects] must appear in succession or simultaneously. Cognitions cannot arise simultaneously, since they depend on the subtle mind, [which can only perceive one object at a time]. And in the case that it occurs over many cognitions—[that is, in succession]—given the difficulty to obtain their cause—that is, to directly perceive every single object that exists in the cavity of the triple world without anything left out—it would take tens of millions of* manvantara *eons [to perceive every single object]. How then could yogis be omniscient?*[229]

The Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor argues that cognition takes time. The mind cannot cognize multiple objects simultaneously. Even if someone had the ability to cognize any given object at will, it wouldn't be possible to know all objects, given that it would take an infinite amount of time to apprehend each object individually. Like Kamalaśīla, Jayanta's response is to assert that omniscience engenders simultaneous cognition of all objects.

> [Reply:] This is what they say, but yogis will see all objects everywhere with a singular mind simultaneously. The charge that it [is not possible to be omniscient] because one would have to cognize contradictory objects is not applicable. Even though blue and yellow, or some other colors, may be contradictory, they appear together by way of a painting, or by way of a peacock eye [as seen on their feathers], in which there appears to be a complete object in the shape [of an eye], but that [eye] doesn't actually exist: [that eye is really] a composite of closely situated but separate components. There is even a simultaneous perception of both hot and cold wherever it rains. It is just like when a man's body is submerged up to the navel in a pond whose water is hanging onto the frost of winter in the summer, when the heat is beginning to rise and the rays of the sun are like a mass of fire:

[229] Sastri, *Nyāyamañjarī of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa with the Commentary of Granthibhaṅga by Cakradhara*, 162.

> simultaneously does he feel both heat and cold, the warmth of the sun and the flow of the water, since they both enter into the purview of his experience.[230]

Jayanta responds that even normal people see multiple objects simultaneously. Otherwise, we could not see the multiple pigments of a painting in gestalt to see an image, nor could the multiple colors of a peacock's feather produce the illusion of there being an eye. Likewise, we can sense both heat and cold at the same time, such as when we are half-submerged in cold water on a hot day. Jayanata's discussion here specifically uses yogic perception as a foil to explain how it is that one can see objects simultaneously (*yugapad*), an argument simpatico with Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's arguments about simultaneous omniscience, as well as Vātsyāyana's description of yogis' ability to see multiple objects simultaneously through several emanated bodies.

There is one element, however, that appears entirely novel in Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's description of omniscience. Specifically, this is the notion that by progressively refining one's perception of the ultimate truth of all objects—their impermanence, selflessness, and emptiness—one perceives *all objects* themselves. This is merely alluded to in the previous quote—"In the culmination of that intense practice [of meditating] on reality […] one gains […] a mental cognition whose scope includes all objects"—but it is more explicit elsewhere. For example, elsewhere in the text, Śāntarakṣita first describes meditation's ability to produce clear appearances by referencing Dharmakīrti's analogy for yogic perception, in which someone hallucinates the presence of their lover when lovesick.[231] He then suggests that the ability to have a clear, meditative appearance of spiritual truths not

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230 Sastri, 162.

231 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.282; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

only affords insight into the nature of reality, but of existing objects themselves. He writes, "One masters meditation on emptiness, selflessness, etc. This [meditative object] epistemically warrants one's meditation on existing objects."[232] In other words, by meditating on the emptiness or selflessness of an object, one also gains epistemically warranted knowledge of that object itself. Śāntarakṣita next argues that it is through this meditative process that one eventually gains omniscience: "It is the omniscient one, that crown jewel of men and gods, that has accomplished [this meditation]. Their province is all knowable objects, which are pervaded in a single moment by a single mind."[233] By meditating on the nature of all phenomena, all phenomena themselves eventually appear clearly.

McClintock gives the same read of these passages. Focusing on Kamalaśīla, she argues his position is that when meditation on the concept of the selflessness of all dharmas achieves clarity in yogic perception, the meditator cannot distinguish the selflessness of those objects from those objects that instantiate it, since this distinction itself is conceptual and yogic perception is nonconceptual. Thus, yogic perception equally apprehends selflessness and the particulars to which that selflessness belongs. McClintock explains:

> To become omniscient, then, it seems that the key is to meditate long enough and with enough concentration not just on the selflessness of one thing but on the selflessness of everything! In so doing, one will, *ipso facto*, be meditating on *all dharmas*, since even though selflessness is a negation and unreal, it nonetheless possesses a connection to all particulars such that by fully knowing selflessness, one comes to fully know particulars as well.[234]

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232 Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:759 v.3442.

233 Śāstrī, 2:759 v.3448.

234 McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 229.

In short, McClintock sees Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as extending Dharmakīrti's theory of yogic perception as the direct insight of a specific spiritual truth to one that perceives literally everything.[235]

There may be some precursors to even this idea, the theory that by apprehending one singular object—the impermanence, selflessness, or emptiness of all objects—that yogic perception thereby gains insight into all objects. McClintock identifies both the Buddhist and even Upaniṣadic roots of this idea of *seeing all through one,* though these do not specifically mention yogic perception.[236] But even Kamalaśīla's specific suggestion that yogic perception explains this ability does not appear entirely novel. Take, for example, the ancient *Saṃkhyasūtras* (verses 89-91) of Kapila (c. 7th century BCE):[237]

> *Perception is a consciousness which makes clear the form of that [object] with which it is connected.*
>
> *Because yogis [also] have a perception of nonexternal objects, there is no fault.*
>
> *Because there is a superior type of connection that obtains the object [as it exists] merged* (līna) *[with all its causes and results], there is no fault.*[238]

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[235] This of course implies that somehow buddhas have a more complete insight of selflessness and emptiness then those *ārya's* who see it for the first time on the path of seeing. Otherwise, *ārya's* would be omniscient, and there would be no distinction between them and buddhas. It is interesting to note that this becomes explicit in the view of Mipham (1846-1912), who heavily relied on Śāntarakṣita, in contrast to Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), who argues that the perception of emptiness is the same for buddhas and *āryas*. On the latter's view, buddhas are distinctive in being able to see phenomena and emptiness simultaneously, but both the *ārya's* and buddha's insight into emptiness is equally complete. For a discussion of this debate, see John Whitney Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, The Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 67.

[236] McClintock, "Knowing All Through Knowing One: Mystical Communion or Logical Trick in the Tattvasaṃgraha and Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā."

[237] Dating Kapila is a bit problematic. James Lochtefeld argues that he dates to as early as the 7th century BCE. James Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (New York: Rosen, 2002), 350. However, the earliest surviving record of his work is from the fourteenth century CE. Charles Alexander Moore and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, eds., *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 425.

[238] Richard Garbe, ed., *The Sâmkhya Sûtra Vritti or Aniruddha's Commentary and the Original Parts of Vedântin Mahâdeva's Commentary to the Sâmkhya Sûtras* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1888), 47–49 v.89–91.

Kapila's gesture to yogic perception of "nonexternal objects (*abāhya*)*"* here does not suggest that yogis do not see discrete objects in space in time. Rather, Kapila means that yogic perception is not *limited* to presently existing external objects. If yogis could only perceive external, existing objects, it would be no better than sense perception, and thus superfluous. So, what beyond existing objects does yogic perception perceive according to Kapila? Though late, Aniruddha's (15th century CE) *Vṛtti* may provide the best insight into this passage, since *"*Aniruddha's reading and interpretation of the *Sāmkhyasātra* is the oldest one available."[239] The interpretation here hinges on the word "merged (*līna)*," which, as Aniruddha demonstrates, has a technical meaning in Saṃkhya philosophy:

> Because the effect resides in the cause, even [its] destruction is merged (*līna*) into its own cause and is not [merely] in its past. Even the future is in its own cause through its not-yet-having-come-to-be-ness (*anagatatva*). Through the graces of the *dharma* generated by yoga, the yogi, whose accomplishment is supreme, has a connection to the primordial germ of creation, and through that a connection to all places and times, etc. Thus, there is no fault that would arise from [yogic perception's] being the same as [normal perception].[240]

Here, Aniruddha explains that *līna* describes the classical Saṃkhya formulation that effects exist fully formed in their causes. Thus, when yogis fully know one object, they are able to know everything: the universe as it arose from the "primordial germ of creation" as well as "all places and times." In other words, through knowing one object thoroughly and completely, they are able to know all things, even those not present and external.[241] This

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239 Ram Shankar Bhattacharya and Gerald James Larson, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Indian philosophies. Volume IV, Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, vol. 4, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 333.

240 Garbe, *The Sâmkhya Sûtra Vritti or Aniruddha's Commentary and the Original Parts of Vedântin Mahâdeva's Commentary to the Sâmkhya Sûtras*, 49.

241 Aniruddha's analysis here seems undeniably similar to Laplace's demon. Pierre-Simon Laplace's (1749-1827) thought experiment meant to illustrate causal determinism: if one knew the location and momentum of every particle in the universe, one could know the entirety of the past and future. Aniruddha's position takes this to a further extreme: because every single effect bears the mark of its previous cause, one could

seems to be a much earlier instance of applying yogic perception as a way of *seeing all through one* championed by Kamalaśīla. While the objects are different—Kamalaśīla argues that the yogi sees all objects pervaded by selflessnesss, while Kapila argues that the yogi sees all objects pervaded by their inextricable causal connection to any one object—the structure is the same: both argue that penetrating one object deeply will afford knowledge of all objects individually due the fact that that object—whether *anatman* or an object-*cum-līna*—is connected to all objects.

vii. Mīmāṃsaka Objections

It is no wonder that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's theory of omniscient yogic perception would draw the incredulity of opponents. The notion of seeing all through one is an affront to realist sentiments, which insist that neither knowing the mind completely (*à la* Dharmakīrti) nor some property inherent in all objects, like selflessness, (*à la* Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) would be sufficient for knowing all external objects. The tenuousness of these arguments for omniscience were quickly ceased upon by Mīmāṃsaka thinkers, who again took it as evidence that the existence of omniscient persons was untenable. We first turn to Maṇḍanamiśra's (7th–8th century CE) *Vidhiviveka*. Maṇḍanamiśra was a student of the famed Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (fl. 700 CE) before he converted to Advaita Vedānta. Here, Maṇḍanamiśra gives the standard Mīmāṃsā rejection of supersensible perception.

> *The senses do not have the scope to see all objects nor other minds.*
> *Thus, no cause for complete omniscience can be established.*

trace any entity back to a primary cause, from which one could know the entire future of the universe from its beginning.

> Not only is there no vision that transcends the senses (*atīndriya*), but there is no perception of the consciousnesses belonging to others. Nor can it be an object of inference. If that cannot be established, then neither can its cause. This [supposed] superior range [of sight] is not gained with the [epistemic] instruments, and yet it is supposed to be superior knowledge. Thus, nowhere does one gain this supreme achievement, [in which one perceives] the scope of all objects (*sarva-viṣaya*).[242]

Maṇḍanamiśra attacks the capacities normally associated with yogic perception: supersensible perception (*atīndriya*), telepathy (*anyavitta*), and total omniscience (*sarva-viṣaya jñāna*). Furthermore, inference is equally unable to have access to such things. Thus, no human can understand the supersensible except vicariously through the Vedas. Maṇḍanamiśra's arguments show a clear continuity with the arguments against yogic perception present in the earliest Mīmāṃsā texts that we explored in chapter one.

It is in Vācaspatimiśra's (c. 900-980 CE) commentary on this text, the *Nyāyakaṇika*, that we see a direct attack on Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's construal of yogic perception *qua* omniscience. As I mentioned in chapter one, the breadth of Vācaspatimiśra's commentaries is incredibly vast. Before, we saw him defend yogic perception against Mīmāṃsā from the Nyāya point of view. Here, he defends the Mīmāṃsā rejection of yogic perception. Vācaspatimiśra first gives an accurate and detailed description of the Buddhist theory of yogic perception:

> There are three characteristics of [yogic] meditation [according to Buddhists]. [First, however, let us explore what yogic perception does.] For those fearful of samaric pain, [yogic perception culminates] in *śravaka* enlightenment and pacifies suffering completely. [But], for those who [have cultivated] compassion, it is an unerring consciousness born from perfected meditation. In the process of dedicating themselves to [the elimination] of everyone's suffering, their own inner faults have been [purified] through their own practice of the [six] perfections, such as giving. [Thus, this meditative knowledge has three characteristics]: (1) [It is unerring] because [its] object is

[242] Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, ed., *Vidhiviveka of Śrī Maṇḍana Miśra: With the Commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vāchaspati Miśra* (Varanasi: Tara Publications, 1978), 145–46.

> established by an epistemic instrument. (2) It is also nonconceptual, since it is a clear appearance. [Lastly], (3) it has the scope of all objects, since its form is the direct realization of the selflessness of [all] those [objects].[243]

Vācapastimiśra's construal of yogic perception directly cribs from Dharmakīrti. We discussed earlier the notion that a meditation's vividness substantiates it as a perception and its accuracy substantiates it as an epistemic warrant. Furthermore, this characterization hails from Dharmakīrti's definition of yogic perception in his *Pramāṇaviniścaya*.[244] As Dharmakīrti also notes in the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*, this ability culminates in the knowledge of all objects. Thus, Vācapastimiśra makes omniscience an explicit characteristic of yogic perception in outlining his third characteristic. Next, he explicitly re-articulates Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's understanding of how yogic perception leads to omniscience:

> Nothing exists separate from selflessness. [Otherwise, if it were possible to perceive selflessness without perceiving those things that are selfless], then [those selfless objects would nonsensically] be something perceptible that had suddenly become imperceptible. If the conceptualization [of the selflessness of all things] could appear to the mind clearly without nonconceptualization, then this [clear conceptual appearance] would be the [same as the] clarity inherent in meditation on this [selflessness of all things], since it itself is true and exists. [In other words, if it were possible to have a clear appearance without meditation, the conceptualization of all objects would be the same as seeing all objects.] Likewise, *the clarity of all things as selfless is [tantamount to] the clarity of all things* [emphasis added]. That omniscience is proven to be accurate, since it [arises] from meditation—which is practiced for a long time without interruption—on an object that exists, and thus directly realizes all objects (*sakala-vastu*) with all their aspects (*sarva-ākāra*).[245]

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243 Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, 104.

244 *gsal bar snang zhing rnam par rtog pa med pa phyin ci ma log pa'i yul can gang yin pa de yang mngon sum gyi tshad ma yin no/* Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," 161a–161b; This similarity is also attested in Moriyama, "On Self-Awareness in the Sautrāntika Epistemology," 272.

245 Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, *Vidhiviveka of Śrī Maṇḍana Miśra: With the Commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vāchaspati Miśra*, 104.

Here, Vācaspatimiśra recapitulates Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's theory that meditation on the selflessness of all phenomena will lead to the total omniscience of all phenomena.[246] This is because ultimately the selflessness of all phenomena is not distinct from those objects themselves. Thus, if one sees that selflessness ultimately—that is, without the conceptualization that reifies selflessness as distinct from selfless objects—then all those objects themselves should appear.

Vācapastimiśra's critique of this position is well constructed, offering a pointed rebuttal without strawmanning his Buddhist opponent. His response is intuitive: why would it be the case that just because all objects are selfless that meditation on selflessness would afford knowledge of all objects? This seems to be an odd conflation.

> On this point, the Master [Maṇḍanamiśra] explains the facts [differently]. True, meditation on objects inferred from scripture, [like selflessness], can be a cause for consciousness of a clear appearance. We have no qualms about that. But why would it be the case that [just because that meditation] was generated [through concentration] on the subject [of all objects] that thus [the mediation itself] also would have the range to bestow a clear [appearance of all objects themselves]? [The meditative subject of all objects and all objects themselves are as distinct as form and taste], and it isn't at all the case that perfected mediation on form imparts a clear consciousness of the domain of taste.[247]

An apple, for example, has both form and taste. However, meditating on the form of an apple will not afford any knowledge about how it tastes. Likewise, knowledge about the selflessness of all objects does not carry with it knowledge of all their other properties. Vācaspatimiśra is careful to note that he is *not* suggesting that selflessness and selfless

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[246] Secondary scholarship confirms that Vācaspatimiśra is presenting the views of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in this section. McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 229; Monkia Pemwieser, "Materialien zur Theorie der Yogischen Erkenntnis im Buddhismus" (Masters Thesis, Vienna, University of Vienna, 1991), 114.

[247] Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, *Vidhiviveka of Śrī Maṇḍana Miśra: With the Commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vāchaspati Miśra*, 104.

objects are thus, somehow, disconnected. He is aware that the Buddhist argues that the separation between selflessness and selfless objects is a false reification. But even the fact that selflessness and the objects that instantiate it are entangled will not help the Buddhist.

> This is not at all to say that the meditative object, [the selflessness of all objects], is the cause for a clear appearance of some completely different object—[e.g., selflessness disembodied from those objects]. But how could it be that the *cause* for the [meditative] clarity [of all] objects is some inferred object from scripture [like selflessness]? You say that this [meditative] object is the selflessness of all objects. While that perfected meditation may produce a clear appearance of the selflessness of all objects, there is no proof that there is [also] an appearance of all objects [themselves]. You say [it is because the appearance of selflessness] carries with it (*avāhati*) the clarity of all objects. That may be true, but it is irrelevant. It is like this. Although the [many] selflesnesses of objective [phenomena] inferred in scripture are ultimate truths that are not distinct from objects, [that meditation] is absorbed in one of those things at the expense of the other; they cannot both be part of the same scope, one that would include both ultimate reality and particulars.[248]

Vācaspatimiśra essentially charges the Buddhist with making an argument from conflation. He grants the possibility that Buddhist scriptures are accurate and all objects are selfless and that furthermore meditation that views all objects as selfless is therefore also accurate. But to construe the fact of the matter that all phenomena are selflessness, and the attendant fact that meditation upon that fact is accurate, as a cause (*hetutā*) for the clear appearance of all objects in meditation is an undue conflation. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla may have demonstrated that all phenomena cannot be disentangled from their selflessness. But this ontological fact does not necessitate the epistemological claim that to know selflessness is to know those selfless objects. To think otherwise assumes that what is true of objects themselves must be true of how we perceive them.

[248] Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, 104–5.

On the other hand, Vācaspatimiśra may be talking past the Yogācārin worldview here. If we assume the realism indicative of Mīmāṃsā, of course Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's claim unduly conflates ontology and epistemology. However, on Yogācārin assumptions, the separation between ontology and epistemology is itself problematic. As we saw with Dharmakīrti's discussion of reflexive awareness, Yogācārin idealism problematizes the existence of extramental entities. On this assumption, the idea that by understanding a property of all phenomena one understands all phenomena themselves appears less odd. If there is nothing external to mental representation, then total omniscience is simply to be fully aware of one's mind, a much more accessible type of omniscience. In other words, on this view, the ontological fact of objects cannot be separated from their epistemology. To do so entails the extramental entities idealists patently reject.

viii. Jñānaśrīmitra's Rebuttal

Jñānaśrīmitra (fl. 975-1025) was well acquainted with Vācapaspatimiśra's *Nyāyakaṇikā* and its arguments against yogic perception. Jñānaśrīmitra was an incredibly important Buddhist figure in his era. A gatekeeper at Vikramaśilā, he was also the teacher of Ratnakīrti (11th century CE). We will explore both his and Ratnakīrti's works more in the next chapter. Jñānaśrīmitra's defense of yogic perception was the central topic of his *Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa*, the only Sanskrit text entirely devoted to the topic of yogic perception. His analysis is especially interesting on the question of yogic perception *qua* omniscience, since his position seems to vacillate on Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's theory of seeing all through one. In this first section, he seems dismissive about the notion.

> In the *[Nyāya]kaṇikā*, an objection is raised against yogic cognition after [an interlocutor] suggests that through meditation on the essence of momentariness,[249] there [arises a vivid] meditation on all things which have that property. [The idea is that] through bringing about an awareness of that mental image [of momentariness], there is a direct cause [for the knowledge of all things]. But this [argument] is to be disregarded, since it is outside of the discourse of the *Pramāṇavarttika* and its commentary [by Prajñākaragupta].[250]

Jñānaśrīmitra notes that the position raised by Vācaspatimiśra is beyond the scope of Dharmakīrti's thinking. Jñānaśrīmitra's assessment accords with our own analysis in this chapter. The notion that by meditatively perceiving some property inherent in all phenomena that one would perceive all phenomena themselves seems novel to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. However, Jñānaśrīmitra does not intend to deny omniscience of yogic perception, only that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's theory is off topic. So, how does yogic perception lead to omniscience?

> On the other hand, [the interlocutor might be representing the position that] undertaking meditation on impermanence, suffering, etc., [will eventually] result in total omniscience. If that's the case, then the objection as to how [this occurs] is conscientiously raised and rejected in the *[Pramāṇa]vārttika* and in the commentary [by Prajñākaragupta]: It is enough to say "we cannot know." When one gains a [meditative] state [cultivated with] excessive compassion, it results in the clearing of internal obstructions. [The meditator's] mind dwells on the complete range of sense objects with the highest prayer that the wishes of others [will be accomplished] in all forms. Therein comes the attainment of this special kind of method cultivated from sustained persistence. From practicing this method, the most vivid knowledge—which represents the state of each atom and all objects in their diverse [positions in] space and time—should arise.[251]

Jñānaśrīmitra again faithfully represents Dharmakīrti's and Prajñākaragupta's position, both of whom argued that the omniscient yogic perception of a buddha is "inconceivable." Thus,

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[249] It is unclear why Jñānasrīmitra trades out selflessness (*anātman*) for momentariness *(kṣaṇikatvā*) here, especially given that not all phenomena are momentary, while all phenomena are without self.

[250] Anantalāla Ṭhakkura, ed., "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," in *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhavāli: Buddhist Philosophical Works of Jñānaśrīmitra*, 2. ed. (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1987), 330.

[251] Ṭhakkura, 330.

although meditation on the nature of reality does eventually lead to total omniscience, we have to be satisfied with not knowing how exactly this occurs.[252] However, elsewhere in this same text, Jñānaśrīmitra seems less reticent to dismiss the notion of seeing all through one. The following section comes just before the conclusion of the entire text.

> Because the conceptualization of all things is possible, those yogis intent on meditation will make manifest [the clear appearance of] everything through their own desire. Thus, even in regard to the possibility of conceiving all [objects], the declaration that it is worthless to cultivate mediation is itself worthless, since it is said the yogi who meditates on the Four Noble [Truths] to completion as a prerequisite has the ability to infer all objects, [and thereby see those objects directly] as they wish. This has been corroborated in the *Mahodadhin*,[253] "Thus, when all objects are put directly [before consciousness], then one should see something else [previously unpleasant as] pleasant or able to benefit others.[254] One never becomes exhausted due to meditation: for one in that state, the appearance of everything becomes easy." This citation addresses [the question of our opponent] and answers it.[255]

Suddenly, Jñānaśrīmitra seems amenable to the idea that meditating on the *idea* of all objects can lead to the actual appearance of all objects in meditation. Unlike Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, he does not specifically mention meditation on all objects in terms of

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[252] Jñānaśrīmitra suggests that this phrase "we cannot know (*na asmābhiḥ śakyate jñātum*)" comes directly from the *Pramāṇavārttika,* but it is not found there. Ironically, since Jñānaśrīmitra claims to be representing Dharmakīrti's view and not Śāntarakṣita's, a similar verse is found in Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* in the chapter analyzing supersensible objects (*atīndriya*). He argues, "The capacities of those in the world cannot be known at the present (*idānīm api loksya śaktir jñātuṃ na śakyate*)," which is also an argument for the inability of normal people to make judgments about omniscience. Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:752 v.3394; Ganganatha Jha, trans., *The Tattvasaṅgraha of Shāntarakṣita: With the Commentary of Kamalashīla*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 1501.

[253] I have not been able to decipher which text Jñānaśrīmitra is to referring to here, nor for whom it would be considered authoritative.

[254] The ability to make a previously unpleasant object pleasant is also predicated of yogic perception in Jñānaśrīmitra's text. Śāntideva (685-763 CE) argues that anything becomes possible with practice. Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra, Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3871, vol. Dbu ma, la (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 15a. Drawing on this notion, Jñānaśrīmitra explains that one can learn to like the bitter taste of the neem tree through habituation. So too, he argues, can one cultivate vivid appearances in meditation through habituation. Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 325.

[255] Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 343.

concentration on a particular property, like selflessness. But he does seem to suggest that any conceptual object encompassing all things—be it "the selflessness of all phenomena," or simply "all phenomena"—is sufficient fodder for the yogi's omniscience. If it is inferable, then it is actualizable, so argues Jñānaśrīmitra. This would seem to pit Jñānaśrīmitra closer to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's position. Rather than this being mysterious and inconceivable, Jñānaśrīmitra seems to argue in the end that whatever is taken as a conceptual object of meditation will be a directly perceived once the meditation is perfected, assuming, of course, that conceptual object is accurate. If the yogi choses the meditative object "all objects," then the culminating perception will literally encompass all phenomena.

ix. Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored yogic perception in the capacity of omniscience. Building off of chapter one, we saw several authors describe this omniscience as an extension of remote seeing. This was most notable in Dharmakīrti's discussion of vultures, which, while historically the exemplar of remote seeing, became a proxy for omniscience in his critique of Jain notions of omniscience. We also saw the relationship between remote seeing and omniscience in Yāmuna's and Haribhadrasūri's works. Yāmuna appears to reference *Yogasūtra* 3.25, concerning yogis' remote seeing, in order to discuss yogic omniscience. Haribhadrasūri marshalled Uddyotakara's argument that the heavens are "just like a jar" and thus perceptible in order to substantiate his argument concerning yogic omniscience.

More than this, however, we have seen throughout this chapter that there are several different types of omniscience that are predicated of yogic perception. Working backwards

from Kamalaśīla's notion that omniscient yogis perceive all objects simultaneously, I argue that a similar ability is attributed to yogic perception by Vātsyāyana. Dharmakīrti gives great importance to practical omniscience. I demonstrated Bhartṛhari's understanding of yogic perception seems to mirror Dharmakīrti's description here, both discussing insight in terms of what to pursue and what to avoid. Thus, yogic perception as literal knowledge of all things does not exhaust its connotations as omniscient.

The notion that yogic perception includes knowledge of all phenomena seems to have its *locus classicus* in the works of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. However, this is not to say it is without its precursors. If the *Yogāvatāra* is indeed authored by Dignāga, this is one possible candidate. Furthermore, Akalaṅka understands Dignāga's definition of yogic perception in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* to include knowledge of all objects. Lastly, we also see that when Dharmakīrti reveals his full Yogācārin colors, such as in the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi,* he seems to agree that the Buddha's omniscience is afforded by yogic perception. The commentaries of Prajñākaragupta make this articulation explicit, while Dharmottara suggests a similar position.

However, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's description of how yogic perception achieves omniscience does appear completely novel. Their theory is that by understanding the emptiness of all phenomena in yogic perception, one sees all phenomena themselves. There is a slightly similar position found in Kapila's *Saṃkhyasūtras,* as explained by Aniruddha: because every single entity is connected to the universe's beginning, and because every effect is inherent in its cause, one can know the entirety of phenomena by understanding one entity thoroughly. Even though this is structurally the same as the notion of seeing all through one, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's reasoning is assuredly different.

They argue because all phenomena are selfless, and the difference between selflessness and the selfless object is only conceptual, that nonconceptual yogic perception on the selflessness of all objects will carry with it a perception of all objects.

This position was met with anticipable resistance by Mīmāṃsaka thinkers, who deny the possibility of omniscience. Notably, Vācaspatimiśra argued that this idea confuses an ontological fact for an epistemological one. Jñānaśrīmitra, interestingly, seems to vacillate in his rebuttal to Vācaspatimiśra. At one point, he denies the possibility of seeing through one entirely, arguing it is simply out of the scope of Dharmakīrti's theories. Yogic perception does lead to omniscience, but how this occurs is inconceivable. At other instances, however, he seems to reaffirm the possibility of seeing all through one. He suggests that because any conceptual object a yogi takes becomes vivid in yogic perception, that meditation on the concept "all objects" should eventually culminate in the perception of all objects in yogic perception.

Jñānaśrīmitra's vacillation here reflects a tension present in the intellectual history of yogic perception itself. On the one hand, he argues that the experience of yogic perception is simply inconceivable, something beyond our ability to even fruitfully approximate. On the other, he demystifies this experience: yogic perception simply makes vivid and clear something already in our conceptual grasp. We have seen similar tensions in the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as well. Both authors seem to articulate yogic perception in both ways at different points. The next chapter will explore this tension in more detail, showing that it is ubiquitous throughout its history. The central question is this: is yogic perception simply a more acute way to perceive the kinds of objects we already know, or is it to perceive something completely beyond our current experience?

Chapter 3: Yogic Perception as Spiritual Insight

Chapters one and two discussed two closely related definitions of yogic perception: yogic perception as a type of remote seeing and as omniscience. As I argued, yogic perception *qua* omniscience appears to be an extrapolation of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing. If the remote seeing power of yogic perception is limitless, it is *ipso facto* omniscient. In this chapter, I focus on yogic perception as spiritual insight, specifically debate about meditative experience in general. This concerns the vivid appearance of objects in meditation and the philosophical implications of such experiences. All Indian philosophical schools appear to agree that vivid appearances in meditation occur, and I expand on why I think this is the case in chapter six. The disagreement lies is in what these experiences entail, namely are such experiences "real" or not. This becomes a thorny issue because different schools have different notions of whether and how vivid appearances represent reality. For example, is a vivid appearance of some object in meditation "real" as long as the object that appears exists? What about a dream about my cat? Is that dream appearance "real" just because I happen to have a cat? I expect we would intuitively say, "No." But what, then, makes the vivid appearance of my cat in waking life any more "real"? What guarantee is there that the appearance that occurs when we "see" a cat gets at a cat any more than the appearance of a cat in a dream?

These questions essentially involve reference and correspondence (*saṃvāda*). That is, what does it mean for appearances to correspond to reality? We intuitively think things like hallucinations, though vivid, do not correspond to real external objects, while perceptions are vivid *and* correspond. However, what are the epistemic criteria that guarantees hallucinations

do not correspond while perceptions do? We cannot simply stipulate this difference *a priori*, since this would merely question beg a definition of correspondence that differentiates dreams from perceptions.

Dharmakīrti's construal of correspondence leaves room for ambiguity on what exactly differentiates a hallucination from a veritable perception. If one recalls from the introduction, Dharmakīrti argues that while any object taken in meditation can become clear and vivid, that this clarity alone is insufficient for that appearance to be real or valid. Again, that meditative object must be predetermined to "correspond (*saṃvādin*)" with something in the world. But the criteria for what substantiates correspondence are not straightforward. Probably the most well-known debate in the secondary literature over yogic perception concerns differing interpretations of Dharmakīrti on this point by John Dunne and Vincent Eltschinger.[256] Both take Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavarttika* as their source text. Both also agree that Dharmkīrti argues yogic perception has a real object (*bhūta*) and corresponds (*saṃvāda*) with that object. Lastly, because yogic perception is vivid and clear, it is unmistaken (*abhrānta*)—without conceptual reification, yogic perception does not distort its object. However, Dunne and Eltschinger disagree on the implications of this criteria for yogic perception's object. Dharmakīrti admits at several points that yogic perception is phenomenologically indifferentiable from a dream or hallucination: there is no way one could tell from the quality of that experience itself whether one had had veritable yogic perception or hallucinated some unreal object. Dunne therefore argues that Dharmakīrti nuances the meaning of "real" in his formulation. Because yogic perception is *effective*—i.e.,

[256] This debate is nicely summarized in Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy*, 46.

it has a causally effective (*arthakriyā*) object toward spiritual ends—it is pragmatically real but not real in any more robust sense. We may intuitively think that "real" means something more that pragmatic efficacy, that there are such things as effective illusions that are still illusions. For example, the optical illusion created by 3D glasses is effective at producing a three-dimensional mental image. But would we admit that it is thus epistemically indistinguishable from perceiving an "actual" three-dimensional object? Dharmakīrti, according to Dunne, says, "Yes."

> Thus, on this model, the object [of yogic perception] is ''true'' or *bhūta* because the intense experiences induced by meditation are soteriologically efficacious in a manner verified by one's behavior in body, speech and mind. Granted, the concepts in question are ultimately unreal, but it seems that, if one's goal is achieved, their irreality is irrelevant.[257]

Thus, illusions and yogic perception are not different as far as their (unreal) referents are concerned. But yogic perception can effectuate goals in a manner that hallucinations cannot. This is a pragmatic difference, and according to Dharmakīrti, this is the only juice really worth the squeeze anyway. Questions of whether yogic perception is real in any other sense is mere hair splitting without benefit. It is from Dunne's use of "irreality" here that I garnered the name of this chapter. In other words, yogic perception's object is ontologically liminal: it is real enough to get the job done, but not as real as we would expect of quotidian objects.[258]

Eltschinger, by contrast, does not agree that Dharmakīrti means to afford the object of yogic perception this type of liminal irreality. He does not take Dharmakīrti to be subscribing to this type of quasi-reality that is sufficient for pragmatics but falls short of more standard

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[257] Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti's Theory of Yogic Perception," 515.

[258] For example, consider a chair. Under a pragmatic view, a chair is that which allows us to sit. But we have an intuition that a chair is something more than this: there are plenty of things that fulfill the aim of sitting that are not properly chairs. According to Dunne, however, Dharmakīrti would ask us to jettison these intuitions as ill-formed. A chair is thus irreal: we think of it being something definitive with essential properties, but really it is much more amorphous, since it can be anything that allows us to sit.

ways of understanding correspondence. Rather, according to Eltschinger, Dharmakīriti argues the yogi perceives reality itself.

> Dunne's exegetical hypothesis is, however, diametrically opposed to mine. To put it in a nutshell, Dunne argues that "Dharmakīrti does not choose to present yogic perception as a mystical gnosis that encounters or uncovers real things in the world," or, to put it in other words, that "Dharmakīrti deliberately chooses to downplay the notion that, through spiritual exercises, an adept gains extraordinary sensory abilities." As I shall try to argue in the second part of this paper, I think that Dharmakīrti actually did hold the opinion that, at the completion of the path, the yogin has a direct perceptual encounter with reality itself.[259]

The Dunne-Eltschinger debate here mirrors a similar tension we explored in Dharmakīrti in the previous chapter. As Eltschinger cites Dunne, Dharmakīrti's quip about vultures assuredly does illustrate that in at least this instance he wanted to downplay the notion a yogi gains extraordinary sensory abilities. However, to Eltschinger's point, we also saw instances in which Dharmakīrti seems to follow the larger tradition of yogic perceptual theory that argues that yogis do have supersensible abilities—especially *Pramāṇavārttika* verse 3.532: "[the yogi] grasps [phenomena] characteristically conceivable [by normal minds]."[260]

The essence of the debate between Dunne and Eltschinger concerns yogic perception's object: does yogic perception grasp the irreal or the real? I argue that there are in fact two closely related but distinct parameters in this question. The first concerns whether epistemic warrant is restricted to the real—as per Eltschinger—or can extend to the irreal—as per Dunne. Because yogic perception is axiomatically a valid epistemic instrument, its object must be epistemically warranted. Thus, if the object of yogic perception is irreal, this *de facto* makes irreality epistemically warranted. Again, I consider the irreal here to mean

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[259] Eltschinger, "On the Career and the Cognition of Yogins," 169n1.

[260] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.532; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 138b.

those intentional objects that are causally effective towards desired ends but fail to represent the true state of things. Eltschinger argues, by contrast, that the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object relies on its accurate representation of reality. I dub Eltschinger's position "Hard," meaning that his criteria for yogic perception's object is stricter: it does not accommodate irreality. Dunne's position is "Soft," the criteria for yogic perception's object is more lose: the object can be both irreal and epistemically warranted.

The second parameter concerns yogic perception's relationship to the other epistemic instruments. Namely, is the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object judged by the same criteria as other objects? In other words, are all epistemically warranted objects equally irreal, or does yogic perception constitute a special case? The Dunne-Eltschinger debate does not address this question directly. On Eltschinger's view, this is a non-issue: the object of yogic perception is not exceptionally irreal and thus there is no need for a special case of epistemic warrant. I dub this a "Continuous" view: the criteria for the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object are continuous with that of those for other objects. On Dunne's view, the proposed irreality of yogic perception's object provokes this question. If it is irreal and therefore unlike other objects, then does it mark a special case of epistemic warrant? I deem this position a "Discontinuous" view, as in the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object is inconsistent with the criteria that establishes the epistemic warrant of other objects. However, if the object of yogic perception is irreal just as all real objects are irreal, then it is not beyond the scope of our epistemic instruments. That yogic perception's object is irreal is not a special case, and so the epistemic instruments that validate any object are equally

applicable to yogic perception's object. This would also be a Continuous view, but one accommodating irreality.[261]

I argue that the genesis of this debate is not any flaw in either Dunne or Eltschinger's exegesis. Rather, it may be that Dharmakīrti is simply ambiguous on this issue, or says different things at different points in his work. Indeed, I think there may be more ambiguity in Dharmakīrti's view than either Dunne and Eltschinger give credit. Furthermore, I argue that the material from which Dharmakīrti was drawing in his development of a theory of yogic perception also contained a similar ambiguity. In importing that material, Dharmakīrti was simply carrying forward an ambiguity already present in the literature. It is thus not unlikely that the two interpretations offered by Dunne and Eltschinger had simply not been given sufficient consideration by Dharmakīrti himself. It is clear, however, that Dharmakīrti's subsequent commentators considered these differing interpretations. In fact, we find commentators who argue various permutations between Hard and Soft, Continuous and Discontinuous views.

This chapter therefore proceeds in two parts. Part I considers the ambiguity of yogic perception's object preceding Dharmakīrti. In this stratum, the ontological status of yogic perception's object does not yet appear to be clarified. I aim to make clear that this ambiguity directly contributed to Dharmakīrti's own ambiguity. Part II investigates the work of subsequent commentators who sought to resolve this ambiguity. Part II has three parts of its

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[261] The distinction between continuous and discontinuous views, which will be repeated throughout this chapter, was also identified by David Seyfort Ruegg in the context of gradualist-subitist debates. He deemed the distinction "apophaticism" as opposed to "cataphaticism." David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989), 1–15.

own. Part IIa considers Hard interpretations of yogic perception, Part IIb, Soft interpretations, and Part IIc, Discontinuous ones.

i. Bones of Contention

Thankfully, the precursors upon which Dharmakīrti drew in developing his theory of yogic perception are fairly clear. He lists these by name in *Pramānavārttika* v.3.284b, where he likens yogic perception to "[meditation on] repulsiveness [of the body], the earth [*kasiṇa*], etc." These meditation objects have a long pedigree in Buddhist texts. We begin with meditation on repulsiveness (*aśubhā*). Also translated as "ugliness" or "foulness," this meditation culminates in a yogi's ability to the see the world as full of bones. The goal of this meditation is to develop a disgust for the body as a way of cultivating nonattachment. Whether these are real bones or meditative illusions is a matter of ambiguity from the earliest descriptions of this meditative practice. When Dharmakīrti uses this familiar example of yogic meditation on bones as an analogy for yogic perception, it only exacerbates the ambiguities surrounding yogic perception's object. We will also discuss meditation on the earth *kasiṇa.* But first, to the skeletons in Dharmakīrti's closet.

a. Bones as Repulsive

The earliest Buddhist evidence I have found for meditation involving bones as a method for cultivating disgust for the body is found in the Pāli sources. It is described in the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta* (MN 10)*,* an almost encyclopedic explanation of the various

meditation methods championed by the Buddha. The bones meditation is found in the section on contemplating the body (*kāyānupassanā*), specifically, the contemplation on the nine stages of bodily decomposition (*navasīvathikā*).

> Also, Bhikkhus, the bhikkhu may see (*passeyya*) a corpse abandoned in a charnel ground that is a sinuous heap of bones with flesh and blood; or a sinuous heap of bones with its flesh and blood exposed; or a sinuous heap of bones bereft of flesh and blood removed; or a heap of bones without sinews, scattered here and there, one a hand bone, another a food bone, another an ankle bone, another the bones of the lower leg, another the thigh bones, another the hip bones, ribs, the upper torso, the shoulders, the neck, jaw bones, a tooth, and the skull. The bhikkhu reflects on the body, "My own body's nature, existence, and future is the same." He keeps his focus inward on the body, reflecting on the body. Thus, Bhikkhus, bodily contemplation is to keep reflection on the body.[262]

This practice is meant to cultivate a certain disgust with the body and relinquishment of bodily attachment. The Bikkhu contemplates their own body as no different from a corpse in a charnel ground, doomed to be strewn about in ever smaller parts. Notice even at this stage the reality of the bones is unclear. The use of the optative in "may see a corpse" could suggest a hypothetical situation in which the meditator actually observes corpses. On the other hand, it may suggest an analogy: "just as one may see a corpse in a charnel ground, so too should one contemplate their own body." It is not entirely clear whether imagining one's own body as the bones of a corpse involves the actual observation of corpses.

In the suttas, this meditation is not explicitly associated with yogic perception. But within the Pāli tradition, its appellation as a type of yoga becomes evident at least by the time of Buddhaghoṣa (5th century CE), who, commenting on the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta*, notes this meditation is done by "the practitioner of yoga (*yogāvacara*)."[263] The necessity of bone

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262 MN 10, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasuttaṃ*, 58.

263 Majjhima Nikāya: Aṭṭhakathā (MN.A) 10, *Satipaṭṭhānasuttavaṇṇanā*, 3:759

meditation for yogic practice also appears in the Sanskrit *sūtras*, particularly the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra.* The date of this text has been contested. However, Christian Lindtner gives convincing evidence that it may have influenced the works of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva.[264] If so, its *terminus ante quem* would be the second century CE. Going forward, the influence of this *sūtra* on subsequent thinkers will be a repeated theme. I reproduce the pertinent section below in full:

> Mahāmati, what is the meditation that the childish enjoy (*bāla-upacārika-dhyāna*)? It is like this. In the yogas of *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas,* yogis first apply themselves to characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*)—[the characteristics] of the selflessness of the person, of the particular and general form [of phenomena], of skeletons (*saṃkala*), of impermanence, of suffering, and of repulsiveness (*aśubha*). They say to themselves "This must have such and such characteristic. It cannot be otherwise." Because they proceed higher and higher from the first [*dhyāna*] up to [the equipoise that is called] "the cessation of perception," this is the meditation of childish enjoyment.
>
> Then, Mahāmati, what is the meditation that investigates objects (*artha-pravicaya-dhyāna*)? It is like this. Making no distinctions (*ubhayābhavaṃ kṛtvā*)—[no distinctions between] the person and selflessness, between particulars and universals, and between the self and the other[265] [as made by] the non-Buddhist [Jain] heretics—one progressively investigates the object characteristic of [each] stage [along the path of realizing] the selflessness of phenomena. This is the meditation that investigates objects.
>
> Then, Mahāmati, what is the meditation whose percept is [reality] just as it is (*tathā-ālambana-dhyāna*)? It is like this. [The yogi] remains [in meditation] upon things as they really are (*yathā-bhūta*). [In that reality, one realizes] the distinction between the imputed nature (*parikalpita*) and selflessness is itself [merely] conceptual. Thus, I can only say that that percept [in this meditation] is "like that"—not involved in conceptualization.
>
> Then, Mahamati, what is the *tathāgata's* meditation? It is like this. Those who reach the level of the *tathāgata* rest in the threefold bliss characteristic of the gnosis of each *ārya.* They do what is necessary [for the benefit] of an inconceivable [number] of sentient beings. Thus, it is called the *tathāgata's* meditation.
>
> Thus, it is said in verse.

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[264] Christian Lindtner, "The Lankāvatārasūtra in Early Indian Madhyamaka Literature," *Études asiatiques: revue de la Société Suisse-Asie* 46 (1992): 244–79, https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146957.

[265] The distinction between the self and the other (*svapara*) is said to be a supreme realization in Jain thought. Jagdish Prasad Jain, trans., *The Essence of Jaina Scriptures: Pravachanasara of Kundakunda with Tattvadipika Commentary by Amrtachandra Suri* (New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2014), 226 and 401n1b.

> *[There are four types of meditation]: the meditation enjoyed by the childish, that investigates objects, whose percept is [reality] just as it is, and the* tathāgata's *meditation.*
>
> *With effort, yogis can see objects—like those of the lotus hells or the [stars like] fires strewn across the sky—with a brilliance [like they were] the sun or moon. But these visions lead one down the path of heretics, or cause one to fall into the state of* śravakas *and* pratyekabuddhas*.*
>
> *Once these are all abandoned, and there are no appearances at all, because [the yogi] has become a buddha, the entirety of the [buddha] fields arrive and gather. They bless [the yogi] on his head*, *and this is a sign [the yogi] has followed them thus.*[266]

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* describes what Christian Lindtner identifies as the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM). This involves three steps, (1) questioning the reality of external objects, (2) questioning the reality of mental appearances, and (3) nondual awareness where appearances disappear entirely.[267] There are a few things here worthy of note. The fourfold meditational schema that the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* uses here to progress through these three stages is at least structurally similar to the four foundations of mindfulness found in the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta.* However, they do not align perfectly:

Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta		***Laṅkāvatārasūtra***	
Meditation	Object	Meditation	Object
kāyānupassī	Body (*kāya*): Bones (*aṭṭhi*) & Repulsiveness (*asubha*)	*bālopcārikadhyāna*	Characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*): Bones (*saṅkala*) & Repulsiveness (*aśubha*)
vedanānupassī	Feeling (*vedana*)	*arthapravicayadhyāna*	Non-distinction (*ubhayābhava*)
cittānupassī	Mental factors (*citta*)	*tathālambanadhyāna*	Things as they are (*yathā-bhūta*)
dhammānupassī	Qualities (*dhamma*)	*tāthagatadhyāna*	threefold bliss (*trayasukha*)

[266] Paraśurāma Lakshmaṇa Vaidya, ed., *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtram*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 3 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1963), 40–41; 'Gos chos grub, "*Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Lang kar gshegs pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo," 149a–149b.

[267] Lindtner, *A Garland of Light: Kambala's Ālokamālā*, 115 ff.

Both schemas describe the path toward liberation, the first culminating in nirvana and the second in becoming a *tathāgata,* or fully enlightened Buddha. The divergence from the second meditation on, however, is marked. If we delimit our analysis to the first stage, however, their objects are relatively consistent—bones and repulsiveness—and if we take an interpretive boost from Buddhaghoṣa, both texts understand meditation on these first-tier objects as being performed by yogis.

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* also identifies additional objects of yogic meditation besides the bones. Specifically, it mentions visions of things like "the lotus hells or the [stars like] fires strewn across the sky." The lotus hells (*padma-pātāla*) denote the two lowest levels of the cold hells. This ability to see down to the hells and up to the heavens is also predicated of the divine eye in Buddhaghoṣa's *Viśuddhimagga*, which we discussed in chapter one.[268] The *Viśuddhimagga* may also explain why, according to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, this ability to see the hells and heavens may lead one down "the path of heretics, or cause one to fall into the state of *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*." It explains that this ability is sometimes only partial, seeing beings either dying and not transmigrating, or coming into existence without seeing their previous lives. This can lead to the false belief that there is no next or previous life.[269] The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* could be making a similar point: the ability to see beings come in and out of existence in heaven or hell can lead to heretical views that deny reincarnation. Even in the case that yogis do observe reincarnation with the divine eye,[270] the yogi can become

[268] Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification*, 417.

[269] Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 416.

[270] Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 415.

preoccupied with escaping samsara, the mere nirvana indicative of the *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* and not motivated toward full enlightenment.

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*'s assessment here seems similar to those abilities described in chapter one concerning yogic perception as a type of telesthesia that could see remote realms. But like Dharamkīrti's doubt about the ultimate benefit of such supersensory abilities, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* emphasizes the superior type of liberative perception of "the meditation whose percept is [reality] just as it is (*tathā-ālambana-dhyāna*)." At this stage, the meditative object is "things as they really are (*yathā-bhūta*)." I noted in the introduction that Dignāga is also part of a lineage from the Pāli sources that describes the object of yogic perception similarly. While the dharma eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*) sees "things as they really are (*yathā-bhuta*)," yogic perception, according to Dignāga, sees "just the object" (*artha-mātra*). Also, both the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and Dignāga argue that seeing just the object as it is denotes seeing it nonconceptually, without the erroneous superimposition of conceptual overlay. The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* thus seems to describe both the abilities of the divine eye—which we discussed in chapter one is a predecessor for yogic perception *qua* remote seeing—and the dharma eye—which we discussed in the introduction is a predecessor for Dignāga's definition of yogic perception's ability to see reality just as it is.

Also reminiscent of the Dignāga of the *Yogāvatāra* (if not of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*) is the palpable anti-realist thread in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra's* meditative progression, which culminates in there "being no appearances at all." Dignāga similarly claimed that the yogi "stops engaging with appearances." This formulation falls in line with Lindtner's more general MMM schema, wherein the meditator ultimate transcends appearances entirely. Later in the chapter, I will demonstrate how this MMM anti-realism carries through Discontinuous

interpretations of yogic perception, particularly among those in the lineage of Asaṅga (fl. 4th century CE). However, before tracing this trajectory, it serves to continue the trail of bones through the literature by first exploring the works of Asaṅga's brother, Vasubandhu (fl. 4th-5th centuries CE).

b. Extending Bones and Growing Horns

The relevant text is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa,* a massive compendium of metaphysical analysis from the point of view of the realist Vaibhāṣika school. As I mentioned, Vasubandhu is said to have eventually sided with his brother Asaṅga in his predilection for the more idealist oriented Yogācāra school—in fact, the *Kośa* is said to have been written as recompense for Vasubandhu's slander of the Vaibhāṣika school upon his conversion. But in any event, his argumentation in this text reflects a provisional realism about which he expresses subtle misgivings throughout. Here, he gives a detailed description about meditation on bones in his auto-commentary:

> *Bones [are an antidote] to all forms of desire.*
> Through [meditation on] the collection of bones, there is no more desire […] Because it merely restricts the passions, meditation on repulsiveness (*aśubha*) does not eradicate the afflictions, but it does suppress them. The yoga practitioner meditating on repulsiveness is said to be of three types. (1) The beginner, (2) the one who has perfected concentration, and (3) the transcendental mind. Thus:
> *One is a beginner when one can expand [the meditation] up to an entire ocean of bones and make it recede again.*
> The beginner yoga practitioner wishes to meditate on repulsiveness (*aśubha*). They concentrate the mind on a part of the body—on the big toe or the forehead, wherever they please. Then, one sees a heap of bones by progressively imagining [a body] stripped of its flesh. Likewise, they meditate again for a second time: [the yogi] concentrates until the monastery, then the temple, town, pasture, up until the ends of the ocean are full of bones, doing this with the goal of increasing concentration. Again, the yogi concentrates by

> placing his attention on the heap of bones until they are his own, doing this in order to concentrate the mind. When he does so, he has completed the meditation on repulsiveness (*aśubha*). He is thus a beginner yoga practitioner.[271]

Vasubandhu seems to expand the meditation described in the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta* from a contemplative exercise into a method that helps develop concentration. That is, instead of using bones merely to cultivate repulsion of the body, the bones are meditatively expanded and retracted in order to increase meditative dexterity. Like both the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta* and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the *Abhidharmakośa* agrees that this is entry-level yoga—a preamble to those methods that afford actual liberation. While there are levels of subtlety to this meditation—similar to the increasingly subtle analysis of individual bones found in the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta*—these are all only considered practices for beginners.

This expansive-retractive meditation on bones is also found in Buddhaghoṣa's *Visuddhimagga*. Buddhaghoṣa contrasts meditation on skeletons to another well-known technique called the "*kasiṇa*" method, where the meditator meditates on the physical elements—the first of which is earth (*pathavī*)—in order to control them. He argues that while meditation on the *kasiṇas* should be gradually deepened or extended, nothing is gained by similarly extending meditation on bones. For example, by extending (*vaḍḍha*) meditation on the *kasiṇas,* "one is able to hear sounds with a divine type of ear, see forms with the divine eye, and have knowledge of the mind and others' mindstreams with their own mind."[272] These abilities are of course references to the type of mundane yogic perception explored in the first chapter, which affords powers of clairaudience, remote seeing, and

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[271] Pradhan, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, 337–38; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4090, vol. Mngon pa, khu (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 9b.

[272] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, ed., *Visuddhimaggo*, vol. 1 (Igatapurī, India: Vipassana Research Institute, 1998), 109.

telepathy. "However, meditation related to the body or repulsiveness (*asubha*) need not be extended."[273] Buddhaghoṣa specifically argues that augmenting the ability of meditation on repulsiveness would not lead to increased perceptual powers, but only multiplies "the quantity of corpses" perceived, and thus, "there is no benefit."[274] In other words, continued meditation on bones allows one to see more bones, but this provides no greater insight. Buddhaghoṣa describes one such adept who took this meditation to its extreme: "One elder (*thera*) achieved the perception of bones, such that he came to see their indication in all directions, and he thought that the entire earth was filled with bones."[275] Buddhaghoṣa's caution seems to suggest that this extending of bones was a common practice at this time. While Vasubandhu encourages this expansion, Buddhaghoṣa rejects its utility.

This story about an Elder who saw the whole world as full of bones is found in the Pāli *Theragāthā,* and he is identified as Siṅgāla.[276] The use of the name "Siṅgāla" is particularly salient, since it may be a variant form of the name "Śṛṅgin,"[277] about whom there is also lore concerning meditation on bones of a different type: horns. This story is found in Tāranātha's (1574-1633) *Religious History of India* (*Rgya gar chos 'byung*) and concerns one of the disciples of Nāgārjuna (c.150-250 CE, though tradition argues he lived 600 years).

> Once, when Master Nāgārjuna was staying at Mount Uśira in the north with a retinue of a thousand or so disciples, he had a disciple that was extremely dull. Even over several days, he could not memorize even one verse. [Master Nāgārjuna] told him in jest to go meditate that he had grown horns on his

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273 Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 1:109.

274 Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 1:109.

275 Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 1:109.

276 KN 8.18, *Siṅgālapituttheragāthā,* 4

277 "Siṅgāla" itself is a variant of the Pali "sigāla," which means jackal. However, it comes from the Vedic Sanskrit "sṛgāla," which is more commonly rendered "śṛgala" and relates to the Sanskrit "śṛṅga," meaning horn. "Śṛṅgin" is thus "One who has horns." Although this etymology seems odd, since jackals do not have horns, modern uses of the term "siṅgāla" retain this connection. In modern Hindi, "siṃgālā" denotes a horned animal, while in Marathi, "siṅgāḷa" denotes having long horns.

> head, but the disciple took him seriously and actually meditated with that instruction. With his intense concentration, he quickly developed tangible and visible horns, which reached the ceiling of the cave in which he was sitting. Then, the Master came to know of his sharp faculty and made him meditate on there being no horns, and thus they went away. Then, teaching him a few points of the completion stage, [the Master] made him meditate, and thereby he soon realized The Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*) [...] Thus, that dull disciple who became a *siddha* came to be known as "Shing khī pa" [Skt. Śṛṅgin], meaning the one with horns.[278]

In the examples of both Siṅgāla and Śṛṅgin, the ability to produce a vivid apparition of bones (of one type or another) marks powerful meditative acumen, even though it does not directly contribute to spiritual advancement. In the case of Siṅgāla, Buddhaghoṣa argues that seeing the whole world as full of bones has "no benefit," since seeing those bones in one "definite location" is sufficient for inspiring renunciation. Similarly, Śṛṅgin's ability to produce horns on his head marks the requisite meditative skill to obtain *mahāmudrā*, but in of itself provides no benefit. In fact, Nāgārjuna has to instruct Śṛṅgin to meditate on removing the horns before he can proceed to a soteriologically effective object.

However, the texts we have explored thus far leave many unanswered questions about what exactly these bones are. Are they vivid figments of the imagination? Or are they real, intersubjective objects? Buddhaghoṣa, in associating the bones with the *kasiṇa* method leaves much ambiguity, since the goal of meditating on earth, for example, is to produce that element. In other words, by meditating on earth, the meditator is eventually able to produce that element at will. By controlling the earth element, they can walk on water, or by controlling the air element, fly through the air.[279] If extending meditation on bones is

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[278] Tā ra nā tha, *Rgya gar chos 'byung* (Khreng tu'u: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1994), 113–14. The equivalence of shing khī pa and Śṛṅgin is attested in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka. Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 127n28.

[279] Clough, "The Cultivation of Yogic Powers in the Pāli Path Manuals of Theravāda Buddhism," 77.

similarly able to produce actual bones, then it is not just simply a mental exercise. The story of Śṛṅgin is also ambiguous. Did he just *think* he could not leave the cave because of horns, or had he produced actual horns that prevented him from doing so?[280]

c. Candrakīrti

Given the ambiguity of meditation on bones—i.e., whether those meditative objects exist or not—it is unsurprising that we find different interpretations of their ontological status in the literature. Candrakīrti (c. 600-650 CE) is one of the earliest Buddhist philosophers to examine this question of the reality of these bones. His position appears emphatically to deny that meditation on bones culminates in the existence of actual, intersubjectively verifiable bones. His analysis is found in *Madhyamakāvatāra* and its auto-commentary, the *Bhāṣya*.

> *If [there were no external objects], your mental [concentration] on repulsiveness* (aśubha) *would be the same as their appearance to the eye consciousness.*
>
> *By virtue of one person's awareness of a place, another [person] would have the same [awareness of that place]. The awareness [of things like bones] would not be false.*
>
> [If there were no external objects], however, the form of that eye consciousness that arose to one person would be the same for someone else, by virtue of the eye fixating on that object, just like watching a theatrical performance, etc. Similarly, the [yogi's] consciousness, in the form of the sights of the objects of skeletons, etc., would arise to the non-yogi and yogi alike, like the consciousness of blue, etc. But on the other hand, [if the bones did not exist at all, even for the meditator concentration upon them], then there could be a mind that exists but whose concentration is fixated on something unreal (**attatvam, de kho na yid ma yin pa*), [and this is absurd]. [Therefore:]

[280] José Cabezón (personal communication, February 21, 2021) mentions that there is a Tantric version of the story of Śṛṅgin, who is meditating on having horns as a deity yoga practice on Yamāntaka, a deity with a buffalo's face and horns. His meditation was so strong that others saw him as the deity and died of fright. I have yet to tract this story down, but it also speaks to the ontological ambiguity of meditation on bones: are they only a meditative object in the mind's eye of the meditator or an intersubjectively shared (and therefore) real object?

> *Just like someone whose [eye] faculty is clouded*
> *The ghost perceives pus in a waterfall and river*
> [If there were no external objects, then] a cognized object like those hairs that fill the vision due to being clouded would then also be an object for someone else. I will leave it at that.[281]

Candrakīrti's main target here is the Mind-Only school (Vijñāptimātra or Cittamātra, a (debatable) branch of Yogācāra), who espouse a form of idealism. If the Vijñāptimātravādin argues that only the mind is real, and external objects are its epiphenomena, then the yogi's perception of bones should be tantamount to real bones. That hallucination, by virtue of being purely mental, must be real. If that is so, then everyone should see them, just like an audience watching the same stage performance. Candrakīrti argues this *absurdum* would hold true for other idiosyncratic perceptions, like floaters—"falling hairs"—in the vision of someone with an eye disease, or the pus that a ghost sees in a river due to their poor karma. If the Vijñāptimātravādin backtracks and says the bones are not real, then the mind perceiving them also could not be real, since, according to Candrakīrti, it is impossible to have an existing mind cognizing a nonexisting object.[282]

Jayānanda (c. 11th century CE)—Candrakīrti's sole Indian commentator on this text—corroborates this reading.

> When Candrakīrti says "awareness," he means of bones. When he says, "Even those would not be false," he means it cannot be that this concentration does *not* fixate on something unreal […] [Yet] when Candrakīrti says, "it cannot be that this concentration does fixate on something unreal," it is because the

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281 Li Xuezhu, ed., "'Madhyamakāvatāra-kārikā' Chapter 6," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 43, no. 1 (2015): 13 v.6.70-1ab; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya, Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i bshad pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3862, vol. Dbu ma, 'a (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 271a.

282 Jed Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology," *Philosophy East and West* 70, no. 4 (2020): 909.

> appearance of bones everywhere would be a superimposition [in which the mind is real but the its object unreal].[283]

It cannot be the case that the bones are real, because then everyone would see them. But it also cannot be the case that they are unreal, because this would contradict the Vijñāptimātra position that they are perceived by a real mind and not a mere superimposition. The bones are thus patently irreal, real for the meditator but not for others not meditating.

In classic Consequentialist (Prasaṅgika) fashion, Candrakīrti only sticks to the use of *reductios* in this section. His goal is only to deconstruct his opponent's idealism without explicitly stating a position. But from his *absurdums,* we can at least be clear of what he rejects. Mainly, the yogi's bones cannot be something like a stage performance that can be seen by several observers. This removes an ambiguity found in both Buddhaghoṣa's and Tāranātha's texts, where it was unclear if this apparition of bones was private to the meditator or shared. Candrakīrti assumes that this must be private in order to level his *reductio* against the Vijñāptimātravādin. This forecloses the possibility of these meditative bones being communal objects that others could see. On the other hand, however, Candrakīrti does seem to agree that those bones are veritable external objects *for the meditator.* If they were not, then the meditator could not have a real mind. Here again, then, the position is still somewhat ambiguous. Do objects necessarily have to be communally perceived in order to be real? Candrakīrti does not seem to think so.[284] The notion of bones that are real for the individual but not communally introduces a particular irreality to meditative objects and

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[283] Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā, Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3870, vol. Dbu ma, ra (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 190a.

[284] This creates some difficulties for Candrakīrti's position, though. Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology."

other private appearances. The question is does this irreality extend to all objects, or is a special case of meditation? This is an ongoing question going forward.

d. Dharmakīrti

Dharmakīrti, Candrakīrti's contemporary, also does not seem to appeal to common perception as a necessary criterion of the real. Indeed, meditative objects like the Four Noble Truths are both epistemically warranted but only seen by the few. As we explored in the introduction, Dharmakīrti thus opts for causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) towards one's aims—even private aims—as the criterion for epistemic warrant. In other words, if an epistemic instrument grasps an object based upon which one can fulfil certain goals, then that object is epistemically warranted. For example, if one wants to sit, sees a chair, and then sits on it successfully, then that object is epistemically warranted as a chair. There are no other necessary criteria for correspondence other than this.[285]

Dharmakīrti was clearly drawing from this lineage of earlier meditative techniques as he formulated his theory of yogic perception, cribbing from meditation techniques involving bones and the earth *kasiṇa.*[286] In chapter one, I demonstrated how he pulled from connotations of yogic perception as remote seeing. Within Buddhism proper, he was also clearly As we discussed in the introduction, Dharmakīrti directly references these precursors when he analogizes them to yogic perception in *Pramāṇavārttika* verse 3.284: "Although considered unreal, meditative bases / Like of the repulsiveness [of the body], the earth

[285] I think there are some clear affinities with Jamesion pragmatism here.

[286] Also see Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy*, 46.

[*kasiṇa*], etc. / Can arise in a nonconceptual clear appearance / Constructed by the power of meditation."[287] By using these examples as an analogy for yogic perception, however, he also imports their ambiguity, especially for his understanding of correspondence (*saṃvāda*). Dharmakīrti's phrasing is cryptic. He notes that meditation on the repulsiveness of the body—presumably a reference to bones—and the earth *kasiṇa* are "considered unreal (*abhūtam varṇyate*)." But considered by whom? Does that mean they are *actually* unreal? Dharmakīrti could be implicitly suggesting that the bones and *kasiṇa* are real under his definition of correspondence as efficacy (*arthakriyā*)—that is, meditation on these accomplish one's goals and so they are real, even though they are "considered" unreal by others. But exegetically, this interpretation is unlikely, given that in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya,* Dharmakīrti makes it explicit that meditation on repulsiveness or the earth *kasiṇa* involves an unreal object.[288]

But if we scrutinize Dharmakīrti's foundational assertions, regardless of his own conclusions, it is not altogether clear why the bones and *kasiṇa* would necessarily be considered unreal. In verse 3.286, he writes "Whatever corresponds [to an object], like those objects predetermined [to be epistemically warranted] / Must be an epistemic warrant (*pramāṇa*). / When that arises in meditation, it is thus asserted to be [nonconceptual] perception. /Anything else is unacceptable [as a perceptual warrant]."[289] If Dharmakīrti understands correspondence (*saṃvāda*) to mean causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*), then it appears meditation on bones and the *kasiṇa* should pass the necessary requirements for epistemically

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[287] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.284; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

[288] Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," 161b.

[289] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.286; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a–129b.

warranted yogic perception—they appear nonconceptually and further one's spiritual aims. It is only from our limited and flawed definition of correspondence that such objects appear to be unreal. Though counterintuitive, bones and the *kasiṇa* aptly fit a more sophisticated understanding of correspondence under causal efficacy.[290]

However, also recall that in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya,* Dharmakīrti adds, "Whoever has a nonconceptual and unmistaken [meditative object in yogic perception] possesses a perceptual valid cognition, like, for example, seeing the [Four] Noble Truths."[291] The question then is what else is like the Four Noble Truths and thus can be an object of yogic perception. Is it *only* the Four Noble Truths that are an object of yogic perception, or is there more than this? And if there is more, could the bones and the *kasiṇa* be included in these additional objects? If not, why? [292]

The stakes of the relationship between the bones and the *kasiṇa* to the Four Noble Truths are more than the ontological status of meditated skeletons or earth. It is the degree to

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[290] It is of interest to note that Candrakīrti was highly critical of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on this point. That is, if one defines epistemic notions like correspondence in counterintuitive ways, like through causal efficacy, then they fail to accord with worldly conventions (*loka-vyahāra*). They are thus disembodied from what we mean by such terms in our everyday vernacular. Candrakīrti thus opts for an anthropological understanding of epistemology that appeals and agrees with our common sense understanding of what it means for an epistemic warrant to correspond with the world. Paraśurāma Lakshmaṇa Vaidya, ed., *Madhyamakasāstra of Nāgārjuna with the Commentary: Prasannapadā by Candrakīrti*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 10 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960), 24. This also motivates Candrakīrti's insistence against the idealist that external objects must exist, since this is implicit when we claim that, for example, we see *something.* Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology," 908–10.

[291] Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," 161a.

[292] Though neither of them argues the bones or *kasiṇa* could be the object of yogic perception, Dunne and Eltschinger disagree as to whether Dharmakīrti accepts objects other than the Four Noble Truths as possible candidates. Dunne says he does. Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti's Theory of Yogic Perception," 504. Eltschinger says yogic perception *only* takes the Four Noble Truths as its object. Eltschinger, "On the Career and the Cognition of Yogins," 196–97. This makes sense considering each one's construal of yogic perception: if yogic perception takes any soteriologically efficacious object, it should conceivably include things like bones and the *kasiṇa*, which are efficacious toward spiritual goals albeit irreal. If yogic perception does not accommodate the irreal and only includes those things that are spiritually efficacious, the Four Noble Truths would be its only object.

which the bones or *kasiṇa* are like the Four Noble Truths that they are real and epistemically warranted and thus the degree to which the resulting epistemology would have to accommodate the irreal. There are essentially two different parameters at play. Consider any given meditative object (other than the Four Noble Truths): (1) is it real (*bhūta*) or not (*abhūta*) and (2) is it an object of yogic perception or not? Clarifying these issues have consequences for how one understands the real in general. To borrow from my discussion of the Dunne-Eltschinger debate, I deem answering "yes" to (1) and (2)—there are real objects of yogic perception other than the Four Noble Truths—a Soft view. "No" to both is a Hard view. Yes to (1) but not (2) is a Discontinuous view. Yes to (2) but not (1) is not a valid permutation, since yogic perception cannot have an unreal object.[293]

	Object	Not Object
Real	Soft	Discontinuous
Unreal	X	Hard

Let us consider the Soft view first. If meditative objects other than the Four Noble Truths are real, they are only strangely so, since these objects are mentally concocted by visualization and not "out there in the world" in the way we would normally expect. This speaks to Dunne's notion of irreality. Vivid hallucination does not meet our everyday criteria of the real, since it is private and mental concocted. Still, it meets the criteria for soteriological efficacy and nonconceptuality and so is a valid, "real" object of yogic perception. This view is Soft because it has a loose criterion for epistemic warrant. This criteria forces us to accept the reality of some things as real that might be counterintuitively so—it forces us to accept

[293] Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti's Theory of Yogic Perception," 504.

the irreal. Next consider the Hard quadrant. Here, meditative objects other than the Four Noble Truths are *un*real and *not* an object of yogic perception. Because such objects are *excluded* from yogic perception and because they are categorically unreal, there is no need to construe yogic perception as accommodating irreal objects (see n292). The epistemic instruments are sufficient to demonstrate that only the Four Noble Truths fit the bill of what can be seen vividly in meditation and be epistemically warranted. Thus, the fact that the Four Noble Truths are meditatively concocted but epistemically warranted does not bleed into how we conceive the epistemic warrant of objects in general, since it is only the Four Noble Truths that can be warranted in this manner. Note that both the Soft and Hard views are Continuous views. There are no different criteria between the epistemic warrant of normal objects and the object of yogic perception. The question is whether this criteria accommodate an ontological explosion of irreal objects—a plethora of meditative objects that can be both imagined and "real" via their soteriological efficacy—which is Soft, or whether that criteria excludes these objects, which is ontologically restrictive in this regard, and thus is Hard.

The top-right quadrant represents a Discontinuous view. This would mean that these meditative objects are epistemically warranted but *not* the object of yogic perception. This position is assuredly outside the scope of Dharmakīrti's formulation. If something is epistemically warranted and spiritually efficacious, it *must* be real and perceivable by yogic perception. Thus, this quadrant is, on the one hand, merely a result of the possible permutations of the two-by-two square. But, there is another cogent interpretation of this quadrant outside of the scope of Dharmakīrti's formulation. Although such meditative objects may be real under our quotidian epistemic instruments, the object of yogic perception *transcends* this everyday reality, taking objects that are beyond the keen of everyday

knowing. This latter interpretation, I argue was taken up by thinkers in Asaṅga's lineage.[294] Thus, this view is transcendent because it categorizes the object of yogic perception as something beyond existence and (normal) reality (*bhūta*). It also takes the object of yogic perception as discontinuous with our normal epistemic judgements about quotidian objects, exactly because it transcends existence. The fact that the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object is discontinuous with our normal epistemic warrant of the real means that our quotidian epistemic instruments are actually flawed. It is *only* the object of yogic perception that is epistemically warranted ultimately. In this way, yogic perception's object is completely discontinuous with mundane epistemic warrant, actually superseding those warrants and trumping them.

e. A Final Example: Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta

Before moving on to subsequent sections on Soft, Hard, and Discontinuous construals of yogic perception, it is helpful to give an example of where these contrasting theories appear in the literature. Though later than most of the authors I will discuss, Utpaladeva (900-950 CE) and Abhinavagupta (950-1016 CE) had the hindsight to comment on these different theories after they had developed. Their work thus serves as a helpful summary of what is to follow. Their own position suggests that phenomena generated by yogis are shared and observable by others. We glean this indirectly from their reasoning that yogic perception

294 Also, there is a similarity here to Candrakīrti's position, found elsewhere in his work, that ultimate reality transcends normal conventional reality (of course, this is a matter of debate in the Tibetan literature) Anne MacDonald, "Knowing Nothing: Candrakīrti and Yogic Perception," in *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco and Dagmar Eigner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 133–68.

constitutes an outlier case related to the validity of inferences based on cause and effect. That is, there are some situations in which one *cannot* justifiably reason that an effect must have come from a particular cause, namely when yogic perception is involved:

> *When something is not created* (nirmāṇa*) by a yogi,*
> *but is made certain by another valid cognition,*
> *Then simple cause, effect, and shared identity are the basis of its arising.*
>
> The yogi's desire is the same in every respect. It produces a distinct effect like how one's sperm, virility, etc., [produces distinct progeny], in no way like how scorpions [spontaneously] generate from cow dung. This means that from this cause [of desire] there is the result, like when one infers fire from smoke, or when a general tree is inferred from its identity with a particular Aśoka tree. It is determined through other epistemic warrants established by the world that if something is not of a yogi's creation, then it may serve the quotidian necessity for inference established by the world, such as practices for the next life, etc. This [establishment by the world] is also the basis for knowledge had by testimony and inference. This truth has been stated by Patañjali. According to others, the reality of customary [objects] is affirmed when their perception accords with yogic perception. But if there are everyday valid epistemic warrants, that is not our burden. Lo, what is genuine is our own godly form, and simply that self-luminosity. Even when there is an obstruction to that knowledge, it is not itself obstructed. This has been said repeatedly.[295]

In other words, the yogi is able to produce physical objects as they wish. This does not occur through some special type of etiology. It occurs through cause and effect, just like how fire produces smoke. The yogi's desire is the cause and the emanated object is the effect. Notice how this position is also a completely different from Candrakīrti's yogic perception on bones, which did *not* result in a perception accessible to others. In that case, perceptions of bones were private to the yogi. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, on the other hand, insist that yogis are able to emanate entities that are publicly perceptible. However, this ability complicates our ability to make *inferences* based on cause and effect, since if yogis can produce smoke merely out of their own desire, there is no logical necessity that fire follows from the

[295] K.A. Subramania Iyer, K. C. Pandey, and Rāma Candra Dvivedī, eds., *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī of Abhinavagupta: Doctrine of Divine Recognition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 275–76.

presence of smoke, and thus inferences based on that assumption would be fallacious. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta's solution is to treat the case of yogis as outliers and circumscribe epistemic warrant "as established by the world" to those cases when "something is not of a yogi's creation."

I take this position as an instance of a Hard view. That is, the epistemic warrant of yogic perception's object does not affect how we reason about everyday objects. Just like how the Four Noble Truths are the only meditative object that can be epistemically warranted, so too are the creations of yogis considered exceptions to inference that prove the rule. Both cases sequester yogic perception's object in a manner that does not cause us to reconsider epistemic warrant of other objects.[296] However, Abhinavagupta recognizes a controversy in the literature, since he notes that others say that "the reality of customary [objects] is affirmed when their perception *accords* with yogic perception." On this account, whatever we say about the epistemic warrant of the object of yogic perception extends to epistemic warrant in general. If the object of yogic perception behaves in counterintuitive ways, we have to expand our epistemic instruments to accommodate that irregularity. Irreal entities would become epistemically warranted. Just as on a Soft view of Dharmakīrti a host of private hallucinations become epistemically warranted, a Soft view of Abhinavagupta

[296] I am aware that I am doing a bit of a sleight of hand here in construing Abhinavagupta's view as Hard. Because he says that the yogi's object breaks quotidian inference, is this not a *discontinuous* view, where yogic perception is outside the scope of epistemic warrant? Strictly speaking, I might agree, but I am using my taxonomy here as a heuristic to organize the sources and not to make a specific claim about the function of *pramāṇas* in Abhinavagupta's works. Still, I think there is a subtle distinction here that puts Abhinavagupta's position closer to a Hard view. That is, he is using yogic perception as the exception that proves the rule. Yogic perception in his formulation is not so much transcendent of normal epistemic warrant, but an outlier that constitutes a special case and is in fact brought into the fold of how we are to understand epistemic instruments *as an exception*. Self-luminosity, by contrast, is not the same type of exception. It is not introduced as a means to refine or improve our understanding of epistemic warrant, but to demonstrate how ultimately epistemic warrant becomes irrelevant at high levels of realization.

would mean that an explosion of counterintuitive entities would become epistemically warranted, such as smoke not produced by fire.

Abhinavagupta's pivot after this problematic position, lastly, is indicative of a Discontinuous view. In a kind of let-them-eat-cake attitude, he asserts that these quibbles about how quotidian epistemic instruments converge or do not is really not his concern, since his only preoccupation is the ultimate reality of our "self-luminosity." Abhinavagupta does not expressly say that this self-luminosity is the provenance of yogic perception. Nevertheless, the notion that there is some object completely beyond the ken of our everyday experience but which is the object of spiritual realization is indicative of similar Discontinuous understandings of yogic perception that we will explore. In these texts, the ultimate truth captured by yogic perception transcends the other epistemic warrants. While Hard and Soft views both rely on epistemic instruments to either suppress the ontological explosion of irreal objects or accommodate them, the Discontinuous view jettisons the need to rely on epistemic instruments at all in considering yogic perception's object, since it transcends them.

Abhinavagupta thus gives a helpful summary of Hard Continuous, Soft Continuous, and Discontinuous formulations of yogic perception. The Hard view is noted by Abhinavagupta's own view, where the object of yogic perception does not entail a reconsideration of epistemic warrant. The Soft version is noted by "according to others." On this position, yogic perception's object must be corroborated by other epistemic instruments and thus instruments may have to adjust to accommodate that object's peculiarity. The last view, Discontinuous, is expressed by the self-luminosity of the mind, a realization transcendent to normal experience. In Buddhist texts expressing this position, we will see

how yogic perception similarly transcends other epistemic instruments because it perceives a truth that vitiates the quotidian reality captured by normal inference and perception. In this regard, Buddhists who advocate this position resonate with Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta's understanding of "self-luminosity" as a reality that trumps everyday ways of seeing the world, though the content of this transcendent reality is assuredly different in each school.

ii. Resolutions of Ambiguity

a. Hard Views

We begin with Hard views. I start with these because they are the most intuitive and easiest to defend. To admit yogic perception has an irreal object or that epistemic instruments validate irreality makes yogic perception's epistemic warrant suspicious. Assuredly, Dharmakīrti's position does hinge on a revision of correspondence in a manner that may accommodate irreal objects. As we will see, Dharmakīrti's ontology that all seemingly enduring objects are really a conglomerate of infinitesimal momentary particulars precludes any naïve realist notion of correspondence. Nevertheless, many of Dharmakīrti's commentators seem wary to double down on the irreality of yogic perception's object—unless when forced.

Like all the views explored in this section, Hard views were forged in the process of dialectic. As we saw in chapter one and two, the Mīmāṃsā school is a major critic of yogic perception in general. We will explore two critiques from Mīmāṃsakas that challenge

Dharmakīrti's theory of yogic perception. The Buddhist rebuttals to these critiques indicate a Hard view of yogic perception.

i. The Mīmāṃsaka critique of correspondence

As Dharmakīrti states, the actual perception of an object and its hallucination by a madman are the same at the phenomenological level. Yogic perception is *like* those hallucinations induced "by desire, fear, and sorrow" or when one is "haunted by dreams, [the fear of] robbers, etc."[297] The distinction between true yogic perception and aberrant hallucinations is whether the "object is predetermined [to be epistemically warranted] (*prāṅ nirṇīta-vastu*)."[298] But determined how? The challenge is to define such objects in a manner that makes yogic perception's object epistemically warranted without inadvertently validating sensorial hallucinations as well.

Vācaspatimiśra (fl. 9th or 10th century CE) attacks this very ambiguity in Dharmakīrti's formulation, arguing that no such definition allows yogic perception to correspond with reality without the *absurdum* of making hallucinations epistemically warranted by proxy. Although we saw him give a convincing defense of yogic perception in his role as a Nyāya commentator, here, Vācaspatimiśra gives a sophisticated analysis of the problem from the Mīmāṃsā point of view in his *Nyāyakaṇika,* a commentary on Maṇḍanamiśra's (c. 8th century CE) *Vidhiviveka.* The *Nyāyakaṇika* first presents a possible

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297 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.282; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

298 Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.286; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

argument in support of Dharmakīrti's position, only to deconstruct it and demonstrate how it is untenable.

> That impermanence [that is an aspect of the Four Noble Truths] has no concomitance (*avyabhicāra*) with this [meditative] object [in yogic perception], neither through shared identity nor causally. The process of having a peak experience in meditation thus assuredly is distinct from the enterprise of [real] objects. Someone may respond, however, [Objection:] *This momentariness [that is taken as an object of meditation] is an effect [of another real object] in uninterrupted succession, just like inference. For example, let us say that from a particular fire arises a particular [instance] of smoke. Then there is the experience of smoke, and from that, the conceptualization of burning, and from that, an inference of fire. Through that uninterrupted connection, one establishes [the presence of] fire which can burn and cook. Similarly, that object [upon which one] meditates has invariable concomitance with its appearance [in meditation] because the process of completing that highest meditative [object] born from inference [also occurs] in uninterrupted succession [between the actual object and its appearance]. Therefore, [on your understanding], both [the inference of fire and of momentariness] would not be authentic cognitions, [and this is absurd]*.[299]

Vācaspatimiśra ventriloquizes a rather convincing Buddhist argument for yogic perception. Smoke is as distinct from fire as the concept of impermanence is from impermanent particulars themselves. However, when one perceives smoke and understands it as such, they can use the necessary causal connection between smoke and fire to understand that there must be fire present. Indirectly through smoke, therefore, they are able to come to a fire that can actually burn and cook. Similarly, the momentariness that the yogi meditates upon is inferred from the observation of actual particulars. Momentariness has as strong a connection to reality as smoke does to fire. Vācaspatimiśra thus argues—through an interlocutor—a Continuous interpretation of yogic perception: the object of yogic perception has an "uninterrupted connection" with the particulars that generate that inference, just as smoke has

[299] Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, *Vidhiviveka of Śrī Maṇḍana Miśra: With the Commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vāchaspati Miśra*, 105.

an uninterrupted connection with fire. Yogic perception's connection to its object is as reliable as inference's connection to its object.

The reader, however, may be able to anticipate why this is not a completely satisfying argument. For example, let us suppose that I see smoke rising from the other side of a mountain and thus infer then that fire must exist on the far face of the mountain. I then meditate upon my inference of fire until that fire is no longer just in my mind's eye but appears vividly as if it were in front of me. According to Dharmakīrti, this should be possible, since repeated meditative fixation on any object should culminate in its clear appearance. But then would we say I had had a *perception* of the fire? Our intuition would suggest no. Such a supposition seems to confuse the directionality of the connection. Although the presence of the particular ensures the validity of the inference, this does not guarantee that one can use inference as a gateway toward a perception of the particular. Just because an inference has a connection to an actual object does not entail that a clear appearance of that inferential object is the same as perceiving the object to which that inference refers. Vācaspatimiśra argues as much in response to his imagined Buddhist interlocutor.

> But what does establishing fire through inference have to do with the [supposed] necessary authenticity of the vivid cognition of fire in mediation? If you agree [that meditation on fire is as authentic as actually encountering it], you would have to say that while someone was ascending a hill, the actual sensory knowledge of that fire would correspond with the recollection of its clarity in meditation, [and this is absurd]. But non-concomitance is everywhere. And if you say, "If the yogi's [meditative] object is not concomitant [with a real object], that [meditative] object is undermined," or, "Intuitive knowledge is a clear appearance," such theories are invalid and amount to [mere] uncertainty. The quasi-object (*arthatva*) that comes from

> meditation is not real (*na bhūta*). The clear knowledge born from meditation is the thing to be judge (*prāmāṇya*), and it is a sign without a referent.[300]

Vācaspatimiśra gives an excellent retort. The Buddhist interlocutor claims that yogic perception is a perceptual epistemic warrant because—though like a hallucination—it (1) corresponds with the impermanence of actual objects and (2) it is a vivid and clear appearance, and so it is not mistaken (*bhrānta*). As we have noted, correspondence and being unmistaken are the essential criteria for perception in Dharmakīrti's system.[301] But Vācaspatimiśra rightly points out that a vivid hallucination that corresponds with an object is still a hallucination. Consider the following example: I cannot find my keys. I am so emotionally distraught that I swoon into a hallucination in which I see my keys in my bedroom drawer. I later go into my room and find that, indeed, my keys were in my drawer. Is that hallucination, however, tantamount to a *perception* of my keys? Our intuitions again say, "No." Vācaspatimiśra acknowledges that on Dharmakīrti's position, correspondence and vividness are sufficient criteria for the occurrence of yogic perception—i.e., the meditative object has to be "concomitant (*avyabhicāra*)" with reality and that meditation must culminate in a "clear appearance." But while my hallucination of my keys passes both criteria—my keys were in the drawer and my hallucination was vivid—we would be reluctant to conclude that I had had a veritable perception of my keys. The hallucination could have been happenstance correct.[302] Similarly, Vācaspatimiśra says that "such theories [of perception]

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300 Mahāprabhu Lāla Gosvāmī, 105–6.

301 Refer to the introduction.

302 There is a similar debate in Western epistemology around what became dubbed Gettier problems. Advanced by Edmund Gettier, these thought experiments challenge a definition of knowledge hailing from Plato. This is the notion that knowledge is defined by the presence of justified, true, beliefs—i.e., *P* knows *s* when *P* believes that *s, P* is justified in believing *s,* and that *s* is in fact true. Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?," *Analysis* 23, no. 6 (June 1, 1963): 121–123, https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/23.6.121. Though Gettier does not in fact use this example, his analysis of the problem with this definition of knowledge can be illustrated by a broken clock. A broken clock that

[…] amount to [mere] uncertainty." The criteria of correspondence and vividness are insufficient to determine if perception has occurred. These two criteria amount to mere uncertainty about what is a perception and what is a hallucination. Vācaspatimiśra thus states that we need further criteria to establish what is real (*bhūta*). Though that meditation produces the apparition of object-ness (*arthatva*), a quasi-object, its connection to an actual object is tenuous.

Jñānaśrīmitra, whom we explored in the last chapter, was aware of Vācaspatimiśra's text and directly quotes it at several points in his *Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa*, a text solely devoted to fleshing out the Buddhist interpretation of yogic perception. There, he offers a retort to Vācaspatimiśra's critique and attempts to recover the continuity between yogic perception and its object in a more robust manner than Dharmakīrti. Showing equal philosophical acumen to Vācaspatimiśra, Jñānaśrīmitra first paraphrases the charge leveled against the Buddhist before replying.

> [Objection:] *The object is absent [at the time of meditation], so how can there be reliable correspondence to the objects presented by valid cognition? Or even if it is not absent at that time, there would be an infinite regress [in establishing] fire, [since one could never see beyond the vivid image] […] That meditation is confined to a single state which it relies upon. You say that it is clear, but it is mistaken with regard to an object, since its mental image differs [from that of the object itself]. Therefore, there is no object of knowledge [in so-called "yogic perception"], and it is not a perception. Even a farmer could have a vivid appearance of fire through meditation, having inferred it prior. If you say that [in this case] there is no yogic perception just*

displays only one time will be correct twice per day. When someone reads a clock at the moment when that clock happens to be correct, they believe that to be the time, they are justified in believing so (since normally we take clocks to be epistemic instruments for time), and they are correct that the time the clock is displaying is correct. But we cannot call this knowledge, since the clock is broken, and correct knowledge cannot come from broken instruments. The case of hallucinating my keys is the same: the fact that that hallucination happens to accord with reality seems insufficient to say that I had a knowledge producing perception of my keys. Thus Dharmakīrti's notion that knowledge producing perception only need correspond with an object and be qualitatively vivid seems to be complicated by Gettier problems.

> *because it is devoid of an ultimate object, then there is the absurdum of there being different types of perception.* This is what they say.[303]

Jñānaśrīmitra's recapitulation of his opponent's position should be familiar. Like Vācaspatimiśra, the interlocutor argues yogic perception fails to correspond and be unmistaken. It fails to correspond because one is meditating on an object that is not present and it fails to be unmistaken because it's mentally concocted meditative object is distinct from the actual object upon which that meditation is based. Jñānaśrīmitra even restates Vācaspatimiśra's example of fire, wherein someone infers fire from smoke, meditates on that fire, and then produces a vivid image of fire. That image can neither correspond nor be unmistaken because it differs from the actual particular fire on that specific hill. The Buddhist might retort that yogic perception is only of the Four Noble Truths and so the example of meditation on fire is irrelevant. But as Jñānaśrīmitra notes, adding this stipulation seems to break the rule of parsimony. The Buddhist would have to explain perception in two different manners: one to explain the perception of everyday objects and one for special spiritual objects. Yogic perception on the Four Noble Truths must correspond and be unmistaken toward something real in the same manner that the sensory perception of fire corresponds and is unmistaken toward actual fire.

The manner in which Jñānaśrīmitra sets up his interlocutor shows that he is invested in giving a Hard theory of yogic perception. He has challenged himself to keep his definitions parsimonious in a manner that keeps the epistemic warrant of actual fire and yogic perception's object consistent, while also rejecting that irreal entities like meditated fire are epistemically warranted. Jñānaśrīmitra argues he has recourse here. As we will see,

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[303] Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 323.

he builds off of Dharmakīrti's understanding of correspondence to explain how the object of yogic perception corresponds and is unmistaken toward a real object.

> This persistent doubt is not possible. Meditation is motivated out of passion, anguish, or pride, or by some purposeful intention. It is taken up with an intention, as in the case of someone (wishing to) examine something. Since it is devoid of the great goal [of perceiving the Four Noble Truths], mere burning and cooking are established through the inference of fire, [but only] when one approaches the place [where that fire is]. Cultivation [of that inference] is in vain if that place remains out of reach. Before the meditation is perfected, that which appears [in that meditation] is mistaken with regard to that object. In the same way that [through inference] you came by fire, or whatever, so too do you engage in meditation. Therefore, where is the absurdity that [yogic perception] is a different type of perception?[304]

Here, Jñānaśrīmitra deconstructs what it means to validly correspond to an object. When we infer the presence of an object, we do so with a certain goal and purpose. In the case of the fire, we expect that it will be able to cook and burn, and it is to the degree that these expectations are met that we can say our original inference of fire was correct. Independent of "approaching the place" of that burning, the question of that inference's validity is nonsensical. Meditation is the same. Just as the inference of fire is only valid if it can fulfil the intention of cooking and burning, so too is a meditation valid if it leads to spiritual liberation. There is no test for correspondence other than this. From this perspective, Vācaspatimiśra has made a false comparison when he argues that if the object of yogic perception legitimately corresponds, then the vivid fire that is the object of meditation on fire would be no different from the object of its perception. Why? Because the fire in meditation cannot cook and burn and thus does not fulfill purposeful intention. The vivid appearance of the Four Noble Truths in mediation, however, *does* fulfill the intended purpose of liberation. Thus, just as our inference of fire is confirmed perceptually by the ability to cook and burn,

[304] Ṭhakkura, 323.

the inference of the Four Noble Truths is confirmed through yogic perception's ability to produce liberation. There is no "absurdity that [yogic perception] is a different type of perception."

More than this, Jñānaśrīmitra even concedes that meditation "is mistaken with regard to that object" before this intention is achieved. But this is not the specific fault of meditation, but general to the process of inference. Because Dharmakīrti argues that all inference involves linguistic universals which obscure the otherwise undifferentiated flux of reality—which, by contrast, *is* apprehended in perception—all inferential cognition begins in error.[305] Jñānaśrīmitra therefore argues that the initial inference upon which one bases one's intentional action—whether that is further meditation or walking toward smoke—"is mistaken with regard to that object" and "obstructs perceptual experience." In both cases, however, once that inferentially motivated action is completed, the validity of that inference is confirmed perceptually, either by the sensation of actual burning, or by the experience of liberation that comes from directly seeing the Four Noble Truths. Thus, in both cases, the confirming perception is also unmistaken.

Jñānaśrīmitra thus attempts to preserve the distinction between yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths and perception of fire. While both start with an inference and culminate in a perception that fulfils purposeful intention, the Four Noble Truths are unique in being able to fulfill purposeful intention through meditation. Again, this is in indicative of a Hard view. Yogic perception is not like meditating on an irreal, imagined fire and thereby hoping to get warm. Likewise, when one infers fire, they must actually go to the place that

[305] Gnoli, *The Pramanavarttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Autocommentary*, 49 v.1.98-99ab.

fire is in order to exploit its ability to cook and burn. By distinguishing yogic perception from this quotidian example, yogic perception is uniquely meditatively validated and disassociated from the irreality of other meditative appearances. Thus, yogic perception admits no irreality to other quotidian objects. Jñānaśrīmitra's Hard view here is also indicated by the fact that elsewhere in his text he does not appear entirely comfortable with just a pragmatic definition of correspondence. He seems to want to offer something more robust to further exclude the irreal. This becomes clear in how he addresses the familiar example of the horns and the earth *kasiṇa*. Meditation on horns is introduced by an interlocutor in Jñānaśrīmitra's text, again concerning the correspondence of yogic perception with its object.

> [Objection:] *Okay, let us assume there is this type of meditation on this object for the time being, such as meditating that one has horns on one's head. Yet yogic cognition is included in unmistaken [perceptions]. There is no problem with saying that yoga is a type of meditative concentration characterized by the one-pointedness of mind. But in the case of clarity on the image of horns, just like the earth* kasiṇa*, etc., it is not a perception because it is devoid of a percept.*[306]

Again, Jñānaśrīmitra does a superb job of articulating strong positions against his own. While the previous example discussed meditation on existing objects, like fire, Jñānaśrīmitra here turns to meditated objects that have no real-world counterpart, like horns on a human head or the mental image of the earth *kasiṇa.* In essence, the interlocutor seems unsatisfied with Jñānaśrīmitra's appeal to efficacy (*arthakriyā*) as the criterion for yogic perception's epistemic warrant. Even if a completely imagined object may be soteriologically effective, it seems that appearance should map onto a real object for that cognition to be considered valid. Otherwise, that appearance must be mistaken.

[306] Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 323.

Jñānaśrīmitra's reply here becomes a staple of his argument throughout the *Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa,* relying on a distinction between objects themselves (*vastu*) and their properties (*vastudharma*).

> When the object is absent [as in the case of horns], or when one is [meditatively] intent upon a mental image that is different [from how that object actually exists, like meditating on inferred fire], there is meditation on mental images of stable, [enduring objects]. [That is, those mental images represent those objects as permanent rather than impermanent.] Though all such meditations are devoid of a manifest percept, they are correct with respect to their meditated object, but not with respect to the properties of that object being meditated on. [However], meditation on the *properties* of the object, momentariness, etc., will become clear [only] through detachment from samsara […] Unstable objects are in the grips of destruction and flux. Therefore, they do not correspond [to a meditated object]. But the properties of objects—their momentariness, etc.—are unceasing. Therefore, clarity of *that* meditated object will always have a percept.[307]

Jñānaśrīmitra argues that meditations on horns and fire equally fail to be unmistaken for the same reason. This, again, has to do with Dharmakīrti's perceptual theory, in which all enduring objects are conceptual fictions. Meditation on horns and the like fail to be unmistaken not because they are imagined, but because they fixate on an enduring "stable" object. However, meditation on momentariness—the very transitoriness of the world that makes concepts unreal—produces vivid images which *do* accurately represent the world, exactly because all things are truly momentary. Thus, meditation on this property of objects in lieu of objects themselves is uniquely unmistaken toward the world in a way that other concocted images never can be, since those concocted images, by representing enduring cohesive objects, differ from their momentary percepts. Jñānaśrīmitra's position appears to be a strong departure from Dharmakīrti, who seems to reduce being unmistaken to vividness. Jñānaśrīmitra, by contrast, seems to flinch at this reduction. Thus, he argues that meditation

[307] Ṭhakkura, 323–24.

on momentariness uniquely represents objects in a way other meditative objects cannot—representations of ultimate truths like momentariness are the only mental images that bridge the gap between static conceptual universals and the ultimately real particular. All other vivid images distort that ultimate truth by virtue of presenting a static, enduring object.[308]

Already, however, Jñānaśrīmitra's position produces its own slew of entirely new philosophical problems. Is not the image of momentary-*ness* (*kṣaṇika-tva*) just as much a conceptual fiction as horns or fire? Although moments themselves may be real, the abstraction of those moments into a property "momentariness" seems just as disparate from the momentary particular as the abstraction of "tableness" is from the collection of parts we deem "table." Thus, meditating on this property seems as equally far removed from reality as horns or the meditative appearance of fire. In all cases, the image does not seem to correspond with the percept. We will see how Tsongkhapa tackles this problem in chapter four, arguing these properties are universals instantiated in objects, not just mere fictional abstractions.

In summary of this section, we can see how Jñānaśrīmitra has worked to ensure a Hard theory of yogic perception. While Dharmakīrti seems to leave open the possibility of an irreal, pragmatic, and epistemically warranted object of yogic perception, Jñānaśrīmitra forecloses this possibility. The irreality of other mentally concocted vivid appearances, like meditation on fire, is not a test case for yogic perception because fire and the Four Noble Truths are efficacious relative to different intentions, the former of which cannot be accomplished in meditation. Thus, Dharmakīrti's pragmaticism does not import the irreality

[308] This position also accords nicely with Eltschinger's view, who argued that yogic perception is only of the Four Noble Truths (which includes impermanence). See n292.

of a slew of meditative objects. It is only the Four Noble Truths that are effective as a meditative object. This is also because meditation on the Four Noble Truths, including momentariness, is uniquely unmistaken towards its object because it captures the properties of objects. All other meditative objects do not represent how those actual objects exist because they represent them as enduring, being built off of inferences that reify objects. The inference of momentariness, by contrast, does not carry this reification and so is unmistaken when it becomes perceptual. Rather than accommodating the irreal, yogic perception, on this view, is the epitome of cognition of the real.

ii. The Mīmāṃsaka charge of redundancy

The previous debate concerned whether meditation is a valid form of knowledge given its tenuous relationship with real objects. In other words, Vācaspatimiśra questioned whether the Buddhist theory of yogic perception included a robust theory of correspondence and being unmistaken. The line of attack in Sucaritamiśra's (c.1120 CE) *Kāśika* is slightly different. Also a Mīmāṃsā adherent, he argues that even if we grant that an object in yogic meditation cogently represents a real object, we must wonder whether this appearance affords us any new information. Dharmakīrti himself argues, "An understanding (*sāṃvṛta*) that apprehends that which has already been apprehended is not accepted [as a valid cognition]. Cognition is instrumental to the degree it engages with [new information about] what objects are to be avoided or acquired."[309] In line with his pragmatist paradigm, Dharmakīrti stipulates that any

[309] *gṛhītagrahaṇān neṣṭaṃ sāṃvṛtaṃ dhīpramāṇatā / pravṛttestatpradhānatvād heyopādeyavastuni //* Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.3.

robust knowledge-producing instrument (*pramāṇa*) must afford new information about how to stay away from what we do not want or obtain what we do. If it merely tells us something we already know, then like a memory, it is not an epistemic instrument. If yogic perception does not afford new information of this sort, then it cannot be an epistemic instrument in the manner Buddhists claim. It is this potential weakness that Sucaritamiśra exploits.

> The strength of one's meditation is said to be the cause that produces the yogi's knowledge. But that [knowledge] cannot come from meditation on an object that was already conceived, nor is it an understanding that arises accidently [with no cause at all]. All things that are produced have a cause. Thus, why does that which is already understood through a different valid epistemic instrument have to be cultivated through meditation? And what even is that epistemic instrument? It is not inference. There is no earlier comprehension of what is *dharma* and what is not […] Only an object that is something to avoid or acquire is the thing that is desired to be known. And thus, if that object is already known, then meditation is useless. Even the compassionate one, [the Buddha], should [be able to] explain his scriptural teachings diligently for the sake of his students. He should not have to exhaust [himself] with the experience of meditation.[310]

As Sucaritamiśra points out, yogic perception cannot simply rehash what is already known: it cannot be meditation on something that is already conceived. Otherwise, per Dharmakīrti, it is not knowledge producing. Nor can meditation arise *ex nihilo*. As Jñānaśrīmitra stated, it is motivated by purposeful intention. But if meditation is simply a process of familiarizing oneself with an intentional object that "is already understood through a different valid epistemic instrument"—and it must be, since if prior to meditation that meditative object is not verified through such an instrument, then the meditator is merely self-inducing a hallucination—then yogic perception would seem by Dharmakīrti's own definition to "apprehend that which has already been apprehended" and thus not be epistemically

[310] K. Sambasiva Sastri, ed., *The Mîmâmsāślokavârtika with the Commentary Kāśikā of Sucaritamiśra*, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 99 (Trivandrum: Superintendent, Gov. Press, 1929), 217.

warranted. Furthermore, how could this pre-meditative verification of the meditative object be possible? It cannot occur through inference, since the truth of what is to be acquired (*dharma*) and what is to be avoided (*adharma*) is exactly *what is to be realized* in yogic perception. If inference has already determined *dharma* and *adharma*, then yogic perception is redundant. Sucaritamiśra uses Dharmakīrti's own reasoning against the Buddhist: if inference has already determined what "to avoid or acquire," since this is the pragmatic criterion of validity, "then meditation is useless," since it adds nothing to that determination.

Ratnakīrti, Jñānaśrīmitra's student, provides the Buddhist response to Sucaritamiśra's argument of meditation as redundant. Like Sucaritamiśra, Ratnakīrti also tries to overturn his opponent's argument on its own terms. That is, he attempts to show why the Mīmāṃsaka's rejection of meditation's validity would be problematic for their own system.

> [In the *Kāśikā*,] it says that [the yogi] does not engage in inference on *dharma* and *adharma*. But this is not the case. What do you even mean by the words "*dharma*" and "*adharma*"? If you mean the real objects that are momentary and without self, then that is not ascertained by perception [prior to meditation].[311] […] However, if you mean the proof of those objects like heaven, etc., then if there is no proof for the experience of those objects, then that is not our problem. This is because practical omniscience (*upayuktasarvajña*) is established by the direct knowledge of samsara and nirvana and all that attends it […] Indeed, [momentariness] must be apprehended either by perception or inference, since there is no other type of epistemic instrument that exists. But for those fixated on momentariness, etc., [in meditation], it is not perception [that has realized it]. After that true object has been determined by an exclusion[312]—i.e., inferentially—the perception

[311] This is another important reason for yogic perception in Dharmakīrti's thought, given that perception can grasp *(√grah*) but not determine or ascertain *(√nisci*) its object: *na pratyakṣaṃ kasyacin niścāyakam / tad ayam api gṛhṇāti tan na niścayena /.* "Perception does not determine anything. Even though it grasps it, that does not occur through determination." Gnoli, *The Pramanavarttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Autocommentary*, 31. Thus, even though sensory perception grasps impermanent objects, our conceptual apparatus is unable to determine the the reality of impermance from this expierence alone. Post-inferential yogic perception, on the other hand, affords a more direct encounter with impermanence. The subtleties of this, however are a matter of debate, one we will see between Taktsang and Tsongkhapa in chapter four.

[312] The reference to "exclusion" here invokes Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory. I will not burden reader with the details, but in short, *apoha* explains conceptual thinking as apprehending a double negation of the object. In this way, concepts correctly apprehend the object while distorting it, since the mind in this

> which directly knows that true object clearly [once that meditation has been perfected] is not the apprehension of something that has been apprehended [prior], since inference does not come in contact with the true object.[313]

Ratnakīrti recapitulates Sucaritamiśra's argument that the yogi cannot infer the object of meditation *a priori*, for then they would already know that object, and there would be no reason to meditate upon it. He questions Sucaritamiśra use of the words "*dharma"* and "*adharma*." As we saw in previous chapters, this reflects what one should take up and what one should abandon. If Sucaritamiśra intends this to mean what is to be realized about reality and what ignorance is to be abandoned, then he is incorrect in saying that the yogi does not infer this prior to meditation. The yogi has received prior teachings and contemplated the fact that objects are momentary and without self and that ignorance about their impermanence causes suffering—namely, the Four Noble Truths. If by "*dharma*" and "*adharma,*" however, Sucaritamiśra means those things that are to be taken up and abandoned from the point of view of his own school—things like heaven and bad rebirths respectively—then this is not the concern of the Buddhist, who is only preoccupied with understanding the nature of reality in order to achieve enlightenment—i.e., "practical omniscience." Ratnakīrti uses Sucaritamiśra's position against him, arguing that it is in fact the Mīmāṃsaka, who asserts objects like heaven as described in the Vedas, that is burdened with substantiating such objects. Implicitly, this would be difficult if one rejects yogic perception, as does the Mīmāṃsaka.

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case has the intentional object of an exclusion rather than the positive particular to which that exclusion refers.

313 Anantalāla Ṭhakkura, ed., "Sarvajñasiddhiḥ," in *Ratnakīrtinibandhavāli: Buddhist Philosophical Works of Ratnakīrti*, 2nd ed. (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975), 18–19.

Furthermore, Ratnakīrti argues that the initial inferential object of meditation is not the same as the final direct perception of that object when that meditation is perfected and becomes yogic perception. Thus, meditation cannot be redundant. This is because, as Dharmakīrti also argued, inferential understanding of spiritual truth obscures that truth by virtue of being conceptual. While inference of the meditative object and that object realized in yogic perception may have the same *referent*—namely, the Four Noble Truths—its appearance as a perceptual particular in yogic perception is markedly different from its conceptual appearance before yogic perception arises. Namely, that inference corresponds but is still mistaken. Buddhists argue that it is the superior unmistaken quality of the object in yogic perception that affords liberation, since it does not distort how that meditative object exists.

Ratnakīrti here is again indicative of his mentor's Hard view of yogic perception. While the initial inferential object of yogic perception may appear irreal—that is, an object that is mentally concocted but corresponds with reality—it would be infelicitous to collapse this irreal object with the object of yogic perception proper, when that meditation has reached its zenith. At this point, the percept of yogic perception loses its status as a mentally concocted inference and spills over into a perception of the actual object such that it "directly knows that true object clearly." Put succinctly, by distinguishing the true object of yogic perception from the meditative process of bringing a mentally constructed concept to mind, yogic perception becomes disassociated from engagement with irreal mental objects. Like Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti disambiguates perception of fire from that of the Four Noble Truths. Because the Four Noble Truths are uniquely valid as a meditative perception, yogic

perception does not provoke us to consider other irreal, meditative objects epistemically warranted.

b. Soft Views

While the previous section reflected Hard views from Jñānasrīmitra and Ratnakīrti, this section includes Soft views, those construals of yogic perception that carry with them some accommodation of irreality more broadly. Interestingly, these views are also expressed by Jñānasrīmitra and Ratnakīrti, but in response to a different opponent, the Naiyāyika Bhāsarvajña.

1. Bhāsarvajña's Nyāya critique of the Buddhist position

Bhāsarvajña first gives a lucid and accurate summary of the Buddhist account of yogic perception, drawing directly from the *Pramāṇavārttika.* He reiterates that while meditation is able to generate the clear appearance of any meditative object, the object of yogic perception proper—namely, the Four Noble Truths—is first verified by correct inference, so that *its* clear appearance is not an occasion for doubt, like that of a hallucination would be. He then offers his critique:

> But if all knowledge has no percept (*nirālambana*) and is merely reflexive awareness, then what distinguishes yogic perception from other perceptions? If you say that they are distinguished by either being pure or impure, [recall], then, that you say [in *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.281] that yogic perception, "appears clearly by clearing the web of conceptions."[314] Even if we grant this, it is

[314] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.281; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

> irrelevant to the objectivity of the Four Noble Truths, and the like. To say that direct perception of the Four Noble Truths occurs through one's mere reflexive awareness would be too broad, [since on its own it has insufficient resources to distinguish correct from incorrect reflexive awareness].[315]

Bhāsarvajña gives a sound critique. His first stage is to attack a Yogācāra idealist formulation of yogic perception. As we explored in chapter two, Dharmakīrti considers all perception to be grounded in reflexive awareness. But on its own, reflexive awareness cannot distinguish a vivid hallucination from the clear appearance of an actual object: reflexive awareness is the mind interacting with itself and does not entail representation of an external object. As Bhāsarvajña notes, Dharmakīrti advances his theory of reflexive awareness to substantiate Yogācāra idealism and obviate the epistemological need of external objects—perception occurs *sans* a percept (*nirālambana*). But if Dharmakīrti means to make sense of cognition without appeal to external objects, and thus all cognition is reflexive, then Dharmakīrti has eviscerated any way to differentiate correct cognitions from incorrect ones. A cognition's clarity becomes irrelevant to the question of its veracity. Since ostensibly any cognition can become clear with practice, clarity cannot serve as a criterion for validity. If, however, Dharmakīrti is arguing from the realist Sautrāntika point of view, Bhāsarvajña also explains how this is problematic.

> If you say the objectivity of those [Four Noble Truths] is from its image [and its relationship to the object], then do you agree with the position of the Sautrāntikas? If you agree, then how is it that [yogic perception can have knowledge] of past and future objects, [since according to the Sautrāntika, the past and future do not exist]? Since those are nonexistent, there is no [valid] mental image of it. And if it is a mental image of something that has been [previously] seen, heard, or inferred, which is augmented by mediation and appears clearly, then while [that appearance] exists, yogic perception would be mistaken, since there would be the appearance of the mental image of

[315] Śvāmī Yogīndrānanda, *Nyāyabhūṣaṇam*, 172.

> something [as if it were] present while it is [in fact] not present, like knowledge of a dream, or something of the sort.[316]

Bhāsarvajña points out that if Dharmakīrti assents to realism and thereby argues (as we saw Jñānaśrīmitra argue) that the mental image of momentariness represents momentary objects, then he has no recourse to demonstrate how yogic perception could apprehend past or future objects, since that momentariness precludes the existence of the past and future. Bhāsarvajña further argues that the Sautrāntika position cannot even account for perception of currently existing objects.

> If you say that [yogic perception] is not mistaken because it arises from correspondence [to an object], that cannot be the case, since you have agreed that when inference corresponds to [an object] it is [still] mistaken. [Objection:] *Despite being mistaken* (bhrānta)*, it can correspond* (saṃvādin)*, and thereby there is an object of a valid epistemic instrument.* [Reply:] But this runs counter to [your assertion] that perception is distinguished by being unmistaken, [and so yogic "perception" cannot be perceptual]. But even your theory of correspondence—[that a cognition can be epistemically warranted via correspondence and yet be mistaken]—is unsuitable. [Correspondence] can only have three possible meanings: seeing the object to be obtained (*prāpya-artha-pradarśaka*), seeing the objective thing with which one engages (*pravṛtti-viṣaya-pradarśaka*), or the fulfillment of causal efficacy (*arthakriyā-niṣpatti*) from the appearing object [itself]. So, which do you mean? [None of these] will give rise to knowledge of the past, etc., nor will knowledge of present objects arise if we assume the position of momentariness. Therefore, the Buddhists' description of yogic perception is untenable.[317]

Bhāsarvajña targets the Dharmakīrtian notion that yogic perception is preceded by an inference, given that inference in his system, as we have seen, is mistaken despite its ability to correspond. The Buddhist claims that the object of yogic perception is epistemically warranted because it has been vetted by inference. But as Bhāsarvajña notes, inference can only establish that a cognition corresponds, not that it is unmistaken. Inference is thus unable

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316 Śvāmī Yogīndrānanda, 172.

317 Śvāmī Yogīndrānanda, 172–73.

to validate yogic perception as an epistemically warranted perception, which requires its being unmistaken. Furthermore, because inference is always *post facto* and reality always momentary, inference never produces cognition of an object that currently exists. Even Dharmakīrti's appeal to causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) cannot explain cognition of presently existing objects, for although our inference allows us to fulfill our intents, the fulfillment of intent is not a cognition of an existing object.

Though lucid, Bhāsarvajña's argument misrepresents the Buddhist position at some points and begs the question at others. At the level of Yogācāra, the lack of correspondence with an external objects does not necessarily mean that Dharmakīrti must maintain that clarity is the only criterion for validity. Again, his appeal to causal efficacy allows him to argue that cognitions are valid to the degree they accomplish their aim. Clear cognition of the Four Noble Truths is not valid *just* because it is clear, but because that particular clear cognition leads to liberation. Thus, even at the level of idealism, there is sufficient criteria to differentiate valid from invalid cognitions. To argue that correspondence entails reference to external objects merely question begs Bhāsarvajña's own Nyāya realism, failing to confront Dharmakīrti's understanding of correspondence as pragmatic efficacy.

Bhāsarvajña's critique at the level of Sautrāntika also contains some question begging. He faults Dharmakīrti's account for not sufficiently being able to reject that yogic perception is mistaken. This is because yogic perception has a previously inferred object, and this establishes correspondence but not being unmistaken. However, Dharmakīrti never claims that inference is meant to establish yogic perception's being unmistaken. That is established by its clarity. Again, clarity is sufficient to establish being unmistaken because what is clear is necessarily nonconceptual, and nonconceptuality does not superimpose mistaken reifications.

This may be an idiosyncratic definition of being unmistaken, but until Bhāsarvajña engages with this definition on its own terms, he is merely question begging when he faults Dharmakīrti's theory of yogic perception as being mistaken because it does not engage with existing objects.

In sum, Bhāsarvajña seems to mix things up a bit. He faults Dharmakīrti for not being able to account for correspondence via vividness and being unmistaken via correspondence. But this was never Dharmakīrti's aim. Instead, Dharmakīrti accounts for correspondence via pragmatic efficacy and being unmistaken via vividness. However, Bhāsarvajña's final point does have some bite. The Buddhist theory of momentariness is especially problematic for the Sautrāntika. If only the present moment exists, the past and future do not. How then can the yogi have knowledge of the past and future, an ability we saw predicated of yogic perception in chapter two?

i. The Buddhist response

Jñānaśrīmitra and his student Ratnakīrti both tackle Bhāsarvajña's critique. Interestingly, however, they take different approaches: while Jñānaśrīmitra attempts to make the issue of external reality irrelevant, Ratnakīrti attempts to show how the Buddhist theory of yogic perception could accommodate it. First Jñānaśrīmitra:

> The objection from [Bhāsarvajna's] *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* is irrelevant in light of Yogācāra, since it proceeds to make its point already assuming the existence of external objects. Even when objections are cast [by the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*] against the position of total omniscience, this is refuted, since [we] don't assume [the existence of external objects]. Similarly, to the same extent that [we deny the existence of external objects], we also deny objects belong to the past or future. Thus, there is no [absurdity that there is a] mental image of something unreal [in yogic perception, since no mental images represent real

> objects in the way he assumes]. This is true even with regard to the present. Therefore, it is also true that there is no apprehension [of the past and future] through some knowledge produced by those [past or future objects]. But we have also shown that another possibility cannot be ruled out, that it is like a dream. In the same way that there is no mental image for the present, it is the same way for other times: those objects in the past and future. Similarly, [then], there should also be no past and future objects in reality, like the hair of an elephant.[318]

In order to extricate yogic perception from the critique that it perceives unreal objects, Jñānaśrīmitra is willing to jettison a realist ontology in which some mental images accurately represent real objects while others do not. Not being able to cognize past and future objects is irrelevant for a Yogācārin, according to whom even the present is a fiction. If everything is like a dream—a world of mental appearances—then temporality is merely a construct. In other words, to ask how mental images accord with past, present, and future objects is to put the cart before the horse. Rather, the question is why do we falsely believe that certain mental images inherently do or do not accord with temporal objects? In order to save yogic perception from cognizing the unreal, Jñānaśrīmitra advocates that all objects are irreal, only seemingly temporal, but ultimately appearances without referents.

Notice here that since Bhāsarvajña has introduced Yogācāra into the mix, Jñānaśrīmitra's argumentation takes a whole different route. While previously he was advocating a Hard view in which yogic perception takes no entailment of irreality, here Jñānaśrīmitra admits that *all objects* may be like a dream in order to defend his theory of yogic perception. When Jñānaśrīmitra concedes that all mental images function independently of external objects, and therefore stipulates only causal efficacy and clarity as criteria for epistemically warranted perception, he admits a Soft view that takes all objects to

[318] Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 341.

be "like a dream" and their temporality to be no more than a fiction, "like the hair of an elephant."

Jñānaśrīmitra then reiterates Bhāsarvajña's critique of the Buddhist position assuming realism. He notes Bhāsarvajña argues that correspondence has three possible meanings: (1) seeing the object to be obtained (*prāpya-artha-pradarśaka*), (2) seeing the objective thing with which one engages (*pravṛtti-viṣaya-pradarśaka*), and (3) the fulfillment of causal efficacy (*arthakriyā-niṣpatti*). As we saw, Bhāsarvajña argues that given the Buddhist theory of momentariness, none of these definitions can account for the cognition of a present object. Jñānaśrīmitra counters:

> This is merely a product of your being under the sway of intense envy, since it is not probative. If, as you say, with the intervening time [between] past and present objects [there is no correspondence], then it should be the same for intervening space. Any cognition of something that appropriately can be said to be occurring in a different place would be invalid. [Objection:] *That cognition is valid. But the others, [that is], past or future objects, are not [valid cognitions] at that time.* [Reply:] But that would be the same as saying, "[Objects] in [some other] place do not exist in the present." [But] on [our theory of] causal efficacy, whether [the object and its cognition] are proximate (*sannidhi*) in time or spatially proximate makes no difference. With respect to momentariness of the present, there is no *conventional* failure of epistemically warranted cognition, since through the superimposition of [there being] a unitary whole, there is a consistent object [that spans multiple moments]: that is the intention of what it means to be based on correspondence.[319]

Jñānaśrīmitra argues that if temporal disparity invalidates perception's correspondence with existing objects, then so should spatial disparity. It is not entirely clear on what basis he forms this *reductio*. Our modern sentiments might interpret this to mean that spatial disparity necessitates temporal disparity. In other words, the cognition of "present" objects separated by a distance also involve time—their light has to travel, their sounds have to reach us, etc.

[319] Ṭhakkura, 342.

Thus, on Bhāsarvajña's view, *no* cognition could be said to be of a present object. But it is not likely this how Jñānaśrīmitra is understanding perception. Instead, he may be simply saying that if proximity/presence (*sannidhi*) is necessary for perception, then that condition should apply to spatial and temporal proximity equally. And yet the Naiyāyika only problematizes temporal distality but not spatial distality.

But this rebuttal misses the mark. Bhāsarvajña's point is that perception cannot function within the Buddhis account of momentariness, which is temporal. To conflate that issue with spatiality misunderstands the terms of the debate, which concern how we can make sense of perception over time given momentariness. The issue of space is a *non sequitur.* Even if we do assume that seeing over distances entails the temporal dimension of perception, Jñānaśrīmitra retort falls flat against the Naiyāyika. On Nyāya realism, enduring universals are not fictious projections on momentary particulars, but robustly exist. Thus, cognition of the same object over time is cogent even with temporal delay. It is only the Buddhist, who subscribes to momentariness, for whom this is a problem. Jñānaśrīmitra thus seems more on target when he adds that although ultimately phenomena are momentary, they conventionally incorporate the superimposition of a spatial-temporal unity—a *res extensa*—and so from that point of view it is cogent to discuss cognition of the "same" object over time. In this conventional sense, perception is of the "same" object despite the time it takes for perception to occur.[320]

[320] This appears to be a slight departure from a stricter reading of correspondence as causal efficacy. On that view, there is no need to substantiate correspondence in terms of an ability to mentally represent an object that is cogently "out there." All that matters is whether the cognition fulfills desired ends. Here, however, Jñānaśrīmitra appears to want to give at least a conventional account of how perception represents an existing object.

Note again here that Jñānaśrīmitra's argumentative strategy is indicative of a Soft view. Yogic perception is supposed to cognize objects in the past, present, and future, but this seems impossible given the Buddhist theory of momentariness. Jñānaśrīmitra is thus challenged with how yogic perception can be unmistaken if it never has an existing object. Instead of trying to address the issue by keeping his rebuttal circumspect to yogic perception, as per a Hard view, he instead argues that the criticism is predicated on a false realist understanding of time. He argues this through reductio. If you think it is a problem for yogic perception to see objects in the past or future, then how does anyone see objects across space? Similarly, even correspondence is a conventional illusion. Conventionally we posit enduring wholes such that our perceptions accord with external objects. But this is just a convention. Ultimately, all perception does not correspond. Thus, Jñānaśrīmitra's analysis of yogic perception against Bhāsarvajña entails the irreality of perceptual objects in general, a Soft view.

Because Ratnakīrti is Jñānasrīmitra's direct student, it is interesting to see him respond in a different manner. Rather than eschew the issue through a rejection of external objects via Yogācāra, Ratnakīrti says the opposite, arguing that Bhāsarvajña's critique of the Yogācāra position is irrelevant because Buddhists present their position from the side of the Sautrāntika realist.

> The criticism in the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* [of yogic perception] in light of Yogācāra is irrelevant, since we have laid out our argument by assenting to external objects. He says, "How is it that [yogic perception can have knowledge] of past and future objects, [since within Sautrāntika, the past and future do not exist]? Since it is nonexistent, there is no mental image of it." But this is the result of failing to study our position. Since the subject of discussion is just practical omniscience, we are referring to the meditation on all objects as momentary and selfless, not to knowledge of all things. Thus, even if there is no cognition of past and future objects, that's no problem for our position. To this extent, the teaching on suffering and its cessation is established.

> Therefore, concerning the former, [practical omniscience], it comes from the *Avatāra*'s instruction based on momentariness, etc.[321]

Ratnakīrti argues that yogic perception strictly concerns insight into the Four Noble Truths, and so if a Sautrāntika position cannot account for perception of past and future objects, that is unproblematic for the goals of yogic perception. This seems indicative of a Hard view. Yogic perception is only concerned with the Four Noble Truths, and so nothing about how yogic perception apprehends its object carries entailments for how the past and future exist. However, as we saw in the last chapter, there is a longstanding tradition in Buddhism that yogic perception is also the epistemic instrument of omniscience. He is thus reticent to reject the role of yogic perception in omniscience entirely.

> But this does not mean, on the other hand, that we deny total omniscience. Thus, once one achieves the direct [perception] of the Four Noble Truths, due to superior compassion—which is a cause that functions within that unobstructed [mind]—that mind will engage with all objects due to [the yogi's] resolution [to accomplish] the aims of others in all their forms. At that time, there will be the attainment of that special method that resembles [their goal] through prolonged effort. That which is practiced arises, even without divine intervention, just like a dream that comes true. They come to have knowledge [in the form] of a supreme appearance that represents each individual aspect of space and time, such as all objects and each [and every one of] their own atoms. Thus, it is not the case that [yogic perception] does not correspond and deviates from existing objects, since [it culminates in] the appearance of individual objects. Normal people know a thing through shared identity and causality. But yogis grasp things merely through shared identity. This the reason. And it is said in the [Pramāṇa]vārtika [3.532]:
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> *The conceit of subject and object is with regard to confused thinking.*
> *The state of yogis is inconceivable.*[322]
>
> Thus, even if there is nothing which produces [a cognition] of the future and the past, those appearances [that arise] in the knowledge of yogis are not falsified.[323]

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321 Ṭhakkura, "Sarvajñasiddhiḥ," 21.

322 While Ratnakīrti's citation of Dharmakīrti reads "subject and object" (*grāhya-grāhaka*), Miyasaka's edition has "object and its characteristics" (*grāhya-lakṣaṇa*). Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.3.532.

323 Ṭhakkura, "Sarvajñasiddhiḥ," 21–22.

Before when Ratnakīrti said that yogic perception only involves the Four Noble Truths, he appeared intent on a Hard view. Suddenly here, as he discusses yogic perception *qua* omniscience, he seems to pivot back toward a Soft view more simpatico with Jñānaśrīmitra. Although we cannot point to robust past and future objects, this fact does not undermine the yogis' omniscient ability to represent all objects. Again, this happens "like a dream." The *explanans* used to explain the yogi's ability to perceive all objects entails those objects irreality, such that the yogi is omniscient of the past and future even if no past and future objects exist. He also notes that normal people conceive of objects as being causally related in addition to the potential of their holding a relationship of shared identity. These, as we saw earlier, are the only two modes of relationship available upon which to build inferences per the Buddhist. But in this case, Ratnakīrti may be gesturing here to the realist Sautrāntika theory in which external objects cause their perceptual cognition. The object produces a mental image which produces its eventual apprehension by reflexive awareness.[324] However, on the Yogācāra realization that all objects are just reflexive awareness, there is no need to speak of a causal relationship between an external object and its cognition. While normal people think they recognize objects because they are the cause of their perception, or can identify an object based of its characteristics, yogis only engage in the latter without any conceit of representations having some causal connection to their referents. Although conventional epistemology has to make sense of how objects causally produce the mental images that exist in consciousness, yogic perception is "inconceivable" in that it skirts the issue of causality entirely. The question of how past objects or future objects causally relate

[324] For a discussion, see Hattori Masaaki, "Realism and the Philosophy of Consciousness-Only," in *Yogācāra, The Epistemological Tradition and Tathāgatagarbha*, ed. Paul Williams, Critical Concepts in Religious Studies (London: Routledge, 2005), 53–59.

to appearances therein is thus simply ill-formed. Again, by vitiating external objects in order to make sense of yogic omniscience, Ratnakīrti imports an irreality indicative of a Soft view.

Ratnakīrti gives room once more to a potential interlocutor who would insist that mental images are only cogent if they refer to actual objects.

> [Objection:] *Well, it is just a rule that knowledge of things that are not present is a mental image without a percept.* [Reply:] This is not the case, since even if it is not present, through meditation on an object, that consciousness represents the mental image of that time and place. So how is there no percept? And since it apprehends [that object] in that way—[i.e., as being in the past or future]—[yogic perception] reaches the distinctive time it apprehends, just like a dream that comes true. Thus, [Prajñākaragupta's] Bhāṣya [verse 615] says:
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> *In the same way, there is no contradiction between having a perception connected to a particular time, like autumn,*[325] *or whenever, [and ultimately there being no past or future].*
>
> *Even if he does not see [that past or future moment] in connection with that time and does not clearly apprehend it, there is no fault.*
>
> Since the appearance of reality is just consciousness, it cannot be said to even occur in the present. Similarly, [if we accept time] and consider momentariness, then there is no problem with saying conventionally [there is the perception of an object over time], since [the cognition of] the same object [over time] is a conventional superimposition of unity.[326]

This argument is again reminiscent of Jñānaśrīmitra, arguing that an appearances-only ontology makes the question of mental images' relationship to present objects moot. He draws on an example from Prajñākaragupta about a perception of something occurring in autumn. His point is that when we are trying to substantiate the possibility of yogic perception of the past and future, we are not looking for some metaphysical guarantee that the object that appears in precognition or retrocognition is *really* in the past or the future. Rather, the appearance itself provides the sought-after temporal information, and, in fact,

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[325] Sānkṛtyānana's edition has *śarīra* (body) instead of Ratnakīrti's quotation as *śarad* (autumn). Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 156. Given the context, Ratnakīrti's quotation is more likely correct.

[326] Ṭhakkura, "Sarvajñasiddhiḥ," 22.

there is nothing other than this to substantiate that it is a perception of a particular time. So, for example, if I have a meditative experience in which I see some event happen in the midst of deciduous trees losing their leaves, I know it must have happened in the Fall. We may intuitively think that, surely, there is a difference between a present hallucination of a past or future event and *actually* peering through time to see some past or future object. But Ratnakīrti and Prajñākaragupta suggest that such instincts are mired in ignorance; all we really have are appearances, and there is no external objects in the present, past, or future to adjudicate if those appearances *really* are of those temporal objects. If they have sufficient temporal content—e.g., they appear to take place in the Fall when now it is Spring—and lead to desired ends—e.g., a precognition allows one to effectively predict a future event or a retrocognition reliably recalls a past one—then they correspond. Lastly, Ratnakīrti recapitulates, almost verbatim, Jñānasrīmitra's argument about why the perception of present objects is not an issue: conventionally, due to the superimposition of unity, conventional objects do have spatio-temporal extension, and thus despite the time delay in their cognition, we can conventionally say that cognition represents "the same" object that instigated its cognition.

This all again represents a Soft view of yogic perception. In order to make sense of yogic perception's ability to see temporal objects, Ratnakīrti must contort his ontology to accept a myriad of irreal formulations—there are no external objects, past and future objects do not exist, and the appearance of perceiving the same object over time (though conventionally valid) is ultimately an illusion. It is noteworthy that Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti switch between this Soft view and the Hard view indicative of their rebuttal against the Mīmāṃsakas. But it is also not suprising that they switch to a Soft view when

defending against Bhāsarvajña, since he critiqued the Buddhist view from the point of view of idealist Yogācāra, which inherently supposes the irreal. Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti's adaptable strategy here is representative of what Sara McClintock has dubbed a "sliding scale of analysis."[327] When arguing from a realist Sautrāntika point of view, their arguments mainly stick to Hard formations. This makes sense, since Sautrāntika realism is antithetical to the type of irrealism advocated by the Soft view. Yogācāra idealism, however, is perfectly amenable to irrealism. In fact, it encourages it, since its very aim is to undermine the reality of external objects. In this way, instead of claiming that Hard and Soft views of yogic perception dictate how each theorist construes ontology, it is better said that it is their ontology—realist Sautrāntika or idealist Yogācāra—that dictates these authors' description of yogic perception as either Hard or Soft.

Both Hard and Soft views, however, are Continuous construals of yogic perception. Yogic perception either leaves our epistemic warrants for the reality of other objects intact (the Hard view) or those epistemic warrants contort to accommodate the irreality of yogic perception's object (the Soft view). But in either case, there is an effort to preserve the probative power of epistemic warrants in light of yogic perception. This is not true of the Discontinuous view. In the Discontinuous view, yogic perception is a type of super-epistemic warrant, one that invalidates the epistemic warrant of our perceived world and transcends normal epistemic instruments. It is these formulations to which we now turn.

[327] McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*, 85–91.

c. Discontinuous Yogic Perception

In the previous two sections, we saw how Buddhists in Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's lineage argued for Continuous views between yogic perception and other epistemic instruments, both Hard and Soft. However, there is another entire lineage of Buddhist thought that sought to prove the opposite, that yogic perception *transcends* and is discontinuous with normal epistemic warrants. The earliest articulation of this position may predate even Dignāga. The following passage is from Asaṅga's (fl. 4th century CE) *Mahāyānasaṃgraha.*

> Why should one see objects as nonexistent even though they appear? The Bhagavan has said, "When the bodhisattva has four realizations, they comprehend that no consciousness has an object. These are the realizations that (1) the mind is the reason why [things] are cognized differently [by different beings]. For example, *pretas*, animals, humans, and gods see the same object differently. (2) Consciousness perceives things in the absence of any referents, just like [thoughts of] the past and future, and in dreams and illusions [one doesn't perceive anything real]. (3) If objects existed, they would be known spontaneously and correctly, and then because consciousness perceives those objects spontaneously, they would *ipso facto* perceive them correctly. (4) They understand consciousness to operate in three ways: (4a) For bodhisattvas and meditators who have gained control of their minds, whatever they wish for appears. (4b) For yogis who achieve concentration (*śamatha*) and apply their insight (*vipaśyanā*), objects appear merely through their attention. (4c) For those who obtain nonconceptual gnosis, no objects appear at all." This is the how knowledge of objects operates in three ways. I have already proven that objects don't exist through the arguments given earlier.
>
> In verse:
>
> *One object appears differently for* pretas*, animals, humans, and gods. Thus we assert there are no objects.*
>
> *Things like dreams, illusions, and [thoughts of] the past appear dualistically. Thus, though they have no referent, it is still appropriate to speak of their referents.*
>
> *If objects were established as objects, there would be no nonconceptual consciousness. And in the absence of nonconceptual consciousness, there would be no way to become a Buddha.*
>
> *For accomplished bodhisattvas and yogis, objects like the earth* [kasiṇa]*, etc., appear simply through their desire.*

> *For anyone who has the aptitude [for insight] and has achieved concentration, objects appear when they set their minds on any phenomena.*
>
> *But for those who have gained nonconceptual wisdom, no objects appear. Thus, know that there are no objects, and because there are no objects, there is no mind.*[328]

Although Asaṅga does not use the appellation "yogic perception" explicitly, he is clearly describing something similar to what Dharmakīrti defines as yogic perception in *Pramāṇavārttika* verses 3.281-6. Both this and Dharmakīrti's text describe the ability of yogis to generate vivid appearances in meditation. Asaṅga specifically mentions that this meditative ability is predicated on concentration (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*). We saw in the introduction that Prajñākaragupta, Dharmakīrti's immediate commentator, also argues that yogic perception depends on having generated concentration and insight. Both Asaṅga and Dharmakīrti also use the example of the earth *kasiṇa* as indicative of the type of entities that can appear in meditation.

However, Asaṅga is much more demure about the ontological status of these appearances than Dharmakīrti. Dharmakīrti (writing from the Sautrāntika realist point of view in his *Pramāṇavārttika*) makes explicit that these meditative appearances, like the earth *kasiṇa*, are unreal (*abhūta*). Asaṅga makes no such concession. And it is obvious why. Arguing from the idealist Yogācāra point of view, *all* appearances, not just those that are meditatively cultivated, are ultimately irreal, since they do not represent anything out there in the world. Asaṅga's Soft view here invokes some similar examples to those marshaled by Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti in the last section. For example, the past and future do not exist, and yet we have thoughts about them, and dreams and illusions appear to have real world referents but yet do not.

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[328] Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Theg pa chen po bsdus pa," 15b–16a.

However, Asaṅga goes beyond a Soft view here. The yogic ability to generate irreal appearances is only penultimate. The final goal of yogic meditation is to "obtain nonconceptual gnosis, [where] no objects appear at all." In the versed section, Asaṅga describes stages of realization that appear to resemble the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM) described by Lindtner in relation to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra.* In the first stage, one realizes that objects are like a dream, and thus there are no external objects. Because only the mind exists, the yogi is able to generate appearances at will. However, the yogi eventually realizes that even the mind is not real. At the final rungs of meditative insight, one transcends appearances completely.[329] The object of yogic perception is thus completely beyond and Discontinuous with the epistemic warrant afforded normal appearances.

Asaṅga's meditation methods are the starting point of a lineage of yogic meditation manuals that span the period from at least from Dignāga to Kamalaśīla (740-795 CE). These are Dignāga's *Yogāvatāra,* Jñānacandra's (8th century CE) *Yogācāryā-bhāvanā-tātparyārthanirdeśa,* Jñānagarbha's (8th century CE) *Yogabhāvanāmārga* and Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanāyogāvatāra*.[330] Some of these texts do not make explicit mention of yogic perception. However, we can see that they each progressively build on Asaṅga's characterization of yogic meditation, culminating in a full-fledge theory of yogic perception in Kamalaśīla's

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[329] Although Candrakīrti, as we saw earlier in this chapter, criticizes Asaṅga's rejection of external objects, both authors describe yogic perception as Discontinuous. Candrakīrti also may be drawing from Asaṅga in this regard. We saw Candrakīrti make an argument concerning different beings seeing the same object differently, specifically, a ghost's seeing pus in a waterfall that humans see as water. This example is also likely drawn from Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṃgraha. Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology," 913. Candrakīrti is also, like Asaṅga, part of this lineage I describe as a Discontinuous understanding of yogic perception, where this insight transcends normal epistemic instruments. Because he does not cast this discussion in terms of yogic perception proper, I have not included his analysis of this realization here, but see MacDonald, "Knowing Nothing: Candrakīrti and Yogic Perception."

[330] Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, 281; Acri, *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons*, 76–77.

Bhāvanāyogāvatāra. We already explored Dignāga's *Yogāvatāra* in chapter two. There we also saw the idea that the yogic meditation culminates in appearanceless wisdom. In traditional Tibetan doxography, the remaining three thinkers— Jñānacandra, Jñānagarbha, and Kamalaśīla—are all grouped under "false aspectarians (*rnam rdzun pa, alīkākāravāda*)" in contrast to the "true aspectarians (*rnam bden pa, satyākāravāda*)," of which Jñānasrīmitra and his student Ratnakīrti were two prominent members. In essence, the debate between these schools concerns the ultimate reality of mental content. Independent of the issue of whether mental images refer to some external reality, this controversy questions the existence of mental images themselves. While it is tempting to see this as an epistemological issue, Yuichi Kajiyama identifies it as more aptly soteriological, or perhaps gnoseological. That is, the question is whether mental content persists upon awakening.[331]

One can then immediately appreciate how this issue relates to yogic perception at the level of a Buddha. Does yogic perception eviscerate or accommodate appearances? In articulating a Soft view of yogic perception, Jñānasrīmitra and Ratnakīrti admit that all appearances are irreal, but never advocate that yogic perception escapes them entirely. The yogi may see the irreality of appearances as nondual with the mind. But this fact does not thereby jettison them entirely. To see appearances as illusory is sufficient—seeming to be of external objects but not actually. Jñānacandra, Jñānagarbha, and Kamalaśīla—and perhaps Dignāga?—by contrast, favor Discontinuous arguments: ultimate yogic perception involves not just seeing appearances as irreal, but in not seeing them at all. Yogic perception engenders not just an irreal ontology, but an anti-ontology, in which appearances are not just

331 Yūichi Kajiyama, "Controversy between the sākāra- and nirākāra-vādins of the Yogācāra School-Some Materials," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu)* 14, no. 1 (1965): 429–418, https://doi.org/10.4259/ibk.14.429.

irreal in their failure to accord with anything external, but completely unreal—those appearances *themselves* do not exist.

We start first with Jñānacandra. His *Yogācāryā-bhāvanā-tātparyārthanirdeśa* makes no specific mention of yogic perception. However, his description of the process of meditation is indicative of the MMM. That is, although one provisionally begins with the rejection of external objects and progresses to the realization that everything is mind only, one eventually realizes that even mental appearances are untenable. Jñānacandra explains:

> Because whosoever desires unsurpassable, pure, and complete enlightenment will have to gain nonconceptual wisdom, one must perpetually meditate on the fact that "all things are mind only" is itself mind only. Similarly, having an insight about mental appearances, one sees that nothing has the nature of being a physical entity, and thus there is no subject and no object […] This means that not only is [nonconceptual cognition] unmistaken, but free of even the subtlest atom.[332]

Jñānacandra makes clear that the rejection of physical objects is not tantamount to an ontological reification of the mind. Again, mind only is provisional, leading to the higher realization that neither the mind nor its object can be ontologically reified. Just after this section, Jñānacandra also quotes from his own teacher, Nāgamitra (7th-8th centuries CE), "Seeing the nature of phenomena just as they are, [the meditator] is freed." In the introduction, we explored the lineage of Dignāga's definition of yogic perception as "seeing just the object (**arthamātradṛk, don tsam mthong*)." Nāgamitra's construal of meditative realization as "seeing the nature of phenomena just as they are (**dharmasvabhāvatathatāmātradṛk*, *chos kyi rang gi ngo bo nyid de bzhin nyid tsam mthong ba*)*"* seems simpatico with Dignāga's definition here. However, in contrast to Continuous

[332] Prajñavarma and Ye shes sde, trans., "*Yogacaryābhāvanātātparyārthanirdeśa, Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i bsgom pa'i don mdor bsdus pa," in *Dpe bsdur ma bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4077 and 4546, vol. 78 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994), 346–47.

views we explored earlier, Jñānacandra appears to insist that the wisdom afforded by yogic meditation completely vitiates the world as it appears to us now. That is, when yogic perception is free from error, "not even the subtlest atom" appears. To be unmistaken is thus not simply to see the world without conceptual superimposition and realize its irreality, but to not see it at all. This is again characteristic of Discontinuous views.

The next text is Jñānagarbha's *Yogabhāvanāmārga*, or *The Way of Yogic Meditation.* Jñānagarbha was the grand-teacher of Kamalaśīla. This text again incorporates several characteristics of a Discontinuous view of yogic perception we have analyzed thus far:

> Furthermore, some say this [wisdom] is established based on concentration (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyana*). That is, insight perceives [its object] accompanied by concentration. Concentration is [to have a] one-pointed mind. The defining characteristic of the awakened mind is that it engages with the object of emptiness. This is known as the transcendent mind (**anyasthānacitta, gzhan dag las sems*). Likewise, the mind with these [qualities] is called the mind of concentration. Because it appears with the mind of emptiness, [that mind] is known as the realization of reality, the object of fixation. [...] Even if one does rouse the mind in that way [such that they understand] all phenomena are empty like the sky, there are still erroneous appearances, due to [the tendency] to differentiate cause from effect, like a dream, an illusion, or whatever. In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, it is said, "Phenomena do not arise, but they are not nonexistent. Thus, they are like an illusion, a mirage, a city of ghosts, a dream, or an emanation"[333] [...] Although [yogis] grasp transcendent reality directly, the yogi ought only and without relent understand all phenomena as being like a dream.[334]

The reference to the necessity of concentration and insight again here mirrors Asaṅga's definition of yogic meditation, as well as the *sine qua non* of yogic perception per Prajñākaragupta. We also see employment of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra,* in this case to suggest, like Jñānacandra, that all phenomena are dream-like. This appears to be a Soft view: the yogi

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[333] 'Gos chos grub, "*Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Lang kar gshegs pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo," 217a. However, Jñānagarbha's quotation of the second half of the phrase, "a dream, or an emanation," is not found in the Sde dge recension of the Buddhist canon.

[334] "*Yogabhāvanāmārga, Rnal 'byor bsgom pa'i lam," in *Dpe bsdur ma bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3909, vol. 64 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994), 12–13.

is encouraged to continually recognize the irreality of these appearances. But in *alīkākāravāda* fashion, Jñānagarbha seems to suggest that the realization of ultimate truth is antithetical to these appearances. In other words, appearances continue *despite* the yogi's realization of emptiness. The challenge for the yogi is thus to be able to recognize appearances as illusions while cultivating a perception of reality that transcends them. This suggests yogic realization at its intermediary stage, where the yogi is not yet free of appearances but has had a glimpse beyond them, and thus recognizes the world of appearances as being dream like.[335] Thus, although the insistence that all reality is dreamlike is indicative of a Soft view, which point to the irreality of appearances, Jñānagarbha sets up a further distinction: that the *actual* reality the yogi realizes transcends those appearances. Seeing appearances as irreal is only palliative until the yogi can maintain their perception of another reality *beyond* those appearances (**tadanya, de las gzhan pa*).

Such a view becomes more explicit in the works of our final author for this section, who wrote the last and most comprehensive meditation manual of these three texts under consideration, Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanāyogāvatāra.* Like the other texts, he begins again by emphasizing the importance of concentration and insight*:*

> The essence of all meditation (*sāmadhi*) is concentration. Thus, it is said,
> *The protectors of the world are beautified by their golden bodies.*
> *The bodhisattva who puts their mind on that object has meditative equipoise.*[336]
> The body of the buddha is yellow like pure gold and adorned with the major and minor marks and is radiant with rays of light. Generating a desire for that, one abandons harmful thoughts and intentions. Sitting up straight, one sits in front of a cast image or drawing of that body. Doing this daily, one sees it or

[335] This position is clearly articulated by Taktsang Lotsāwa (1405-1477), whom we will explore in the fourth chapter.

[336] Bande Dharma tā shī, ed., "*Sarvadharmasvabhāvasamatāvipañcitasamādhirāja, Chos thams cad kyi rang bzhin mnyam pa nyid rnam par spros pa ting nge 'dzin gyi rgyal po," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, trans. Śrī Lendrabodhi, Toh. no. 127, vol. Mdo sde, ta (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 22b.

its parts completely and perceptually. Furthermore, the nature of all wisdom is based on insight. Thus, one must study further. Why? It is said,

Insight arises from purifying the view, which itself comes from study and contemplation.[337]

Therefore, having listened extensively with devotion to the definitive meaning of the Buddha-dharma and the meaning of truth, one should dispel doubt through conviction in what has become certain through contemplation.[338]

Kamalaśīla's instructions on how to develop concentration are unique in comparison to the other two texts, advocating the use of the body of the Buddha as a meditative object. This suggests some simpatico with the *kasiṇa* method explored earlier, where one mediates both on an actual disk of earth and imagined earth in order to eventually control that element. Here, an actual cast image is like a training wheel for meditation on a visualized buddha. We will see in chapter four how Tsongkhapa identifies this same visualization exercise as vital to creation stage (*utpattikrama, skyed rim*) Tantric practice, and how he further describes the vividness of the meditational deity as afforded by yogic perception. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Kamalaśīla's description of daily meditation resulting in vividness of the buddha's body—in which it is seen "completely and perceptually"—seems simpatico with Dharmakīrti's assertion in the *Pramāṇavārttika* that yogic perception produces a perceptual appearance of the meditative object. Both describe the same meditative process and goal of generating a vivid visualization. Also like Dharmakīrti, Kamalaśīla asserts that mere concentration—concentration on just *any* meditative object—is not the end goal; it is the object gleaned through insight that ought to be cultivated. Kamalaśīla's description of insight thus also seems to resonate with Dharmakīrti's assertion in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* that we

337 "*Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, Dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, Toh. no. 106, vol. Mdo sde, ca (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 54a.

338 Prajñavarma and Ye shes sde, trans., "*Bhāvanāyogāvatāra, Rnal 'byor gsum pa la 'jug pa," in *Dpe bsdur ma bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 4077 and 4546, vol. 64 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994), 195–96.

explored earlier, which states, "The yogi gains knowledge of [an object] through hearing about it. Through reasoning about that object, it is made certain, and by fixating upon it, the yogi meditates."[339]

Unlike Dharmakīrti, however, Kamalaśīla next proceeds to formulate yogic meditation under the MMM schema, culminating in an objectless meditation.

> That [Buddha's] body is empty of intrinsic existence. It transcends existence and nonexistence. It exists free from elaboration. Likewise, all phenomena are nothing other than mental imputation. Take this to heart. Therefore, think that all phenomena are ultimately without intrinsic characteristics. The thought "there is no intrinsic existence" must also be abandoned using pure wisdom. Even consciousness of an object free from existence and nonexistence is itself free from existence and nonexistence. In that way, meditate without any intentional object. One investigates the mind with the mind repeatedly in this fashion. And thus, even when the mind has some intentional object, it will naturally cease to superimpose its proliferations. One should then rest in that extremely vivid [appearance] of reality. Do not let the mind waver. Why? Because when it does, all entities become objects grasped by subjects. But with [a stable] mind, those objects are pulverized into particles. They do not exist when analyzed. The [perceiving] subject is just the same. [Objects] appear [just] as mental images, so abide in that aforementioned state in which [mental] wavering is pacified [and those mental images no longer occur].[340]

In stepwise fashion, Kamalaśīla instructs the meditator to realize that even the irreality of appearances is itself a superimposition that must be overcome. Like Jñānagarbha, Kamalaśīla argues there is an intermediary stage in which there are appearances, but one does not reify their existence. This seems to be the stage at which Soft, *satyākāravādin* views, like those held by Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti stop, since they do not discuss final realization an erasure of appearances. But according to Kamalaśīla, "Even consciousness of an object free from existence and nonexistence is itself free from existence and nonexistence." The appearance of any object, even one that is neither reified as existing or nonexisting, must

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339 Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇaviniścaya, Tshad ma rnam par nges pa," 161a.

340 Prajñavarma and Ye shes sde, "*Bhāvanāyogāvatāra, Rnal 'byor gsum pa la 'jug pa," 196–97.

itself be transcended. Kamalaśīla elaborates that this is because the appearance of objects is the fault of mental perturbation, and so one must "meditate without any intentional object" in order to perceive reality. Like Jñānacandra's notion that there is not even the appearance of the "subtlest atom," so too Kamalaśīla argues that "with [a stable] mind, those objects are pulverized into particles."

This is again a Discontinuous view of yogic perception, the irreality of appearances is a provisional stage preceding their destruction. Kamalaśīla's articulation of Discontinuous yogic perception is even clearer in his *Madhyamakāloka,* where he gives a targeted analysis of the relationship between inference and yogic perception:

> How can the nature of objects determined by nonmistaken (*abhrānta*) cognition be challenged by inference? If it were challenged, then perception could be discredited. And if perception were discredited, then even inference would have no foundation. Inference is based on perception. So, the claim that it can overturn perception offers no recourse. Some also claim that, [furthermore], the object established by perception is not overturned by inference. Thus, [perception and inference are reliable] to achieve one's aims. [They argue that] if [perception and inference] are sound, then the realists must be right, [since it is only in the case that perception and inference refer to real objects that they could be effective in this manner]. This position, however, is to be rejected. The masters divided perception into two types: yogic perception and the perception of common [people]. The perception of common people is not nonmistaken with regard to the ultimate. Otherwise, everyone [would have] yogic perception and no one would be on the side [of ignorant] seeing. Assuredly, common perception is separate from yogic perception and thus is not nonmistaken. Even so, since [common perception] corresponds with objects that exist just like a dream, or whatever, is it is said to be conventionally unmistaken.[341]

[341] Penpa Dorje and Rāmaśaṅkara Tripāṭhī, eds., *Madhyamakālokaḥ* (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001), http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/241/1014; Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Madhyamakāloka, Dbu ma snang ba," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 3887, vol. Dbu ma, sa (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 179a. The pagination of the Sanskrit edition is unclear, but look up "*abhrāntajñānenādhyavasitaḥ khalu vastusvabhāvaḥ kathaṃ*…" in the digitized version.

Kamalaśīla first argues against the notion that inference could ever invalidate perception. Inference relies on perception, so it is impossible that inference could eat its own tail, as it were, and invalidate its foundation.[342] Some argue that, therefore, perception and inference never deviate. That is, although it is true that inference can never overturn perception, it must always corroborate perception. This position is similar, though not exact, to Abhinavagupata's interlocutor: "According to others, the reality of customary [objects] is affirmed when their perception accords with yogic perception." In that formulation, yogic perception always had to agree with normal perception. Here, the object of yogic perception must be corroborated by inference.

Kamalaśīla likely has Dharmakīrti in mind here. He recapitulates his *arthakriyā* theory, namely that inference is valid the degree to which it fulfils purposeful intention. We also saw Jñānasrīmitra (in his capacity as a Sautrāntika realist) discuss the importance of inference for yogic perception. Correct inference determines which objects cultivated in meditation appropriately convert to yogic perception. Objects that have not been inferentially validated before meditation culminate in mere illusions. This, we noted, was indicative of a Continuous view: inference and yogic perception are continuous in that they must agree.

However, Kamalaśīla rejects this view. He argues that in fact the object of yogic perception *is* Discontinuous with inference. In fact, unmistaken perception contradicts inference.[343] He thus is forced to differentiate two types of perception: normal perception, which does accord with inference, and yogic perception, which transcends the epistemic

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[342] See the introduction on why in Indian epistemology inference relies on perception.

[343] While Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti, as we saw, argue that being mistaken only effects the clarity of the object, Kamalaśīla here takes the error as more egregious. Inference is mistaken to the degree that it can only accord with general perception but has no connection to the reality realized in yogic perception.

instruments, including inference. Kamalaśīla thus qualifies Dharmakīrti's definition of all perception as unmistaken. Normal perception is only *conventionally* unmistaken, while yogic perception is *ultimately* unmistaken. Interestingly, this notion of there being two different types of perception—one yogic and one common—is exactly the *absurdum* that we saw Jñānasrīmitra reject against Vācaspatimiśra in the previous section. Jñānasrīmitra argued that because perception is continuous with inference, there is no violation of parsimony, or "absurdity that [yogic perception] is a different type of perception." Kamalaśīla, by contrast, by advocating this discontinuity between yogic perception and inference seems forced to bite the bullet on a ruptured parsimony. This is not problematic for Kamalaśīla, since his goal is to separate yogic perception from the other epistemic instruments. Because the realization of ultimate reality is beyond the ken of the inferable, yogic perception must be discontinuous with inference and the other normal epistemic instruments.

All of this is to show that there are different views on how yogic perception relates to the other epistemic instruments. The Soft and Discontinuous views seem to align at one stage. Even though Kamalaśīla and his predecessors argue that ultimate yogic perception is appearanceless, there is an intermediary stage in which, drawing from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra,* appearances are seen to be dream-like or illusory. This description of their irreality aligns with the Soft view that yogic perception entails the illusory nature of all phenomena. But while Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnākīrti seem to preserve this irreality to appearances, the final goal according to those in Asaṅga's lineage is to rid oneself of these appearances entirely. This final stage is indicative of the MMM. These differing final views of the ontological status of appearances clearly map onto to each author's respective *satyākāravāda* and *alīkākāravāda* positions. It is these positions that inform their reasoning about yogic

perception relationship to appearances, whether yogic perception culminates in their irreality (Soft view) or their erasure (Discontinuous).

iii. Conclusion

This chapter began with a debate between Dunne and Eltschinger on how Dharmakīrti understood the object of yogic perception. Dunne argued that Dharmakīrti understood it as irreal, as something pragmatically effective but not tangibly real in the way we might expect of quotidian objects. Eltschinger, by contrast, argues that Dharmakīrti accepts no such irreality, that the object of yogic perception must be of the real.

In Part I, I argued that this ambiguity surrounding yogic perception's object is not just an exegetical difficulty surrounding Dharmakīrti. In fact, this same ambiguity is inherent in those texts preceding Dharmakīrti. We first saw this ambiguity in the *Mahāsattipaṭṭhānasutta*, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra,* the *Visuddhimagga,* and even in Vasubandhu and Tāranātha's anecdote about the meditation of bones, where the ontological status of the appearance of these bones was never defined. Although the phenomenological analysis—how they appear and how one can manipulate their appearance to garner meditative dexterity—was comprehensive, the question of their existence was never fully resolved in those texts. This ambiguity was exacerbated by this meditation's similarity to other meditative practices, like the *kasiṇa* method, which are equally ontologically liminal—sometimes denoting looking at an actual disk of earth, sometimes imagining it, and sometimes producing actual earth through meditative ability.

Candrakīrti is the earliest figure to give an analysis of this question. The bones appear real but are an idiosyncratic appearance, since they are not shared. However, even here the ontology is still ambiguous, since Candrakīrti (perhaps counterintuitively) cites this idiosyncracy of bones as evidence for why no cognitive episode can be *mind-only.* If the world were mind only, then there would be nothing to guarantee that my own mental apparitions would be private. If everything is mind only, what stops my mental appearances from being on public display? Thus, the fact that I have my own private, physical object ensures that my perception can be idiosyncratic.

Dharmakīrti seems to inherit the ambiguity of the examples he uses in formulating his theory of yogic perception. While he is more definite about the bones—calling them unreal (*abhūta*)—his use of bones as an example of meditative visualization calls into question the degree to which yogic perception's object is real, prefiguring the debate between Dunne and Eltschinger. In analyzing this debate, I said it suggested three possibilities. (1) A Hard view of yogic perception, where yogic perception remains epistemically strict, and so even though the object of yogic perception is mentally concocted, this does not bleed into a larger irreal ontology of pragmatically effective but ephemeral objects. (2) A Soft view, where the irreality of yogic perception's object forces us to consider the reality of all objects as referentless appearances. (3) A Discontinuous view, where yogic perception escapes the realm of appearances entirely. Yogic perception does not just accord with a re-envisioned irreality, but is completely beyond the world as it appears to us. I used a textual example form Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta to illustrate these three positions.

We saw Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti in their capacity as Sautrāntika realists argue a Hard view against Mīmāṃsaka opponents. These arguments relegate the object of yogic

perception to the Four Noble Truths and did not admit any type of irreality to phenomena writ large. However, in their capacity as Yogācāra idealist Satyākāravādins against the Naiyāyikas, Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti championed a Soft view that describe our appearances of reality as irreal, all like a dream. Meanwhile—taking their inspiration from Asaṅga—Jñānacandra, Jñānagarbha, and Kamalaśīla, as Alīkākāravādins, sought to transcend appearances completely, showing how yogic perception supersedes even irreal appearances.

Thus, we can see that these three views—Hard, Soft, and Discontinuous—also map onto three distinct Buddhist schools: Sautrāntika, Yogācāra Satyākāravāda, and Yogācāra Alīkākāravāda respectively. Furthermore, we can see that these three also map onto the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM) described by Christian Lindtner and first articulated in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra.* The first stage is from the Sautrāntika realist point of view, taking external objects as real and objects of analysis. The second stage rejects external objects and asserts mind only as an object of analysis. However, at this stage appearances still persist, but they are seen to be dreamlike, indicative of the Yogācāra Satyākāravāda. In the last stage, these appearances are overcome completely. This we saw described repeatedly in the Yogācāra Alīkākāravāda view.

It is thus not always clear when authors espousing Hard, Soft, or Discontinuous views are giving a provisional teaching or their definitive position. All three are potentially different rungs on the MMM. Sara McClintock dubs this feature of Buddhist thought to be provisionally adaptable and context dependent the "sliding scale of analysis." It may be the case then that Hard, Soft, and Discontinuous views are not firm positions as much as tools that are progressively more radical. For example, we saw Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti give

both Hard and Soft responses depending on their interlocutor. But on the other hand, Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti both seem strong proponents of Satyākāravāda and never assent to the absence of appearances as the ultimate view.[344] Thus, the discussion in this chapter cannot definitively identify whether Hard, Soft, and Discontinuous views of yogic perception are argumentation heuristics appropriate for certain contexts or indicative of something more akin to disparate philosophical schools.

In any event, these three positions on yogic perception carried a great deal of inertia when they were introduced to Tibetan thinkers, who only contributed to the sophistication of their arguments and nuance. It is to those sources that we now turn.

[344] For example, as Smriti Khanal and Davey Tomlinson point out, Jñānaśīmtira criticizes the Alīkākāravādin, who in rejecting the mental image (*ākāra*), he argues, reifies awareness as something separable from its intentional content (Personal communication, panel discussion during the Yogācāra Studies Unit of the American Academy of Religion, December 2, 2020)

Chapter 4: Tibetan Continuous Views of Yogic Perception

In the last chapter, I differentiated between Continuous and Discontinuous theories of yogic perception. While the first denotes theories where the object of yogic perception accords with our normal epistemic warrant, the latter encompasses theories where the object of yogic perception completely transcends normal epistemic warrant. These two theories were both picked up by Tibetan exegetes. It is the continuation of these two themes from the Indian sources up into Tibetan works on which we will focus in the next two chapters.

This is not to say that yogic perception as remote seeing and omniscience have no inertia in Tibetan texts. For example, Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé (1813-1899)—the famed pioneer of the Ris med ecumenical movement—describes the ability of the yogic eye to see transmigrating beings gestate in the womb.[345] It seems that yogic perception's ability *qua* remote seeing to see behind walls, as we noted in chapter one, extends to an ability to penetrate uterine walls. This not only harkens to Buddhaghoṣa's description of the divine eye's ability to see transmigrating beings but directly cribs from the foundational text of Indian medical Āyurveda, the *Carakasaṃhitā* (c. 100 BCE-100 CE), which also describes the divine eye's ability to peer into the womb.[346] David White also notes that this section of the *Carakasaṃhitā* specifically concerns yogic perception.[347] Furthermore, modern-day Nyingmapas also cite the ability to observe gestation directly as being afforded by yogic

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345 Phinjo Sherpa, ed., *Sheja Dzo, The Treasury of Knowledge* (Boudhanath, Nepal: Rangjung Yeshe Translations & Publications, 2006), 236.

346 Trikamji, *The Charakasaṃhitā by Agniveśa, Revised by Charaka and Dṛidhabala, with the Āyurveda-dīpikā Commentary of Chakrapāṇidatta, Edited by Vaidya Jādavaji Trikamji Āchārya*, 305.

347 White, *Sinister Yogis*, 161.

perception.[348] Thus, there is at least a two-millennia long intellectual history of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing between the Indian and Tibetan sources.

But the primary substance of the debates between Tibetan schools appear to concern whether yogic perception transcends our current, as in "this-worldly," epistemic instruments. This chapter will focus on views that deny this transcendence, Continuous views. This is not to say, of course, that yogic perception is mundane. All Buddhist schools note the mystical in yogic perception. Specifically, Continuous views argue that yogic perception captures with greater felicity and clarity a reality only inferred prior through a glass darkly. Discontinuous views, by contrast, argue that we have *no* epistemic warrant on this reality, muddled or otherwise, prior to yogic perception. As we will see, the Continuous view is most championed by the Gelug (*dge lugs*) school founded by Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa (1357-1419). However, it has antecedents in Tibetan sources that predate him. We start with the earliest of these by Chapa Chökyi Sengé (1109-1169).

i. Chapa Chökyi Senge: Continuous Roots

Chapa Chökyi Senge (1109-1169) is a foundational figure for the study of epistemology (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*) in Tibet. He was abbot of the famed Sangpu Neutok monastery in Central Tibet for eighteen years, which quickly became a center for epistemological studies in large part thanks to his directorship. Chapa is also responsible for codifying the language still used in all Tibetan monasteries for debate, developing sophisticated neologisms to represent Indian syllogisms. He was a strong proponent of the power of epistemic

[348] Personal communication, Naomi Worth, July 31, 2019.

instruments and highly resistant to Buddhist theories that argued the goal of Buddhist praxis was to reach some state that escaped the purview of reason. This sentiment is reflected below in an excerpt from his *Dbu ma shar gsum gyi stong thun*, wherein he argues against an opponent to this position.

> [You hold] the notion that being beyond elaboration means that the mental continuum is severed once knowable objects are refuted [upon analysis]. You argue that a knowable object is not actually free from elaboration. Therefore, you implicitly must agree that the inference which negates elaborations is also bereft of an object. [In other words, if that inference had an object, then it would not negate elaborations and thus would have failed its task.] Thus, the mind that negates elaborations could not be an epistemic warrant, because it has no object, and it would have to be a type of mind other than an inference or perception.[349]

The opponent holds a classic Discontinuous view. Ultimate reality is revealed when one has eliminated not only conceptual elaborations, but those objects themselves.[350] Per the opponent, to remove elaborations is to remove knowable objects completely. Thus, whatever is revealed once these elaborations are eliminated is completely beyond the world as we know it now. As we noted in the previous chapter, this process has to begin inferentially. First one infers the nature of reality and then realizes it directly. But if elaborations are the same as knowable objects themselves, then there can be no inferential object free of elaborations. Nor can there be any perception of an object free of elaborations. Chapa thus takes as axiomatic that epistemic warrant must be intentional—it must have some object. If there is no object that is epistemically warranted as free from elaborations—since to be an

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[349] Helmut Tauscher, ed., *Dbu ma shar gsum gyi stong thun* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1999), 21.

[350] Again, this is reflected in the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM) explored in the previous chapter, where the final goal is to arrest appearances completely.

object and to be free from elaborations are antithetical—there is nothing to be realized *as* free of elaborations and therefore no method by which to realize the goal.

The interlocutor attempts to hedge in response. That is, inference does indeed have an object, the ultimate-*qua*-entity (*don dam pa'i dngos po*). Even though this object is a reification of ultimate truth *not* free of elaborations, it is sufficient for the initial purposes of inference and is later totally transcended when one realizes truth directly.

> [Objection:] *[Indeed, inference] never encounters freedom from elaborations. Nevertheless, it reaches the ultimate*-qua-*entity, which [ultimately] is to be negated. Thus, it is not the case that [an inferential] reason is bereft of a knowable object.* [Reply:] Is this object [of inferential reasoning] commensurate with emptiness or not? If not, then it's just an approximation of emptiness. If it is, that knowable object exists as emptiness itself, and this would contradict [your assumption] that the knowable object [of inference] is [only] the ultimate-*qua*-entity. Likewise, if that [ultimate-*qua*-entity] exist impermanently, then it contradicts the fact that emptiness [as a negation] is permanent.[351]

Chapa argues that this hedging strategy is unhelpful. The opponent is essentially trying to have it both ways. Inference about ultimate reality does have an object, but it is not free of elaborations. This ultimate-*qua*-entity is thus supposed to be liminal, a steppingstone between an inferential understanding of the ulitmate and the ultimate realization of emptiness. But Chapa questions how it is the ultimate-*qua*-entity could afford this transition. Is it different from emptiness? If so, it is a mere approximation of emptiness (*nyi tshe ba'i stong pa nyid*). In this case, inference would not capture emptiness, so how could it have the probative power to lead to a full-blow realization of emptiness? If, on the other hand, inferred emptiness is no different than emptiness, then it is not liminal: it is not the ultimate-*qua*-entity; it is just the ultimate. Even the notion of the ultimate as an entity seems to be a

[351] Tauscher, *Dbu ma shar gsum gyi stong thun*, 21.

contradiction. The ultimate is a negation of something and therefore permanent. An entity (*dngos po*) is a positive thing and therefore impermanent. How can a negative permanent thing be represented by a positive impermanent thing? The ultimate-*qua*-entity reveals itself to be as oxymoronic as negative-*qua*-positive or permanent-*qua*-impermanent.[352]

Chapa next drills further into the problem with construing the ultimate-*qua*-entity as a steppingstone to realization of the actual ultimate.

> Furthermore, is this ultimate-*qua*-entity appropriately characterized as an object substantiated by epistemic instruments or not? If it is, then somehow there would be no contradiction in saying that a definition has no instantiation (*mtshan gzhi*) but has a basis (*rten pa*), or while the subject of a syllogism does not exist that the reason used to prove that syllogism cogently exists in the subject. Or like both of these, that while the definition does not exist, the thing being defined (*mtshon bya*) does and thus that the designation of something as an entity does not refute its being non-functional.[353]

Chapa here casts his argument in the technical language of definitions and their referents. That is, ultimate reality as signified by the ultimate-*qua*-entity must have ultimate reality itself as its referent, else absurdities abound. To argue that an inferential account of ultimate reality can lead one to a realization of ultimate reality without itself actually according with ultimate reality is like arguing that a definition has a basis without an instantiation, that reasons can be correctly applied to entities that we cannot even take as subjects—since they are beyond the scope of knowable objects—or that there are things that are definable that do not have definitions. All of these are logical impossibilities and demonstrate that inference on the ultimate-*qua*-entity as an object is incommensurate with the realization of ultimate reality as objectless. No Buddhist dare claim that realization is impossible or that it arises *ex nihilo*

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[352] We saw a similar debate between Vācaspatimiśra and Jñānaśrīmitra in the previous chapter. That is, how can momentariness—an abstract permanent property—felicitously correspond with actual momentary objects.

[353] Tauscher, *Dbu ma shar gsum gyi stong thun*, 21.

without prior study and inferential reasoning. And so, Chapa argues, they must jettison the notion that we can uses signposts toward that goal which have no intrinsic relationship with the goal of realization.

Up to this point, the connection of this discussion to yogic perception is not entirely clear. The issue of inference's relationship to its object is indeed reminiscent of debates we examined in the previous chapter. As we saw, because meditation is based on inference, it is essential for Buddhists arguing Continuous views to prove that this inference connects with a real object, else yogic perception is no more than the concoction of a fantasy. Chapa thus is in a long line of Indian thinkers trying to prove that inference captures reality in order to show that the meditation based thereupon has an appearance of the real. Chapa makes this point explicit in the next section.

> Also, some claim that the epistemic instrument that refutes elaboration merely contrives freedom from elaboration as a knowable object. Thus, we might talk about having knowable objects and epistemic instruments. But knowable objects are refuted by a mind [that realizes] its own nature. Thus, there are not really comprehensible or knowable objects. But this so-called "mind [that realizes] its own nature" is either an epistemic instrument or not. If it is not, it has no capacity to refute whatever is to be negated. If it is, and knowable objects are refuted in freedom from elaborations, then having a knowable object must also implicitly be eliminated in relation to the reasoning that eliminates elaborations. Thus, to be an epistemic instrument would be eliminated, and even knowable objects of epistemic instruments would be refuted. The object established by that epistemic instrument on the nature of mind would contradict its own formulation, and there would be no object of freedom from elaborations had by yogic perception. Thus, if you feign knowable objects, the mind errs [on your formulation], and if you do not feign them, then there is nothing to be known thereby, since that is also mere conceit.[354]

Chapa here may be referencing those systems indicative of the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM) discussed in the previous chapter. That is, by concentrating on the mind, one negates

[354] Tauscher, 21.

external objects. This is an intermediary stage before realizing ultimate nonduality. As Chapa notes, this might be a way to argue how one can progress to an objectless meditation. By taking the mind as an object, one negates external objects and then eventually the mind itself. However, Chapa argues again that this approach is a nonstarter. This mind is either an epistemic warrant or not. If it is an epistemic warrant, it must have an object, and this undermines its very attempt to prove no objects. If it is not an epistemic warrant, then it establishes nothing, and cannot be probative. As Chapa notes, this also holds for yogic perception. The notion that yogic perception transcends objects is incommensurate with its status as an epistemic instrument; an epistemic instrument must have an object.

We thus see how Chapa's insistence that inference must have the capacity to felicity capture ultimate truth directly bears on his construal of yogic perception. While inference and perception may differ in the level of sophistication with which they render ultimate truth, they must both be directed at the same thing, else there is no way to move from an inferential understanding to a direct one in yogic perception. This is indicative of the same Continuous formulations of yogic perception that we saw in the previous chapter. Yogic perception and inference may mark different points on a continuum of realization about any given object, but they essentially accord in that they correspond with the same object.

ii. Tsongkhapa: Moderate Realism

Although Tsongkhapa disagreed with Chapa on many points, he undoubtedly shared in Chapa's belief in the power of reason.[355] Like Chapa, Tsongkhapa is invested in showing that

[355] Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, SUNY series in Buddhist studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 30–33; Thupten

the realization afforded by yogic perception is Continuous with what can be afforded by the other epistemic instruments. In light of the distinction I made between Hard and Soft versions of Continuous views in the last chapter, Tsongkhapa's view more closely resembles the former. For example, we saw that Jñānaśrīmitra (in response to Sucaritamiśra) did not opt to construe correspondence as entirely pragmatic, which might accommodate irreal objects, but instead sought a more robust notion of correspondence that showed how the object of yogic perception was inherent in reality. That is, meditation on momentariness is not only effective at achieving liberation, but that momentariness itself cogently refers to momentary things.

We find Tsongkhapa adopting a similar strategy: even when restricting himself to the viewpoint of Dharmakīrti's school, Tsongkhapa did not feel comfortable abandoning the epistemological framework of reference in favor of pure pragmatism. What yogic perception sees is actually present in objects; it is not merely efficacious towards liberation. Indeed, this efficacy *depends* on yogic perception's grasp of the real. As we have noted throughout, Buddhists since Dignāga understand inference to take universals rather than particulars as its object. To say that meditation on an inferred object is not just effective but is of something real is thus tantamount to affording universals at least some modicum of ontological status. Tsongkhapa, therefore, must not only explain how it is that meditation on conceptual universal leads to desired ends, but how those universals are cogently part of reality. Tsongkhapa's project here was carried forward by his successors in the Gelug school. Georges Dreyfus thus calls their position "moderate realism," given their insistence that

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Jinpa, "Tsongkhapa's Qualms about Early Tibetan Interpretations of Madhyamaka Philosophy," *The Tibet Journal* 24, no. 2 (1999): 4.

universals are not purely fictional entities. But Gelukpas do not argue—as the Naiyāyikas do—that universals exist independently from the particulars that instantiate them. Universals are moderately real, impossible to disentangle from the objects which instantiate them and not robust enough to have some ontological status independent of particulars.[356] Because objects can be said to instantiate universals in this moderate sense, Tsongkhapa does not have to opt for Dharmakīrti's pragmatism, which affords universals a teleological role but undermines their veridical presence with the world.

On Dharmakīrti's view, whether universals are instantiated in particulars is irrelevant. His notion of causal efficacy does not demand this be the case, and, in fact, his theory is presented as a means to explain how inference can be effective even though universals have no ontological relationship with particulars.[357] Jñānaśrīmitra, on the other hand, wanted a more robust relationship between the universal momentariness and momentary particulars: meditation on momentariness is not just effective at relinquishing attachment; momentariness is *true* of momentary objects. Tsongkhapa continues this quest for a more robust connection between universals and particulars more generally, which has significant ramifications for his analysis of yogic perception.

a. Falling Hairs

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356 Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 179–82.

357 As I noted in chapter one, Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil describe this feature of Dignāga and Dharamkīrti's epistemology as "differential application of the sources of knowledge (*pramāna-vyavasthā*)" in contrast to the view as "convergence of the sources of knowledge (*pramāna-samplava*)." McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion*, 10.

We first explore the *Dgongs pa rab gsal,* Tsongkhapa's famed commentary on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra.* This section is especially revealing since it gives a long analysis of the issue of bones that we first explored in chapter three. We should recall that in that chapter we demonstrated how Candrakīrti argued that the yogic perception of bones could not be explained through the Mind-Only (Cittamātra) framework, since then they would be seen by both yogis and non-yogis. The reasoning was that if everything is mind only, then mental projections should be universally shared: there would be nothing to ensure their privacy. Tsongkhapa comments:

> [Those bones] would be the same for the yogi and non-yogi alike and their cognition would occur on its own [to both parties]. If that were true, then it would vitiate any need for meditation following the instructions [for how to meditate] on bones. Similarly, one must know how to account for examples such as having an eye disease [and seeing floating hairs] and similar illusions and mirages, while understanding, as before, how it is that the mind of a hungry ghost comes to see pus in a waterfall. Although according to the tenets of the realists, these [illusions] are not considered to be the sense object (**āyatana, skye mched*) of form, it does say so in Sūtra, and we say the same thing. Therefore, we must say that the clear appearance of bones without there being bones is similar to an illusion, but also has form. Since [the bones] appear to mental consciousness only, it is like an illusion and not the sense object of form. However, since [this appearance] is of form, it cannot be one of the other nine sense objects either.[358] Thus, it is nominally the sense object of form. The appearance of a falling hair to the eye consciousness, [on the other hand], is like an illusion but *is* the sense object of form [since it appears to sense consciousness and not mental consciousness, like the bones]. [Lastly], since the appearance of pus and blood to a hungry ghost appears to his eye consciousness, it must be posited as the sense object of form, [but is not "like an illusion, since the pus is there].[359]

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[358] The *āyatanas* are twelve, describing both the subject and object of the six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Tsongkhapa's reference to the nine other *āyatanas* here is most likely the other nine *external āyatanas* excluding mind and its object, thought.

[359] Blo bzang grags pa, "Bstan bcos chen po dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal," in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, TBRC W3PD188, vol. 16 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2012), 261–62.

Tsongkhapa groups the bones and falling hairs as both being "like an illusion," while the falling hair and pus are grouped under the sense object of form. The reason that the bones are not considered the sense object of form is because they do not appear to the eye consciousness, whose sense object is form, but directly to mental consciousness. However, those bones also do not fit into one of the other nine sense objects, and so it is nominally (*kun brtags*) form. It is worth recalling that in the passages from Candrakīrti we explored in chapter three that there was no attempt to differentiate these examples in this manner: the bones, pus, and hairs were said to be "just like" each other in that they were are all examples of idiosyncratic appearances whose privacy refuted the possibility of idealism, so Candrakīrti argued. Though Candrakīrti's argument does not preclude Tsongkhapa's reading, Tsongkhapa does seem to make an exegetical leap, arguing that the bones, hairs, and pus are ontologically distinct from each other, a position extensively criticized by other Tibetan thinkers.[360] Tsongkhapa argues that while the hairs and pus are both the sense object of form *qua* the object of sense consciousness, the hairs themselves have no external reality, no external sense object*,* and thus, unlike the pus, are illusory. By creating an ontological taxonomy out of bones, falling hairs, and pus, Tsongkhapa advocates a realism that tracks the distinction between the appearance of objects and their existence. While other Tibetan exegetes read Candrakīrti here to mean that there is nothing that can even conventionally adjudicate between correct and incorrect appearances—the hairs are real *for* those with an eye disease and not *for* those without it (see n360)—Tsongkhapa argues that there are facts of the matter that determine which appearances correctly represent reality. While falling hairs

[360] Shes rab rin chen, "Grub mtha' kun shes kyi rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho," in *Stag tshang lo tsā ba shes rab rin chen gyi gsung 'bum*, TBRC W2DB4577, vol. 1 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 281–82; Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology," 914–15.

only appear to sense consciousness without any external form as a counterpart, the appearance of pus both appears to sense consciousness and is a veritable type of form.

We need not get bogged down with how Tsongkhapa justifies this division. For our purposes here, it suffices to recognize that Tsongkhapa is constructing an ontological hierarchy which Candrakīrti never explicitly mentions. Candrakīrti was only concerned with showing how private perceptual objects cannot be accommodated by idealism. But the question of private objects immediately brings up the possibility of relativism, a world in which there is no absolute way to differentiate between personal hallucination and the perception of existing objects. Indeed, many Tibetan thinkers argue that Candrakīrti's system precludes any hope for a robust differentiation of this type.[361] It is part of Tsongkhapa's moderate realist project, however, to make these distinctions robust so that appearances in yogic perception can be shown to have a veritable referent—i.e., that they are like the appearances of pus and not falling hairs. While on a Soft reading of Dharmakīrti the difference between a "hallucination" of falling hairs and an "actual" perception of pus might be difficult to distinguish—neither serves purposeful intention[362]—Tsongkhapa argues a Hard fact of the matter about which appearance is true.

Interestingly, we will see that Tsongkhapa switches his analogy concerning yogic perception from the bones—the traditional example in Dharmakīrti—to the falling hairs in subsequent discussions. It is not entirely clear why Tsongkhapa makes this departure from scripture and opts for an example seemingly unknown to Dharmakīrti, but we might

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361 Shes rab rin chen, "Grub mtha' kun shes kyi rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho," 281–82; Forman, "What is the World? Neckties, Ghosts, Falling Hairs, and Celestial Cities in a Coherentist Epistemology," 914–15.

362 In fact, pus is exactly what *pretas* do *not* want. Their karma is such that when they approach what appears to them to be water, it suddenly turns into pus. Thus, the perception of pus actually is the antithesis of pragmatic efficacy, since it is only what appears when a *preta* wanted one thing but got pus instead.

speculate. I argue that part of the reason may be that Tsongkhapa desires to shift the debate away from mentally conjured entities, like the bones, is because it is clear these mental objects have no referents. As we saw with Asaṅga in the last chapter, meditation on bones was offered as evidence that *all* appearances have no referents. By focusing on falling hairs as a test case, Tsongkhapa recenters the debate on yogic perception as concerning its relationship to an external object. That is, the falling hairs appear to the eye consciousness as external form but are not actually form. The question is whether yogic perception is equally a faux appearance of an external object or a veritable one. By contrasting yogic perception with the apparition of falling hairs instead of bones, Tsongkhapa aims to prove that yogic perception has an object as real as the pus that appears to ghosts.

In other words, by shifting the pertinent example from the bones to falling hairs, Tsongkhapa recasts the terms of the debate. The question is no longer simply can mentally concocted appearances be efficacious—like bones toward disgust with the body—but does yogic perception apprehend something *there*—is it like a hallucination of falling hairs, something not there, or of something more robust, like pus? If this is correct—that Tsongkapa's contrast between yogic perception and falling hairs reveals his desire to substantiate the reality of yogic perception's object over merely the efficacy of yogic perception to generate effective, clear appearances—then he appears in line with Chapa and Jñānaśrīmitra (the Sautrāntika), who are also both invested in showing how the object of yogic perception is epistemically warranted in a manner beyond its efficacy. The object of yogic perception is not merely an irreal entity with pragmatic efficacy but something really there that yogic perception felicity captures. In other words, Tsongkhapa is in the lineage of these thinkers who argue a Hard Continuous view.

The source for Tsongkhapa's view on yogic perception is his *Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang,* a commentary on the perception chapter of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*. Tsongkhapa picks up on the issue of the falling hair in the context of his discussion of yogic perception. The interlocutor argues that the object of yogic perception cannot be epistemically warranted because it is neither a particular nor a universal. It cannot be a universal, because it appears clearly,[363] nor can it be a particular, since it is mentally contrived and not a real object. The interlocutor then likens the object of yogic perception to falling hairs.

> [Objection:] *(1) When a falling hair appears clearly, it is not a particular, since it has no causal efficacy, nor is it a universal, since it appears clearly. (2) But it cannot be some type of clear [appearance] other [than a particular or universal].* (3) *That falling hair is an object* (yul)*, because it appears clearly, and, therefore, it is a comprehended object that is neither a particular nor a universal.* [Reply:] While our own system assents to (1) and (2), the pervasion in the latter [that the hair is therefore an existing object that is neither a particular nor a universal] is unestablished. If that hair is validly established as an object, then which of the two objects of comprehension is it, [a particular or a universal]? It cannot be validly established as an [existing] object based on the fact that it is some third type of entity other than those two. Thus, there is no necessity that it is some third type of object. Therefore, the falling hair is not an object. If the falling hair were an object, then we would have to assert that an object exists however it [mentally] appears (*snang*) to those familiar with what the word ["falling hairs"] means. Similarly, there would be no need to establish its existence with reference to a conceived object (*zhen*). Therefore, while we deny that a falling hair appearing to a sense consciousness plagued with apparitions of falling hairs is an object, what about the consciousness of the *appearance* of a falling hair? We do not deny that the mental image of the appearance of a falling hair is an object.[364]

In other words, only an *existing* thing must be either a universal or particular. Falling hairs, by contrast, are not objects—they do not exist— and thus there is no need for them to be

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[363] As we discussed in the introduction, universals are conceptual and so cannot be clear perceptions.

[364] Blo bzang grags pa, "Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang," in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, ed. Dar ma rin chen, TBRC W20510, vol. 10 (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 346–47.

either universals or particulars. Tsongkhapa uses the novel Tibetan distinction between appearing object (*snang yul*) and conceived object (*zhen yul*) to substantiate why falling hairs are illusory and unreal.[365] Namely, while their appearance *qua* a mental image exists—there is assuredly an appearance that exists—that appearance *qua* what the mind grasping that appearance conceives to exist—that is, whether the falling hairs *actually* exist—is false.[366] We also see Tsongkhapa drawing on Dharmakīrti's discussion of yogic perception, where he argued that there can be a clear appearance of an object "whether existing or non-existing." As Tsongkhapa notes, though through mediation a linguistic object can appear (*snang*) to those who are familiar with their meaning (*brda la byang*), this appearance in and of itself is insufficient to substantiate the existence of its referent. If it were, any clear appearance of those objects that we can hold in our mind's eye—like the examples described in *Pramāṇavārttika* in verse 3.281-2, such as hallucinations provoked by intense emotion—would necessitate that object's existence. While such appearances as appearances exist, they fail to do so as conceived, that is, as referring to some external object that it seems to represent, which does not exist. It is this latter criterion of the conceived object that differentiates illusions from accurate cognitions. Again, this appears roughly the same strategy that Tsongkhapa used to differentiate the falling hairs from pus in his *Dgongs pa rab gsal.* In both texts, the falsity of the hairs occurs as a failure to refer.

So, at this point Tsongkhapa has made clear that yogic perception's object is *not* like falling hairs. The interlocutor attempted to say that the object of yogic perception is not

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[365] For a discussion, see Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 384–85.

[366] For a discussion, see Jonathan Stoltz, "Sakya Pandita and the Status of Concepts," *Philosophy East and West* 56, no. 4 (2006): 567–82, https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2006.0064.

epistemically warranted because it cannot be a universal nor a particular. According to the opponent, it was thus like the appearance of falling hairs—a clear appearance without a referent. Falling hairs, Tsongkhapa countered, are not existing objects, and thus they are not appropriately analogous to yogic perception's object. Only existing objects are either universals or particulars. But this leaves the fundamental question unanswered: if the object of yogic perception *does* have a referent that *is* a veritable object, then what is *that* object? Is *it* a universal or a particular? This question Tsongkhapa tackles in the next section.

b. Sautrāntika and Cittamātra

The introduction of appearing objects and conceived objects gives Tsongkhapa a method for differentiating false appearances—like that of falling hairs—from veridical ones—that of pus, etc. Again, this strategy relies on some notion of those cognitions accurately representing or failing to represent to real objects. But this strategy now creates a new issue for Tsongkhapa. The object of yogic perception does seem suspiciously like the falling hair. Like the falling hair, this object cannot be a causally effective particular, since it is a negative property—self*less*ness, *empti*ness. Chapa identified as much is his critique of the ultimate-*qua*-entity. Nor, however, can it be a universal, because it too appears clearly in yogic perception. Unlike the falling hair, however, yogic perception's object cannot be a non-object, since this would entail that the fundamental Buddhist truth does not exist. While Dharmakīrti bites the bullet on this, arguing whether selflessness is "real" is pragmatically irrelevant—the irreal will do just fine—Tsongkhapa's Hard view precludes this dismissal: yogic perception must have a real object. So, is *this* object a universal or a particular?

Tsongkhapa actually gives two solutions, one from the perspective of the idealist Cittamātra school and another from the realist Sautrāntika perspective. Continuing in his *Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang*, he first sets up the problem.

> Concerning whether this presentation of the two epistemic instruments [of perception and inference as having particulars and universals as their respective objects] is from the perspective of only the Sautrāntika or is compatible with Cittamātra, it cannot be the first. From the lower [school (Sautrāntika) on up], the reality of the two emptinesses [of persons and phenomena] are thoroughly settled. Thus, [both schools] have to explain how the enumeration of the two epistemic instruments is encompassed by nonconceptual yogic perception. Furthermore, this must be the case, since [Cittamātra] does not give any alternate explanation, and the Unchanging Absolute (*'gyur med yongs grub*) […] is definitive on its own.[367]

Tsongkhapa recapitulates the issue of universals and particulars concerning yogic perception. The Cittamātra and Sautrāntika schools share a similar hurdle. Both are committed to the fact that perception exclusively apprehends particulars and inference only universals. Nevertheless, both also explain that yogic perception begins with inference on a universal and culminates in a direct perception of a particular. Therefore, both must also explain how the knowledge produced by these two epistemic instruments is encompassed (*ya gyal du bsdus pa*) by yogic perception's insight.[368] Tsongkhapa thus sets up his position as thoroughly Continuous. He has charged himself with demonstrating how yogic perception carries forward what was gleaned from pre-meditative inference.

Tsongkhapa next signals that he is addressing the issue from the side of Cittamātra by mentioning the "Unchanging Absolute" (*'gyur med yongs grub*). This is a reference to the

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[367] Blo bzang grags pa, "Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang," 346.

[368] This is an important general feature of Tsongkhapa's thought. Namely, that universals have to be real things in the world, otherwise, our inferences cannot be epistemically warranted, and thus it would be impossible for the Buddhist teachings to be effective toward liberation. For a lucid discussion, see Tom J. F. Tillemans, *Scripture, Logic, Language: Essays on Dharmakirti and his Tibetan Successors*, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 215–6.

third of the so-called three natures (*trisvabhāva, mtshan nyid gsum*), the Absolute (*pariniṣpanna, yongs grub*), or emptiness[369] as understood in this school. As the object of yogic perception, the Absolute exacerbates the problem, given that it is unchanging (*'gyur med*), which is antithetical to being a causally effective particular. How, then, can it be the object of yogic *perception*? Tsongkhapa raises this objection and offers a clarification:

> Someone might object that from the perspective common to both [the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra] schools, the Unchanging Absolute has no causal efficacy. And yet the Cittamātrin does not concur that it is a universal. This appears unreasonable. However, the Vijñāptimātrin[370] does not agree that if something is unable to perform a function it is necessarily a universal, nor that if it can, it is necessarily a particular. While it is true that [the Vijñāptimātrin system] posits the Unchanging Absolute […] here we are concerned with the perspective of Sautrāntika alone and not the uncommon perspective of Vijñāptimātra.[371]

In other words, someone might assume that the Cittamātrin's position is untenable, since they deny that an unchanging entity, like emptiness, is a universal, and thus argue that it is a proper object of perception. However, in that school, that the Absolute is unchanging and unable to perform a function does *not* necessitate that it is a universal. In other words, despite being unchanging, the Absolute can still be a particular and an appropriate object of yogic perception.[372]

Notice that Dharmakīrti can sidestep this issue entirely. If the *mental image* of the Absolute cultivated in yogic perception—which can be a positive particular—leads to liberation, then this is sufficient for the criterion of causal efficacy. There is no need for that

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369 Emptiness (*stong pa nyid*) and selflessness (*bdag med dpa*) are both objects of yogic perception and as negative properties similarly problematic.

370 Cittamātrin (*sems tsam pa*) and Vijñāptimātrin (*rnam rig pa*) are synonymous here.

371 Blo bzang grags pa, "Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang," 346.

372 I am grateful to Geshe Lobsang Tsultrim at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies who explained to me this unique feature in Tsongkhapa's understanding of the Cittamātra school (personal communication, December 12, 2019).

image to correspond to any *actual* Absolute *qua* particular, and indeed, due to momentariness, mental images will invariably fail to correspond.[373] Other schools similarly eschew the issue of reference per the Absolute, arguing that a theory of mental images entails that ultimately the mind cognizes itself and that this self-cognition constitutes yogic perception of the Absolute.[374] But Tsongkhapa eschews this strategy. He represents the stakes of the debate as whether the Absolute represented in yogic perception accurately accords with the Absolute as it exists. In showing that in Cittamātra that the Absolute is cogently a particular ontologically, Tsongkhapa can demonstrate that its perception is epistemically warranted, not just in terms of pragmaticism, but because it "gets at" something real. In fact, later Gelugpa scholars understood mental images not as mental pictures that *represent* objects, but (in the case of cognizing real objects) as the direct cognition of external objects themselves.[375] Based on a similar understanding that accurate mental images transparently capture external objects, Tsongkhapa forecloses any doubt that the accurate mental images that arise in yogic perception might be nonreferential. Much in the same way Tsongkhapas differentiated illusions from accurate cognitions by way of their relationship with actual objects, so here too does he substantiate the validity of yogic perception in Cittamātra via its ability to accurately render a real particular, the Absolute.[376]

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373 As we saw in the previous chapter, this is why in the final analyst Dharmakīrti subscribes to idealism; the notion of mental images representing external, momentary objects collapses under its own weight.

374 Such a view is found among Sakya and Kagyü thinkers. See Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 412–5. We will explore these in the next chapter.

375 Dreyfus, 408.

376 It is important that I nuanced my position here a bit. Assuredly, Cittamātra (Mind Only) argues that external objects do not exist. Tsongkhapa cannot deny this. I would thus be completely incorrect if when I said that "yogic perception in Cittamātra […] accurately render[s] a real particular" that I meant that Cittamātra, on Tsongkhapa's view, asserts that yogic perception's particular is an *external object*. The issue here, however, is not external objects as much as intentionality. My point is that in alignment with Chapa, Tsongkhapa argues that yogic perception, as an epistemic instrument, must be substantiating *something.* Even if this particular is not an external object, it must be a knowable entity that the mind establishes. This

This strategy is also reflected in his construal of the Sautrāntika view of yogic perception. Here the difficulty is more egregious: there is no possibility in this school for a negative entity like self*less*ness or *empti*ness to be a particular. Only positive, impermanent entities are particulars. How can selflessness or emptiness be an object of yogic perception, which only grasps particulars?

> From that [Sautrāntika] perspective, yogic perception engages the selflessness of persons (*gang zag gi bdag med*) implicitly and explicitly apprehends the causally effective particular. Therefore, it says [in Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*] that "yogis see just the object, independently from the guru's instructions."[377] However, this position is overturned in the commentary to [Nāgārjuna's] *Yuktiṣaṣṭīkā*, where he refutes this [position] while responding to an opponent. The Unchanging Absolute realized by yogic perception is [thus] an explicit realization and is *not* realized implicitly.[378]

In Sautrāntika, being the object of a perception, being causally efficacious, and being a particular are synonyms. Thus, the object of yogic perception must be a causally effective particular. Selflessness (*bdag med*), by contrast, is a negative entity, and so cannot be an object of perception. How, then, does yogic perception realize selflessness? Tsongkhapa answers "implicitly (*shugs rtogs*)." As Dreyfus explains, this describes a cognitions ability to realize something about an object that does not directly appear to it. Thus, just as the absence of an elephant on my desk can be known just by seeing my empty desk, apprehending the particular free of reification is sufficient to eradicate superimpositions of self. Furthermore,

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is also the Satyākāravādin's charge against the Alīkākāravādin: there is no mind without an intentional content (see n344 in chapter three). Discontinuous Alīkākāravādin views following Asaṅga, on the other hand, argue that the enlightened mind has no intentional content whatsoever. I thus argue that Tsongkhapa's Cittamātra construal of yogic perception as having an intentional particular—whether external or not—bespeaks his Continuous formulation.

377 Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Text with the Help of the Two Tibetan Translations on the Basis of the Hitherto Known Sanskrit Fragments and the Linguistic Materials Gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Ṭīkā*, 3; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇasamuccaya, Tshad ma kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," 2a.

378 Blo bzang grags pa, "Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang," 346.

this occurs perceptually, without the need to marshal inference.[379] But selflessness proper does not appear to yogic perception. This introduction of implicit cognition into Dharmakīrti's system is likely a Tibetan invention[380] and was also likely first championed by Chapa.[381] But in Tsongkhapa's formulation, it allows for yogic perception's not perceiving a universal, only the momentary particular, and yet still cognizing selflessness, albeit implicitly.

Tsongkhapa's immediate student, Gendün Drubpa (1391–1474), gives a similar analysis of this point in his *Tshad ma rigs rgyan.* He again notes that while yogic perception's object must be a particular, selflessness itself cannot be.

> In the Sautrāntika system, if an object appears to perception, it must be a particular. Because the selflessness of the person is not a particular, the selflessness of the person does not appear clearly in the yogic perception that realizes it. Therefore, the mind that explicitly (*dngos su*) realizes the selflessness of the person does so through an object universal. But yogic perception realizes the selflessness of persons implicitly (*shugs la*).[382]

Like Tsongkhapa, Gendun Drubpa's solution is that yogic perception perceives its object implicitly. By realizing the particular itself, yogic perception implicitly realizes that it is

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379 For a lucid explanation of how Gelug uses the notion of implicit cognition to explain how perception perceives conceptual entities, see Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 370–3.

380 Rongtön (1367–1449), following Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), understands the notion of implicit cognition as a Tibetan invention. See Rong ston, "Rigs gter rnam bshad nyi ma'i snying po," in *The Collection of the Eighteen Renowned Scriptures: Root Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Sachen International (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2011), 202 ff. I admittedly agree that I find it difficult to see how the notion of implicit cognition could square with Dharmakīrti's formulation.

381 Peter A. Schwabland, "Direct and Indirect cognition and the Definition of Pramāna in Early Tibetan Epistemology," *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der SchweizerischenAsiengesellschaft* 49, no. 4 (1995): 796, https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147199.

382 Dge 'dun grub, "Tshad ma'i bstan bcos chen mo rigs pa'i rgyan las mngon sum le'u," in *Dge 'dun grub kyi gsung 'bum*, TBRC W1KG14505, vol. 7 (Lhasa: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, 2011), 93.

selfless. The appearance of the particular itself has the latent power to eliminate superimpositions of self.

Returning to his *Mngon sum le'u'i brjed byang*, Tsongkhapa's invocation of Nāgārjuna here is also revealing, where Tsongkhapa insists Nāgārjuna argues that "the Unchanging Absolute realized by yogic perception is an explicit realization and is *not* realized implicitly." It seems somewhat misplaced, since the discussion concerns the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra school. Why, then, does Tsongkhapa introduce a Madhyamaka author, who argues that yogic perception perceives its object explicitly and not implicitly?

I argue that this quotation signals that in his discussion of Sautrāntika and Cittamātra, Tsongkhapa may be proleptically setting the groundwork for his eventual Madhyamaka view. As we noted in the last chapter *à la* Sara McClintock, Buddhist authors often provide a sliding scale of analysis adaptable to ever more sophisticated levels of scrutiny. However, the steps along this continuum have to be continuous; the lower levels must feed into the higher ones. Tsongkhapa thus may want to develop an epistemology in the Sautrāntika system that will eventually allow him to account for ultimate truth under a Hard epistemology within Madhyamaka.[383] In other words, even within Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, the highest school, inference captures the same ultimate truth realized by yogic perception. Describing the Sautrāntika system, Tsongkhapa has to hedge: though selflessness is a universal normally captured only by inference, it is perceived implicitly in yogic perception. Describing

[383] The Gelug school in general is known (and criticized) for adopting a view of Madyamaka highly reliant on Pramāṇavāda. Taktsang Lotsāwa (1405-1477) thus dubbed them those who advocate the traditions of Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti are like "two lions with their necks intertwined." Shes rab rin chen, "Grub mtha' kun shes kyi rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho," 273.The famed Gelug scholar Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1570-1662) proudly adopts the slogan. Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, "Sgra pa shes rab rin chen pa'i rtsod lan lung rig seng ge nga ro," in *The Miscellaneous Works of the First Paṇ chen Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, Reproduced from an Incomplete Manuscript in the Collection from Zangla Khar* (Gemur, H. P, India: Topden Tsering, 1979), 431.

Cittamātra, he claims the ultimate is liminally a particular: it is a particular but with properties (like being unchanging) typically afforded to universals in lower schools. But in Prāsaṅgika, he argues that perception *can*, in fact, perceive universals, like emptiness, directly, even though such objects are typically reserved for inference in the lower schools.[384] Thus, by positing a foundational epistemology in which yogic perception perceives a universal, albeit implicitly, Tsongkhapa sets the stage for the final reveal that ultimate reality itself exists as a type of universal which can be perceived directly.[385] As he notes, Nāgārjuna, the founding Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika in his view, argues yogic perception realizes this universal-*cum*-negation emptiness directly. Consistently through all three schools, the object of yogic perception is afforded a type of reality in excess of Dharmakīrti's initial formulation: yogic perception perceives something that albeit a universal is not just effective, but *there*—the ultimate itself exists as this type of universal. This again speaks to his Hard construal of yogic perception: it consistently has a real and never irreal object.

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[384] For a discussion, see Thakchoe, "Candrakīrti's Theory of Perception: A Case for Non-Foundationalist Epistemology in Madhyamaka," 105–11. Thakchoe's read of Candraikīrti is reflective of a Gelug understanding and is not shared by other scholars, who, for example, consider Candrakīrti to argue a Discontinuous view. See, for example, MacDonald, "Knowing Nothing: Candrakīrti and Yogic Perception"; MacDonald, *In Clear Words: The Prasannapadā, Chapter One 1: Introduction, Manuscript Description, Sanskrit Text*, 2015, 2:292n543..

[385] For a lucid discussion of Tsongkhapa's thought in this regard, see Tillemans, *Scripture, Logic, Language: Essays on Dharmakirti and his Tibetan Successors*, 215–6. This also connects to Tsongkhapa's unique interpretation of Nāgārjuna. That is, to be empty is not negate *the thing* that is empty, only the notion that thing has *intrinsic existence,* that it exists ultimately, independently from anything else. Blo bzang grags pa, *Ocean of Reasoning: A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, trans. Ngawang Samten and Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37. Thus, ultimate reality is a negation (*med dgag*) that can be comprehended both inferentially and in yogic perception, though only the latter affords the necessary insight for liberation. This is consistent with Chapa's view that freedom from elaborations does not vitiate knowable objects.

c. Tantric Concepts

Interestingly, however, this is not to say that Tsongkhapa relegates his discussion of yogic perception only to the cultivation of appearances that appropriately refer. He also recognizes benefit in the vivid appearance of purely fictional entities, like that of the falling hairs or bones.[386] This final sub-section explores how Tsongkhapa argues that even the cultivation of hallucinations can have soteriological value. In particular, he seems to afford them a role in his formulation of the Tantric Creation Stage (*utpatti-krama*, *bskyed rim*). In his *Sngags rim chen mo,* Tsongkhapa heavily relies on the *Pramāṇavārttika* and its discussion of yogic perception, specifically citing the same verses 3.284–5 we explored earlier. Commenting on the first verse, 3.284—which explains meditation on both real and unreal objects, including bones—he writes:

> Although the Sugatas speak about [the power of meditation to generate clear appearances] in scripture, some heretics, who assert that renunciation and freedom are impossible, disavow any evidence that demonstrates the feasibility of yogic perception. Since this objection is pervasive, there is also—for the sake of the opponent—an analysis of the fundamental proposition that people like *āryas*, etc., exist. [On the other hand], [Dharmakīrti] intends the pursuit of mere meditation, [and not yogic perception specifically, when he says] that meditation on an object, whether veritable or false, will result in its clear appearance.[387]

The "heretics" in this passage may be a reference to the Mīmāṃsakas, who we saw (at least in the earliest stratum) reject the possibility of meditative insight or liberation. Because they argue no authentic yogis exist—that only the *Vedas* and not any human can be an

[386] Note that this parallels Eltschinger's discussion, who also cites the benefit of meditation on unreal objects for the sake of spiritual ends, although this is not properly yogic perception. Eltschinger, "On the Career and the Cognition of Yogins," 194.

[387] Blo bzang grags pa, "Rgyal ba khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang chen po'i lam gyi rim pa gsang ba kun gyi gnad rnam par phye ba," in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, TBRC W3PD188, vol. 3 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2012), 548.

authoritative source of spiritual knowledge—the proof for yogic perception is purely hypothetical but without an actual example and thereby invalid. Tsongkhapa therefore subsequently offers a proof for the existence of yogis and their perceptions by extrapolating from verse 3.285 of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, explaining that, when a yogi takes a real object, the vivid appearance of that object arises from its repeated conceptual mediation, culminating in yogic perception.

While Tsongkhapa's proof of yogis is fascinating in its own right, what concerns us here is how Tsongkhapa understands yogic perception in the context of Creation Stage practice. As he notes, mere meditation can culminate in the clear appearance of objects that do *not* constitute a yogic perception. So, is Creation Stage meditation a yogic perception, or a "mere" vivid meditative appearance? Tsongkhapa explores this question a little further on in the text, where he again quotes verse 3.285 of the *Pramāṇavarttika,* further elaborating:

> I have already explained […] that the mind will take on the mental image of whatever object to which it habituates itself. First, the beginner withdraws [the senses], and then, having amassed some familiarization, they grab hold of [the meditative object: the deity]. While meditating to reinforce [this object], they visualize each and every aspect in detail. [Then], outside of solely imagining that mental image [of the deity], the meditator is to cultivate a powerful mental certainty [of being that deity], since both the clear mental image and divine pride are necessary.[388]

Tsongkhapa therefore understands vivid meditation as the means by which one accomplishes the Creation Stage. It is a meditative practice which culminates in the deity's appearing clearly, as if real. This is associated with the conviction that the meditator themself is also the deity, which is described as "divine pride (*lha'i nga rgyal*)."

[388] Blo bzang grags pa, 582–3.

However, while Tsongkhapa argued that yogic perception of the Unchanging Absolute constituted perception of a real object—i.e., that it was not *merely* a mental image—Tsongkhapa makes no such concession here. He first explains that the mental appearance of the deity in meditation is not the same as an actual sensorial one.

> When one has steady Deity Yoga thorough intense habituation [and there is a clear appearance of the deity], there is no other appearance to visual consciousness, or to the rest [of the other sense consciousnesses]. Because the mental consciousness needs to be fully engaged with its object, the power of the conditions [for meditation] are diminished as soon as the visual or other consciousnesses arise. Therefore, no other appearance, such as that of colors, etc., comes to mind [other than that of the deity], since those [sense consciousnesses] are not operative at that time. However, this does not mean that the Creation Stage negates [those sensory] appearances.[389]

In other words, cognition of sensory appearances hinders meditation, and so they cannot operate in tandem with meditation; mental consciousness alone apprehends the meditative object. Again, Tsongkhapa makes use of Dharmakīrti in making this point, citing *Pramāṇavarttika* verse 2.112cd: "Attached to another object, the mind has no [meditative] power, because it can grasp nothing else."[390] This is not just a minor point over whether mental or sensory consciousness grasps a meditative object.[391] Tsongkhapa notes that the absence of awareness of sensory appearances during meditation does not mean the Creation Stage negates the sensory world itself, which would be solipsistic indeed. As a corollary, he argues that because this meditative object is purely the domain of mental consciousness, and not of the sense consciousnesses, its reality is precluded. He thus follows with:

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389 Blo bzang grags pa, 574–5.

390 Blo bzang grags pa, 575. Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.112cd; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 111b.

391 It is worth noting that Tsongkhapa's point that meditative objects appear to mental consciousness only traces a long line of understanding yogic perception as the unique provenance of the mind, where Praśastapāda was the first to say that it occurs without fourfold contact. See n68.

> Therefore, when one achieves the power to stop ordinary appearances at the level of mental consciousness through the exceptional appearances [of the deity], one gains what is necessary. *Although one will not have reached the deity in reality* [emphasis added], even when the uncontrived pride of the deity arises, one gains what is necessary thereby.[392]

Tsongkhapa is therefore careful to distinguish the clear appearance of the deity to mental consciousness from having "reached the deity in reality." It is real as an appearance and mental image to mental consciousness but false in terms of its referent: an actual deity, as corroborated by the sense consciousnesses.[393] Although the appearance of the deity to mental consciousness is soteriologically effective in eliminating ordinary appearances, it fails to represent reality, a reality Tsongkhapa argues remains a fact of the matter despite appearances. It is thus revealing that in this case, where the goal of Deity Yoga is to concoct a vivid appearance of an unreal object, Tsongkhapa cites the verses from the *Pramāṇavārttika* concerning meditative appearances of unreal objects like bones. The bones, like the appearances in Deity Yoga, are purely mental concoctions and thereby false. But previously, when Tsongkhapa discussed yogic perception as a realization of reality, his focus shifted to questions concerning the veracity of its object, a debate more accurately captured by the distinction between the failing hairs and the pus. In these latter two examples, the appearance as *conceived* entails some external referent. The pertinent question in *that* case, as in the case of yogic perception of reality, is whether that conceived object exists. In the case of Deity Yoga, the question is not that object's reality—it is undeniably unreal—but its capacity for clarity, and so the example of bones is used.

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[392] Blo bzang grags pa, "Rgyal ba khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang chen po'i lam gyi rim pa gsang ba kun gyi gnad rnam par phye ba," 575.

[393] I am not necessarily arguing that Tsongkhapa is saying that one can tell who is a buddha through the senses. However, there seems to be a sense in which because this appearance is purely mental, like the bones, it is not real. Conceivably, a buddha sees themself as a buddha with *all* of their enlightened senses, not just the mental sense.

It is important to note that although Tsongkhapa quotes the sections of the *Pramāṇavārttika* concerning yogic perception *ad nauseum* in his own discussion of the Creation Stage, he never once identifies meditative Deity Yoga as a type of yogic perception. Rather, he is specifically showing that meditative vividness of unreal objects is possible and that this is effective at eliminating ordinary appearances. But notice that this soteriological efficacy is explicitly *not* sufficient on Tsongkhapa's view to afford its status as yogic perception. Deity Yoga involves an effective, vivid appearance but falls short of yogic perception because its object is unreal.[394] This type of meditative appearance is in stark contrast to yogic perception, which generates a clear and vivid appearance of meditational objects that actually exist—such as the Unchanging Absolute and the Four Noble Truths.

Tsongkhapa thus bespeaks a Hard view. Meditative appearances of irreal objects like bones and deities may be soteriologically effective, but they do not qualify as yogic perception. This requires something more, that yogic perception have a real object. In other texts, we saw how this reality is substantiated by other epistemic instruments, like inference. Tsongkhpa appears to argue something similar: part of the reason that Deity Yoga has an unreal appearance is that it *only* arises to mental consciousness and not to sense consciousness—it is actually only at the latter's expense that the deity can appear at all. As

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[394] Elsewhere, Tsongkhapa does make clear that these vivid appearances in Deity Yoga are valid epistemic warrants (*tshad ma*) because they undo self-grasping. However, they are still mistaken (*phyin ci log pa*). Blo bzang grags pa, "Rgyal ba khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang chen po'i lam gyi rim pa gsang ba kun gyi gnad rnam par phye ba," 609–10. Thus, they are technically epistemically warranted, being causally efficacious, but they cannot be true perception, since they are mistaken. However, this is a bit of an odd position. If we go back to Tsongkhapa's own interlocutor's use of the falling hair, this vivid appearance in Deity Yoga cannot be a universal, because it is vivid, but neither can it be a particular, since it is not epistemically warranted in perception, being mistaken. In the case of the falling hair, Tsongkhapa noted that it is neither a universal nor a falling hair because it does not exist. But it would be odd to take this position here given that it is epistemically warranted. In any event, Tsongkhapa's position here seems to counter Mipham's, which advocates that these appearances are not just effective, but "pure" in their own right, differentiating between conventional appearances and pure vision. Douglas S. Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature: The Ground of the Nyingma Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 124–31.

we noted in the *Dgongs pa rab gsal*, it is the bone's appearance only to mental consciousness that disqualifies its being a true cognition of form, despite appearing as form. Tsongkhapa makes the same argument here: that the deity only appears to mental consciousness is a sign that one has not "reached the deity in reality."

Given that Dharmakīrti's theory is open to Soft interpretations, where yogic perception's object can be pragmatically irreal, Dharmakīrti himself might be suspect of this sharp distinction between meditation on a deity—per Deity Yoga—and yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths. The disparity between him and Tsongkhapa here is put all the more in relief by a glaring difference between the Tibetan and Sanskrit editions of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. While Tsongkhapa's citation of verse 2.112cd from the Tibetan is correctly attested in the *Sde dge Bstan 'gyur* and translated above—"Attached to another object, the mind has no power, because it can grasp nothing else"—the Sanskrit edition puts this hemistich closer to: "When consciousness is defiled with attachment to another object, it is because it grasps no other object [but consciousness itself]."[395] Prajñākaragupta's commentary confirms this reading:

> By no means does seeing [the illusion of] a subject influenced by an object arise through some interceding, sudden [effect] other than conceptualizations, which are the mental impressions of an obstructed consciousness. Thus, [subject and object] come from consciousness alone.[396]

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[395] *anya-artha-āsakti-viguṇe jñāne anartha-antara-grahāt* // Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v.2.112. The discrepancy with the Tibetan is somewhat bewildering. "*Āsakti*" may have been mis-rendered "*aśakti*" in the Tibetan *"nus med"* but does seem correctly translated as *"chags pa."* If so, then *"nus med"* may be *"viguṇa,"* which is a slightly strange translation choice, since *"yon tan med pa"* or some variant would be more standard. The Tibetan phrase *"don gzhan mi 'dzin phyir"* would be more appropriately *"artha-antara-agrahāt"* in Sanskrit, as in, "it does not grasp another object," but the Sanskrit recension, *"anartha-antara-grahāt,"* more felicitously means "it grasps *something* which is not another object." Finally, the Tibetan trades the locative *"jñāne,"* which denotes a conditional, for an instrumental, also significantly changing the meaning.

[396] Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 102.

In other words, Dharmakīrti does not simply mean (as Tsongkhapa takes it) that mental and sensory appearances cannot be simultaneous but that the very notion that some appearances represent external sensory objects is false. The disparity between the Sanskrit and Tibetan here serendipitously traces Tsongkhapa's deviation from Dharmakīrti's thought. Tsongkhapa understands this verse to mean that sensory and mental appearances are mutually exclusive only with respect to consciousness; it is not the case that "that the Creation Stage negates appearances" in the world writ large. Their mutual exclusivity is epistemological, not ontological. This is consistent with Tsongkhapa's larger framework that differentiates appearances and their referents. The cessation of certain appearances' presence in consciousness does not necessitate the elimination of their referents, no more than the appearance of oneself as a deity necessitates actually being a deity.

The Sanskrit reflects Dharmakīrti's rejection of representationalism. That is, the notion that there is some referent to appearances is a confusion, since the mind is actually grasping itself when it thinks it apprehends an external object. On this understanding, the question of what appearances accurately refer to external objects is simply ill-formed. Appearances thus point to no external ontology, and the distinction between valid and invalid appearances based on reference to external objects is vacuous.

One thus wonders what Dharmakīrti would have to say about Creation Stage practice in general. Would he argue that because such appearances of oneself as the deity are efficacious toward Buddhahood and there are no external, non-mental criteria that adjudicates their truth otherwise, that one is therefore a Buddha by virtue of seeing themself as one? We have seen Jñānaśrīmitra (in his capacity as a Yogācārin) argue something equally radical, that because all phenomena are mind-only, the Buddha is omniscient about all times

without there actually being past and future objects. Such a position would be indicative of a Soft view: if Deity Yoga is actually a form of yogic perception, then being a Buddha is more irreal than we might expect, a matter of how one view's oneself rather than something more robustly independent of self-esteem *par excellence.* Tsongkhapa advocates stricter criteria for Buddhahood, and thus unsurprisingly does not equate Deity Yoga with achieving Buddhahood, advocating a Hard view that denies irreal enlightenment.

iii. The Grounds and Paths

Thus far, Tsongkhapa's formulation roughly recapitulates those Hard views found in the Indian texts. We saw that Tsongkhapa, much like (Sautrāntika) Jñānaśrīmitra in contrast to Dharmakīrti's pragmatism, argues that yogic perception has real, knowable objects as a referent. He even incorporates meditation on a reference-less object into his formulation of the Tantric Creation Stage but distinguishes this from yogic perception proper. That meditative appearances sometime do and do not correspond with reality again bolsters his "moderate realism." Again, the correctness or incorrectness of these appearances is not determined simply by their efficacy—both Deity Yoga and meditation on selflessness have soteriological benefit—but by their ontological felicity: selflessness is *there* in the world in a manner that seeing oneself as a deity is not.

There is another Buddhist domain, however, within which Tibetan authors debate their formulations of yogic perception but of which the Indian texts seem to make no explicit mention in their own discussions. This specifically concerns the Grounds (*bhūmi, sa*) and Paths (*mārga, lam*), which he reviewed in the introduction. Tsongkhapa's argumentation in

these debates will continue to reflect a Continuous view. As we discussed previously, there are five paths accepted in Mahāyāna Buddhism: the path of accumulation (*sambhāra-mārga*), of preparation (*prayoga-mārga*), of seeing (*darśana-mārga*), of meditation or habituation (*bhāvana-mārga*), and of no-more-training (*aśaikṣa-mārga*). We noted that Asaṅga's text seems to suggest that when one becomes an *ārya* by reaching the path of seeing, that this graduation is afforded by yogic perception. This, we will see, becomes explicit in the Tibetan texts. Mahāyāna doctrine further stipulates that are also five paths for each of the three goals: the Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva, the last of whom becomes a fully enlightened buddha. Additionally, these three sets of paths themselves do not run on isolated tracks: both the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha can become full buddhas. Nor is it straightforward how an adept transitions from the Śrāvaka's or Pratyekabuddha's path to that of the Bodhisattva. Within Madhyamaka philosophy alone there are two sub-schools, Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika, which each understand this progression differently. Not only this, but different Tibetan Buddhist schools understand these schools' understandings differently! Between different paths for different goals, different Indian Buddhist schools' interpretations of those paths and goals, and different Tibetan Buddhist schools' interpretations of the Indian interpretations, the permutations quickly become dizzying.

Thankfully, our discussion here is delimited. In this last section, I focus on one piece in this complicated puzzle: the transition from the path of preparation to the path of seeing. As we will see, the details of this transition are a matter of debate in Tibetan sources. While Dharmakīrti does not explicitly connect yogic perception to the spiritual paths and grounds, these were integrated into a theoretical whole by later commentators. Thus, Gendun Drubpa explains yogic perception's intersection with the paths.

> The definition of yogic perception is any knowledge in the mindstream of an *ārya* that arises from meditation on a correct object, such that that correct object is unmistaken and free from conceptualization [...] From the point of view of the basis, there are three divisions: yogic perception of the Śrāvakas, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Mahāyāna *ārya*. Each also has three paths: seeing, habituation, and no more training.[397]

Thus, yogic perception is initiated at the path of seeing in which one becomes an *ārya*. One continually meditates on that realization until one achieves the goal, requiring no more training. There are also three distinct paths of seeing for each of the three Buddhist soteriological goals—that of the Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva. This position is roughly the same as Sakya Paṇḍita's (1182-1251), perhaps the most influential figure in the Sakya school. We will explore in the next chapter how different Sakya Paṇḍita's (henceforth, Sapen) view of yogic perception is from Tsongkhapa's. But on this point of where yogic perception occurs on the paths, he accords with Gendun Drubpa:

> If we divide [yogic perception] based on the basis, there are three direct perceptions that correspond to the three types of *ārya*. With the division of training and no training, there are five total. The Śrāvakas that are stream-enterers have [yogic] perception *with* training. From the point view of those who have both wisdom and have achieved liberation, they have that perception *without* training. The Pratyekabuddhas, by relying on the four contemplations, finish all paths at once, and therefore they have no [yogic] perception [that relies on] training […] The Mahāyāna learning type [of yogic perception] is the wisdom [garnered throughout] the ten Grounds (**bhūmi, sa*), whereas no more training is the Buddha's perception, making five. This is the common division.[398]

Sapen's division is essentially the same as Gendun Drubpa's. While Gendun Drubpa distinguishes the paths of seeing and meditation, Sapen groups these two under those who are in training in distinction to those no longer training, the final path within which one has

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397 Dge 'dun grub, "Tshad ma'i bstan bcos chen mo rigs pa'i rgyan las mngon sum le'u," 94.

398 Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," in *Tshad ma'i 'grel pa phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 7 (Rdzong sar khams bye: Rdzong sar khams bye'i slob gling thub bstan dar rgyas gling, 2009), 279.

completed the goal.[399] However, Sapen also introduces a debate about the relationship between these paths and their realizations:

> However, according to some tenet systems, because Śrāvakas are not Bodhisattva *āryas*, they do not have yogic perception. On the other hand, because some of those on the Mahāyāna path have not seen the selflessness of phenomena that the Śrāvakas do, [being a Bodhisattva] is not [itself a sufficient] defining characteristic of yogic perception either. However, in this [system], the crowing jewel of the logic tradition, in accord with the Sautrāntikas, we posit yogic perception in terms of seeing the Four Noble Truths—the perception of selflessness through the power of [perceiving] a [momentary] functional entity.[400]

Sapen's point here is that some argue that the realization of selflessness of persons alone cannot be considered real yogic perception. The Bodhisattva has a realization that supersedes the Śrāvaka's and Pratyekabuddha's. Only the Bodhisattva's realization is yogic perception. Others, Sapen states, argue that being a Bodhisattva is not sufficient for having achieved yogic perception either, since one can be a pre-path-of-seeing Bodhisattva without any realization. Thus, there are instances in which the Śrāvaka's and Pratyekabuddha's realization trump that of the Bodhisattva. Sapen dismisses these objections and argues that yogic perception, in the system of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, is co-extensive with realization of the Four Noble Truths.

Both Gendun Drubpa's and Sapen's positions here are articulated from the Sautrāntika position. Although they roughly agree, there is a slight difference. Gendun Drubpa takes it as given that Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas all have yogic perception, albeit unique to each path. Sapen introduces an occasion for doubt about this

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[399] In the case of the Pratyekabuddhas, this division is actually a bit more complicated than this. Because Pratyekabuddhas realize their path without a teacher, they technically do not have a training phase. Thus, they realize both the seeing, habituation, and no more training "paths all at once."

[400] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 279–80.

position. He indicates that some authors assert that yogic perception is the unique domain of the Bodhisattva, disqualifying the Śrāvaka's and Pratyekabuddha's realization on the path of seeing as yogic perception proper. When the Gelug and Sakya schools evaluates this issue from within the framework of Madhyamaka, these differences are only exacerbated. Granted, both schools still agree that all three adherents—the Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva—have yogic perception on the path of seeing. But Sakya thinkers appear to carry forward this notion that the Bodhisattva's yogic perception is superior and more sophisticated than the other two. Gelug thinkers, however, deny this difference. Furthermore, there is also a disagreement as to whether yogic perception *only* occurs on the path of seeing and no earlier.

These two parameters form the crux of the debate. If it is not a given that each path of seeing constitutes the same realization, in what ways do the yogic perceptions on each of these paths differ? Do they *see* the same thing, or different things? One major defining characteristic of Mahāyāna philosophy (at least as it defines itself in contrast to its predecessors) is its understanding that realizing the Four Noble Truths—which includes the realization of impermanence and (a version of) selflessness[401]—is insufficient for full enlightenment. Mahāyānist argue that full enlightenment also requires a realization of emptiness (*śunyatā, stong pa nyid*), whereas lower schools (in the Mahāyāna view) argue realization of the lack of self and impermanence, as described by the Four Noble Truths, is sufficient for nirvana. That is, while the Abhidhamma philosophy of the Pāli Canon deconstructs, seemingly enduring and spatially extended objects—selves—into a series of

[401] As we will see, Tibetan authors give multiple taxonomies of selflessness, some of which are equivalent to emptiness, and thus beyond the pale of the Four Noble Truths.

moments and an amalgam of particles, Mahāyāna philosophy further deconstructs these moments and particles until those phenomena are emptied of any substantial existence. The question then becomes whether these lower schools are correct even about their more circumscribe goal of reaching nirvana: can the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha even reach nirvana through a yogic perception of impermanence and selflessness?

In other words, while yogic perception denotes the prerequisite realization needed to advance along a given path, the descriptions of the content of that realization are not consistent. In the texts that describe the Śrāvaka's and Pratyekabuddha's paths, the Pāli Canon, selflessness and impermanence are the object of that insight, while texts describing the Bodhisattva path, the Mahāyāna corpus, advocate emptiness as the object of yogic perception. In developing an overarching theory of grounds and paths, Buddhists thus had to negotiate this inconsistency to determine whether Śrāvakas see only selflessness and impermanence, or if they also gain insight into the emptiness realized by Bodhisattvas. To put the question succinctly, although the realization of emptiness is necessary for full enlightenment, is it also necessary for becoming a Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha *ārya*? And if it is, does the realization of impermanence and selflessness alone constitute an additional type of yogic perception or not? And furthermore, if so, where does this occur along the path?

a. The Gelug Position

Again, the articulations we will explore on this question assume a Madhyamaka framework and supersede each Tibetan school's understanding of Sautrāntika. We turn first to the Gelug answer to this question, whose preeminent position is found in Tsongkhapa's *Dgongs pa rab*

gsal. On Tsongkhapa's understanding, the two schools of Madhyamaka understand the paths differently. The Svātantrika argues that on the Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha path of seeing, one only sees selflessness. The Prāsaṅgika claims, so Tsongkhapa argues, that Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha *āryas* also realize emptiness. In Tsongkhapa's text, a Svātantrika interlocutor argues that aspiring Arhats[402] first have "a epistemically warranted cognition of selflessness, such that the aggregates are not equivalent to a substantial person (*gang zag rang rkya thub pa'i rdzas yod phung po dang ngo bo gcig tu med pa*)." This is a rather coarse realization of selflessness, where one understands that there is no substantial self that subsumes the five aggregates.[403] They still fail to realize that those aggregates are themselves selfless, or that phenomena themselves, down to individual atoms, are also selfless.[404] Still the Svātantrika argues that through intense meditation on this coarse type of selflessness, "the direct realization of selflessness will be accomplished, [and that selflessness] is established by reasons that are corroborated by yogic perception." This direct realization is sufficient for their path of seeing and ultimately for eliminating afflictions. The opponent therefore concludes, "Since one has thus eliminated all trace of affliction, even without realizing emptiness, this has the power to eliminate the latent tendency of the three realms along with their seeds." In other words, if you are just interested in achieving your own personal liberation in nirvana, Arhatship is sufficient, and the realization of emptiness is not

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402 To save myself from repeating "Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha," I henceforth group these two under their common goal, to reach the state of an Arhat. This is described as freedom from suffering but falls short of the enlightenment sought by the Bodhisattva, which includes full omniscience.

403 For an explanation of selflessness from the Gelug point of view on Prāsaṅgika as well as a lucid chart that explains its contrast with the other schools, see Jampa Tegchok Geshe, *Insight into Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 97 ff.

404 For a discussion, see Joe Bransford Wilson, "Pudgalavāda in Tibet? Assertions of Substantially Existent Selves in the Writings of Tsong-kha-pa and His Followers," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1990): 159.

necessary; realizing coarse selflessness will suffice. Tsongkhapa gives the following retort from the Prāsaṅgika perspective:

> We do not deny that one can validly understand the sixteen aspects [of the Four Noble Truths] without a view of reality or [emptiness], nor that those who focus their efforts on that object can directly perceive the coarse selflessness of the person. Nor do we deny that having seen that [directly], one can habituate to it. So, what *do* we say? Because such a path [realizes only a coarse selflessness to the substantial person], it does not *completely* realize the characteristic of selflessness, [which includes emptiness]. Thus, we do not assert it is the path of seeing or a meditative path that transcends the mundane.[405]

Tsongkhapa accepts that there can be a direct perception of coarse selflessness and the Four Noble Truths akin to what the interlocutor describes as a type of yogic perception. He denies, however, that this direct perception is sufficient to enter the path of seeing—for any of the three goals—which is exclusively characterized by a perception of emptiness and is requisite for the *complete* realization of even selflessness. In tandem, this suggests that there is some type of yogic perception of mere coarse, incomplete selflessness that can precede the direct understanding of emptiness that occurs for the first time on the path of seeing.

In later Gelug literature, this yogic perception of coarse selflessness came to be known as *ordinary* yogic perception (*so so skye bo'i rnal 'byor mgnon sum*) in contrast to the yogic perception of emptiness had by an *ārya* who has reached the path of seeing. Although the term "ordinary yogic perception" is not found directly in Tsongkhapa's *Dgongs pa rab gsal*, this Gelug view seems roughly contemporary with its founder, finding explicit description in the work of another of his close students, of Kedrup Gelek Pelzang (1385–1438). His concise yet lucid statement of this position in his *Stong thun chen mo* is worth

[405] Blo bzang grags pa, "Bstan bcos chen po dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal," 45–46.

quoting in its entirety. First, his characterization of yogic perception in the non-Prāsaṅgika schools:

> The definition of yogic perception [is as follows: it is a type of perception] that directly arises from a meditation (*samādhi*) whose dominant condition is unique: the union of concentration (**śamatha, zhi gnas*) and insight (**vipaśyanā, lhag mthong*). Its object is either the [sixteen] aspects [of the Four Noble] Truths or subtle or coarse selflessness. It is thus a type of nondeceiving (**avisaṃvāda, mi bslu ba*) knowledge free from conceptualization. Thus, the Svātantrikas, Sautrāntikas, and the Cittamātrins argue that the direct realization of the sixteen aspects [of the Four Noble Truths], including the aspect of impermanence, etc., must be an *ārya's* gnosis. [Furthermore], they argue the knowledge of a clear appearance of an object universal (*don spyi*) on the path of preparation—like the invalid cognition that knows the world to be full of bones through meditating on repulsiveness, etc.— is a conceptual apprehension of a [mere] linguistic universal (*sgra spyi*) and thus is not a type of valid perception. Therefore, they do not assert there can be yogic perception in the mind of an ordinary person.[406]

Following Prajñākaragupta's definition, Kedrub identifies that yogic perception is unique in being founded on concentration and insight. Again, the Four Noble Truths are sufficient for an object of yogic perception in these schools. Though it is possible to experience a vivid appearance of a meditative object before the path of seeing, such objects are unreal and concocted hallucinations and thus do not qualify as yogic perception. We see Kedrub therefore cite the same example of a non-existing meditative object that Dharmakīrti identified: seeing the world as full of bones when meditating on repulsiveness (*aśubha*). Thus, yogic perception only happens on a path of seeing, since it is only in preparation for that stage where meditation has a true object: the Four Noble Truths.[407]

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[406] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang po, *Stong thun chen mo*, ed. Lha mkhar yongs dzin bstan pa rgyal mtshan, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Madhyamika Text Series, 1972), 461.

[407] Kedrub's position is also simpatico with the Hard view I identified in relation to Eltschinger, that yogic perception only has the Four Noble Truths as an object and therefore does not accommodate the irreal.

But, according to Kedrub, this is *not* how Prāsaṅgikas understands yogic perception. He thus continues

> Here, [in the Prāsaṅgika system], as I have already said, determination of those [more coarse truths]—the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths (impermanence, etc.), the selflessness which merely negates the substantially existent (*rang rgya thub pa'i rdzas* [sic.]) person, and the emptiness which negates that subject and object are distinct—precede the final determination of the two subtle types of selflessness [of persons and phenomena]. Meditation on those [former three], within which one familiarizes oneself with their qualities, results in their clear, direct perception. Although that knowledge is not *āryan* gnosis, it is a valid yogic perception, and thus we accept valid yogic perception in the minds of ordinary persons.[408]

In other words, the three meditative objects that precede realization of the most subtle type of emptiness—that of the Four Noble Truths, namely impermanence, the lack of a substantially existent person, and the absence of subject and object's being distinct (an articulation of non-dualism)—are epistemically warranted, real, soteriologically efficacious, and therefore necessarily the object of yogic perception. But these yogic perceptions fail to graduate the meditator to the path of seeing, which requires a realization of emptiness proper, the most subtle form of selflessness. In the Gelug understanding of the Prāsaṅgika school, therefore, *the path of seeing for all three goals involve a perception of emptiness.*[409] Because coarse selflessness is equally true, if not complete, its clear appearance must constitute yogic

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408 Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang po, *Stong thun chen mo*, 1:461–62.

409 This is the sixth of what became known as the "Eight Difficult Points," (*dka' ba'i gnad chen po brgyad*), which describe the Gelug understanding of eight distinct features of Prāsaṅgika that differentiate it from other schools. For a translation of the eponymous text purportedly composed from notes taken by Gyeltsab Je (1364-1432) on Tsongkhapa's teachings, see Dar ma rin chen, *Two Prolegomena to Madhyamaka Philosophy: Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛttiḥ on Madhyamakakārikā I.1, and Tsoṅ kha pa Blo bzaṅ grags pa / Rgyal Tshab Dar ma rin chen's Dka' gnad/gnas brgyad kyi zin bris: Annotated Translations*, trans. David Seyfort. Ruegg (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2002), 227–33. For Tsongkhapa's more specific discussion of how the direct realization of these sixteen aspects fail to be sufficient for Arhatship, see Blo bzang grags pa, "Bstan bcos chen po dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal," 53–54. This is a section that Jamyang Shepa also employs. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson 'grus and Rol pa'i rdo rje lcang skya II, *Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School*, trans. Daniel Cozort (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1998), 339.

perception, but one that precedes the path of seeing, on which all three types of aspirants perceive emptiness. And hence, this must be an ordinary—i.e. non-*āryan*—type of yogic perception. The yogic perception of coarse selflessness and of impermanence (as part of the Four Noble Truths) both occur before the path of seeing proper.

I argue that Kedrub's reasoning here is again indicative of the general Gelug Hard view. In many ways, it is the flip side of their rejection of any possible irreality to yogic perception's object. This rejection manifests as the requirement that anything both real and soteriologically efficacious *must* be an object of yogic perception. In other words, Tsongkhapa rejects the bones and appearances of oneself as the deity as yogic perception because, while soteriologically efficacious, they are not real enough. However, Tsongkhapa cannot claim this of the Four Noble Truths. There are both efficacious and real. Their reality is confirmed by his assertion we explored earlier that while things like impermanence, selflessness, and emptiness may be universals, their reality is instantiated in objects. Thus, although realization of the (coarse) selflessness and impermanence indicative of the Four Noble Truths may not be as sophisticated as a realization of emptiness, they cannot be denied the status of an object of yogic perception, since they fit the criterion of not *only* being efficacious but also ontologically robust. Because Tsongkhapa argues that all three adherents—Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas—must perceive emptiness on the path of seeing, this forces him to place yogic perception of other real soterioloigcally effective objects—coarse selflessness and impermanence—before the path of seeing.

b. Taktsang's Critique

Most Tibetan schools other than Gelug disagree with Tsongkhapa's description of the paths here. Taktsang Lotsāwa Sherab Rinchen (1405-1477) was especially critical of his views. While his philosophy in general did not come to be accepted by the majority of his Sakya successors, Taktsang's criticism reflects the standard Tibetan take in contrast to Tsongkhapa's idiosyncrasies. Taktsang outlines his gripe in his famed eighteen contradictions leveled against the Gelug school. Here follows his explanation of the fifteenth contradiction in his *Grub mtha' kun shes*:

> [Gelugpas] argue that while insight into the Four Noble Truths (including impermanence, etc.) is a type of yogic perception, that one has yet to arrive on the path of preparation by that realization. This is because the path of preparation of all three vehicles—[be it Bodhisattva, Śrāvaka, or Pratyekabuddha]—must [prepare one for] the realization of the absence of inherent characteristics—[that is, emptiness]—in meditative equipoise. But this is a contradiction, since they assert that someone can have yogic perception on the path of accumulation even before having followed a previous path prior. *Therefore, even if there were a type of yogic perception outside the scope of an* ārya's *insight, it would be exhausted merely by the realization of the subtle impermanence of conventional phenomena and nothing more than mental perception* [emphasis added].[410]

First, we ought notice Taktsang's accurate portrayal of the Gelug position. Indeed, Tsongkhapa and subsequent Gelugpas argue that success in any of the three vehicles—whether for personal liberation or total enlightenment—requires preparation for the perception of emptiness on the path of seeing proper. As Taktsang notes, this means that already by the path of preparation one is engaged with emptiness. Thus, any realization of the

[410] Shes rab rin chen, "Grub mtha' kun shes kyi rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho," 285. Taktsang couches the Gelug position here as arguing that yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths occurs on the first path, accumulation (*tshogs lam*). Kedrub, as we saw, does argue that it occurs before the path of seeing, but it is not clear that he identifies its occurrence on this first path. However, this position is made explicit by later Gelugpas. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson 'grus and Ngag dbang dpal ldan chos rje, *Maps of the profound : Jam-yang-shay-ba's great exposition of Buddhist and non-Buddhist views on the nature of reality*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2003), 667–68 and 1042n857.

impermanence and coarse selflessness indicative of the Four Noble and its sixteen aspects would have to occur on the first path, the path of accumulation. Taktsang argues that this is a contradiction: while the path of preparation is necessary to prepare one for yogic perception of emptiness on the path of seeing, yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths appears to require no preparatory path, since it occurs on the very first path.

More importantly for our discussion here, Taktsang also argues that any yogic perception that could occur before seeing emptiness would have to be mental perception. The purported objects that ordinary yogic perception perceives—like impermanence—are not true objects of yogic perception, so Taktsang argues, and actually objects of mental perception. The question becomes why Taktsang precludes impermanence as an object of yogic perception, or why it would have to be an object of mental perception instead. Taktsang goes into a more detailed explanation elsewhere in the same text. The following section begins with an interlocutor who is attempting to place this impermanence. If, as Taktsang says, it is not the object of yogic perception, it is not ultimately true. But even conventionally, in our day-to-day encounter with the world, we fail to see things as impermanent. Thus, there is no conventional realization of impermanence either. Therefore, the Buddha's teaching on impermanence could not be true at any level, provisionally or ultimately.

> [Objection:] *You say that momentariness does not exist from the point of view of [ultimate] reality. However, it also contradicts the conventional, [since the conventional involves no analysis. Thus, momentariness is established at no level].* [Reply:]
>
> *There is no fault [here, since impermanence concerns] the yogic conventional*, *which sees in relationship to the world.*
>
> [Indeed], momentariness is not [realized] within worldly conventional [understanding]. Nevertheless, it is [realized] within *yogic* conventional [understanding]. Thus, there is no problem. The Four Noble Truths—the sixteen moments, including impermanence and the rest—concern [an

> understanding of] reality within [the context of] the world and so are conventional [but not ultimate]. The yogi who realizes this is said to analyze conventional reality. But if in this [Prāsaṅgika] system to directly realize [ultimate truth] was only this [realization of the Four Noble Truths], then yogis would never have a direct perception [of reality]. This is because it is also said that the appearances [that occur] post [yogic] achievement are still mistaken [by virtue of there being appearances]. [Thus, yogic perception of the impermanence of those appearances] could hardly be anything other than mental perception.[411]

Taktsang initiates the discussion with an interlocutor who argues that the realization of impermanence cannot be cogent, since there is no level of analysis that can accommodate it. At the level of conventional truth, there is no analysis at all, and so impermanence does not appear. Analysis, however, vitiates momentariness, since by realizing ultimate truth, appearances disappear entirely. Taktsang's strategy is to relativize conventional truth, arguing that the yogic conventional is distinct from the worldly conventional of no analysis. At the level of the yogic conventional, reality appears as momentary, which supersedes the mundane view of the world with no analysis. However, this is still not a direct perception of reality by virtue of the fact that it is still endowed with appearances. If yogic perception of reality involved appearances, then it would be no different from ordinary mental perception.[412]

Subsequent Gelugpas put forth several responses to Taktsang's critique of ordinary yogic perception, including Paṇchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1570-1662)[413] and Phurchok Ngawang Jampa (Phur lcog Ngag dbang byams pa, 1682-1762);[414] there is also a lengthy

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411 Shes rab rin chen, "Grub mtha' kun shes kyi rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho," 296–97.

412 It should be noted, however, that Taktsang appears to agree with Tsongkhapa that all three vehicles—Śravaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva—do indeed achieve insight into emptiness on their own paths of seeing. Shes rab rin chen, 343.

413 Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, "Sgra pa shes rab rin chen pa'i rtsod lan lung rig seng ge nga ro," 626.

414 Ngag dbang byams pa, "Stag tshang lo ts+tsha ba'i brgal lan rdo rje'i gzegs ma," in *Phur lcog ngag dbang byams pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Ngawang Sopa, 1974), 363.

rebuttal by Jamyang Shepa (’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1648-1722).[415] These responses are mainly exegetical, citing various texts — particularly the ninth chapter of Śāntideva’s (late 7th to mid-8th century CE) *Bodhicaryāvātara* — as evidence that yogic perception is possible before the path of seeing. But leaving aside the issue of scriptural interpretation, none of these Gelug rebuttals give a straightforward reply to Taktsang’s charge about mental perception. In other words, that a direct perception of impermanence cannot be yogic perception by virtue of its involving appearances. If appearances are involved, it must be apprehended by quotidian epistemic instruments, like mental perception, but not yogic perception, so Taktsang argues.

The Gelug failure to address this aspect of Taktsang’s critique is not wholly unsurprising: Taktsang and his Gelug opponents are simply operating with different understandings of the relationship between yogic perception’s object and those that populate our daily experience. For Taktsang, the fact that a realization of impermanence entails appearances—the impermanence *of* some entity—vitiates its being a realization of reality, which transcends appearances. It thus cannot be anything more profound than mental perception. The Gelugpas do not problematize appearances in the same manner, and thus there is no reason to assume that a realization of impermanence, albeit less profound than that of emptiness, is not a depiction of reality simply by virtue of something’s appearing. This debate therefore resembles the same between Chapa and *his* own interlocutor. Just as Chapa argued that freedom from elaborations does not vitiate objects themselves, so too do Gelugpas argue that yogic perception does not vitiate appearances. Here again, therefore, we

[415] ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson ’grus and Ngag dbang dpal ldan chos rje, *Maps of the profound : Jam-yang-shay-ba’s great exposition of Buddhist and non-Buddhist views on the nature of reality*, 666–69.

see that the issue of continuity shapes each author's understanding of the paths. Tsongkhapa's view sees yogic perception as essentially Continuous with the other epistemic instruments. If some ontological fact can be determined by inference—e.g., that appearances are impermanent—then that fact is realizable in yogic perception. Thus, there is no problem that both inference and yogic perception are involved in appearances. According to Taktsang, the very fact that impermanence is inferable and involved in appearances is what *precludes* it as yogic perception. Yogic perception's object is wholly Discontinuous with reality as it normally appears and is epistemically warranted. Thus, yogic perception is predicated on transcending appearances.[416]

iv. Conclusion

This chapter focused on Tibetan Continuous views of yogic perception. We saw the earliest evidence of this idea in Chapa. He argued that ultimate reality as inferred must accord to at least some degree with its direct realization. Otherwise, he argued, there is a slew of untenable contradictions. His view assumes that epistemic warrant must have an intentional object. That is, there is no sense in which an epistemic instrument can be probative without an object. That that object is a negative, an absence, makes no difference. Epistemic warrant must substantiate *something,* even a something-*cum*-nothing. Thus, inferences about ultimate reality and its direct realization in yogic perception intend this same object.

[416] It is of note that this debate seems to mirror the Satyākāravāda-Alīkākāravāda debate we saw in the last chapter. That is, does a realization of ultimate reality involve or vitiate appearances. Even though this debate is from a strict doxographic point of view a debate within Yogācāra and not Madhyamaka, and suspect that it informs many of the Madhyamka debates in Tibetan literature, as it does here.

I focused most of my attention in this chapter on Tsongkhapa, which is likely the preeminent Continuous view in the Tibetan stratum. I noted that his view was particularly Hard. That is, he is careful at every turn to assert the reality of yogic perception's object. This reality is something greater than pragmatic efficacy. In his discussion of both the views of the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra, he insists that yogic perception captures an ontologically robust particular. In both cases, he resists any formulation that yogic perception is of an irreal universal that has no real-world referent, a possibility left upon by Dharmakīrti and argued by Dunne. Rather, at the level of Cittamātra, yogic perception perceives a real particular that has universal-like qualities—namely, being unchanging—in the form of the Absolute. At the level of Sautrāntika, yogic perception realizes impermanence implicitly by observing the impermanent particular. Again, this implicit cognition of a universal is not tantamount to the type of false conceptual reification indicative of inference's grasp of universals. Impermanence itself is epistemically warranted by perception and thus unmistaken.

Tsongkhapa's Hard view also became apparent in his articulation of Tantric Creation Stage practice. There, one cultivates a vivid meditation of oneself as the deity. Although he cites verses in the *Pramāṇavārttika* concerning yogic perception in discussing Deity Yoga, Tsongkhapa is careful to differentiate Creation Stage practice from yogic perception proper. Even though seeing oneself as the deity has soteriological benefit, it is not real enough to be an object of yogic perception, mainly because it cannot be corroborated by other epistemic instruments, like the sense consciousnesses. Thus, even the irreal appearance of oneself as a deity—the penultimate stage of realization before final Tantric Completion Stage practice—is not counted among the objects of yogic perception.

Lastly, Tsongkhapa's Hard view informs his understanding of the relationship between the paths and yogic perception. Because impermanence and coarse selflessness are real—in no way irreal—and soteriologically effective, they *must* be an object of yogic perception. Thus, Tsongkhapa is consistent in his view, both rejecting irreal objects of yogic perception and accepting any real, soteriologically effective object as perceivable by yogic perception. Tsongkhapa's view is in stark contrast to Taktsang's, who argues something akin to the opposite. If an object is deemed epistemically warranted by our conventional epistemic instruments, it *cannot* be the object of yogic perception. Thus, while the epistemic warrant of the Four Noble Truths forces it to be an object of yogic perception in Tsongkhapa's view, this same fact precludes it as an object of yogic perception on Taktsang's. The Four Noble Truth's involvement with appearances relegates it to yogic conventional analysis but not yogic perception of ultimate truth.

Taktsang's view is thus assuredly Discontinuous: yogic perception's object transcends anything epistemically warranted in our quotidian reality. Taktsang's view is not idiosyncratic. We have seen its expression in the Indian sources. It also has vast support among Tibetan exegetes, to which we now turn.

Chapter 5: Tibetan Discontinuous Views of Yogic Perception

The last chapter explored Continuous formulations of yogic perception. As we saw, this view was an outgrowth of Gelug "moderate realism." I thus argued that Tsongkhapa and his intellectual progeny held a Hard view. Because our inferences pick out real objects in the world, yogic perception, which takes those inferences as a starting point, have real objects. There are no concessions to the irreal. Just as the previous chapter focused primarily on the

Gelug school, this chapter will focus on one of the Gelug's primary rivals, the Sakya school. We already had an introduction to an important Sakya figure in the last chapter, Taktsang Lotsāwa. Although Taktsang's views were never fully integrated into Sakya orthodox, we will find that his fellow Sakyapas share a similar penchant for Discontinuous views. In general, this is marked by an insistence that yogic perception transcends appearances entirely. Thus, it breaks with our normal epistemic warrant, which is restricted to those appearances. Taktsang was, however, highly influential for the Karma Kagyü school, especially the Karmapas, who cite him consistently.[417] We will see how Taktsang's Discontinuous view becomes incorporated into Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje's (1507–1554) unique tantric synthesis of yogic perception. We will also briefly break with our chronological analysis of these figures for a brief interlude from Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846-1912), the preeminent and prolific Nyingma scholastic.

First, however, we must explore earlier instances of this Discontinuous view in Tibet. Just as the first chapter rooted Continuous views in Chapa's work, this chapter grounds Discontinuous views in those of his student, Sönam Tsemo.

i. Sönam Tsemo: Discontinuous Roots

One of the earliest Tibetan articulations of Discontinuous views of yogic perception hails from Sönam Tsemo (1142–1182). Sönam Tsemo's position conflicts with Chapa Chökyi Sengé's, whom we explored in the last chapter. Chapa was also Sönam Senge's teacher at Sangphu monastery. But given how closely the flow of Chapa's polemic seems to follow the

[417] *Knowing Illusion: Bringing a Tibetan Debate into Contemporary Discourse*, forthcoming

organization of Sönam Tsemo's arguments forthcoming, it is not unlikely that Chapa was rebuking his student in his *Dbu ma shar gsum gyi stong thun.* Given the fact that both Sönam Tsemo and Chapa were not only contemporaries but in close contact, and that their views are diametrically opposed, it is clear that their contrasting views already existed and were well-defined in their era.

The section we will explore hails from Sönam Tsemo's commentary on the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra.* As we noted in the previous chapter, Chapa was adamant that being free from elaborations did not vitiate knowable objects. Here, we see the opposite view, that once mental elaborations are eliminated, knowable objects are taken with them. Notice, also, Sönam Tsemo's understanding of the role of inference in the process of realizing reality.

> Reality is free of elaborations. The truth of ultimate reality [is established] in relation to the truth of the nature of mind, which is naturally empty of all mistaken intentional objects. This is [also] the truth of ultimate reality. Though one may have completely analyzed [the tetralemma]—that there is neither existence, nonexistence, both, nor neither—one can still have a mistaken intentional object. Thus, freedom from elaboration is to be void of all those [intentional objects]. When conventional reality still appears due to [grasping to] an untrue nature of the mind, there is a mistaken intentional object. Freedom from elaboration is the characteristic that defines the ultimate. Thus, yogic perception only sees reality *qua* not seeing anything all. In this way, [the ultimate] is known. Through the inference that eliminates elaborations, the thing to be refuted is eliminated and, in this way, ascertained. Conventional reality appears merely like an illusion and is ascertained by conventional epistemic instruments. [But] the inference that negates elaborations obstructs the [ultimate] truth. And so even its appearance is understood to be untrue.[418]

We first notice Sönam Tsemo's emphasis on realizing the nature of reality via the mind. This is indicative of Discontinuous views that employ the Mahāyāna Meditation Method (MMM) explored in chapter three. That is, one inspects the nature of the mind in order to undermine

[418] Bsod nams rtse mo, "Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa," in *'Phags yul rgyan drug mchog gnyis kyi zhal lung*, TBRC W3CN3408, vol. 68 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2015), 114–15.

belief in external objects. Thus, in complete opposition to Chapa, Sönam Tsemo argues that freedom from elaborations is synonymous with the eradication of all objects. Yogic perception thus "only sees reality *qua* not seeing anything at all" (*'ga' yang ma mthong ba de kho na mthong ba*). We also see Sönam Tsemo advocate a role for inference that Chapa vehemently rejected. He notes that the inference that eliminates elaborations is itself still a conventional epistemic warrant for appearance and thus obstructs ultimate reality. Chapa, we will recall, argues that affording this interstitial role to inference results in absurdities. Sönam Tsemo addresses his teacher's position as he continues:

> Some say that the definition (*mtshan nyid*) of ultimate reality, as explained in scripture, is that it is [an object] of the mind. They say that therefore, the referent (*mtshan gzhi*) [of this definition of ultimate reality] must be ascertained by an epistemic instrument. [However, this does not account for how subsequent realizations trump previous ones. Concerning how this occurs, there are the following topics]: (1) the divisions of mind, (2) the stages of [which realizations] trump [which], and (3) refuting any objections. Per (1), [the divisions of mind], the yogi always abides in the achievement of supramundane wisdom and has achieved the first *bhūmi* or higher. Ordinay people, [who have not achieved the first *bhūmi*], only see what's ordinary. Per (2), [the stages of which realizations trump which], persons of this world perceive the self, etc. With the knowledge that this is untrue, through the direct perception of selflessness, [a yogi's view] trumps [that wrong view]. Thus, the yogi who [still grasps things in the] world trumps the common worldly view. The wisdom of the yogi who sees nonduality trumps the Śrāvaka yogi that sees phenomena as endowed with a self. Appearanceless wisdom trumps seeing [the world] as mind only. Thus, through the yogi's distinctive mind, [these views] are superseded one after the other.[419]

Again, we see Sönam Tsemo employ stages of meditation similar to the MMM. The yogi analyses phenomena until they overcome grasping to phenomena as endowed with a self and see it as nondual with the mind. In the final stage, the cessation of appearances allows the yogi to overcome any residual reification of that mind. As we noted in chapter three, this

[419] Bsod nams rtse mo, 115.

employment of the MMM is common to Discontinuous views of yogic perception. Sönam Tsemo's view is similar, since in the end it is "appearanceless wisdom" that the yogi achieves, transcending the world entirely. Sönam Tsemo appears to offer this view in distinction to that argued by Chapa. In Chapa's view, recapitulated by Sönam Tsemo here, ultimate truth is an intentional object of the mind, not the erasure of intentional objects. Thus, it must involve epistemic warrant. Sönam Tsemo counters that realization of ultimate reality involves a stepwise process of first grasping the ultimate as an inferential object, then negating that object in order to transcend appearances and the mind entirely. While Sönam Tsemo argues this stepwise process allows him to circumnavigate epistemic warrant of the ultimate, Chapa, we saw, argues that this route is blocked: epistemic warrant cannot be a steppingstone to objectlessness.

We also see Sönam Tsemo invoke the issue of the paths in relation to yogic perception. He insists that yogic perception only occurs on the first *bhūmi* or higher, that is, on the path of seeing. We noted that Tsongkhapa and subsequent Gelugpas reject this view, arguing that ordinary yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths occurs before the path of seeing. We can also surmise that Sönam Tsemo must argue, also unlike Gelugpas, that yogic perception across all three path's of seeing—those of the Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva—must have different objects: not all of them see emptiness. For example, "The wisdom of the yogi who sees nonduality trumps the Śrāvaka yogi that sees phenomena as endowed with a self." Presumably, the Śrāvaka yogi's realization of selflessness of the person occurs on their own path of seeing, even though they have yet to realize the selflessness of phenomena, which is only realized by Bodhisattva yogi *āryas* on *their* path of seeing.

It is unclear to what degree Sönam Tsemo's thought may have directly influenced Taktsang Lotsāwa. But their views are undeniably similar. They both advocate an interstitial yogic stage at which yogis see worldly phenomena as momentary or selfless. Both agree that this is not a view of ultimate reality, but a view that still supersedes the non-analytic, common view of conventional reality. Also, both argue that true yogic perception of ultimate reality must be void of appearances, because the fact of anything appearing at all is antithetical to ultimate reality. This view is in sharp contrast to Chapa and subsequent Gelugpas, who argue that to be empty is *not* tantamount to the complete disappearance of that object.[420]

To a certain degree, Sönam Tsemo and Chapa seem to be talking past each other. Chapa argues that it is impossible to establish the mind has no object. The notion that objectlessness could be epistemically warranted is oxymoronic, since epistemic instruments invariably have an object. However, the goal, per Sönam Tsemo, is to demonstrate exactly that there is *nothing* to establish. Thus, the fact that it is not possible to *establish* an absence of objects does not have much bite against Sönam Tsemo's argument, since he seeks to demonstrate that ultimately our epistemic instruments cannot establish anything at all—there is nothing *to* establish. Chapa, by contrast, argues that this destruction of our epistemic framework leaves us impotent to produce realization, since any attempt to undermine those instruments is simply a referendum on knowing full stop, whether spiritual or quotidian. Sönam Tsemo, in response, might argue that the spiritual realization indicative of yogic perception is soterologically effective exactly because it is *not* a type of knowledge;

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420 Tsongkhapa calls such a view an overly broad refutation. Blo bzang grags pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, trans. Joshua W. C. Cutler, Guy Newland, and Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, vol. 3 (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2015), 127–34.

knowledge only maintains our existence in samsara. The debate between Sönam Tsemo and Chapa thus essentially concerns what it means to have spiritual insight, whether it comes as the result of destroying previous ways of knowing or is continuous with it. Again, this difference is a rearticulation of the Continuous-Discontinuous debate. Chapa and company's insistence that our insight into ultimate reality must be epistemically warranted betrays a Continuous understanding, while Sönam Tsemo's insistence that ultimate reality is in excess of epistemic warrant reveals a Discontinuous approach.

ii. Sakya Paṇḍita: To Appear or not to Appear

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, Sakya Paṇḍita (1182-1251, henceforth Sapen) is perhaps the most important figure in the Sakya school. Sapen took issue with how Pramāṇa texts had been interpreted by the Sangphu tradition, arguing it had been sullied by exogenic Tibetan accretions not endemic to the Indian texts. One of few Tibetan scholars skilled in Sanskrit, Sapen thus sought to reform Pramāṇa in Tibet by reevaluating Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika.* His interpretation of that text engenders a Discontinuous view. I noted in chapter three, however, that even though the *Pramāṇavārttika* appears ambiguous between a Hard or Soft view, it and its Indian commentaries appear to be univocal that yogic perception is Continuous with other epistemic instruments. I argued that it is in the works of Asaṅga and *his* tradition that Discontinuous yogic perception finds its Indian genesis. This makes sense, given that in the *Pramāṇavārttika,* Dharmakīrti focuses on a realist Sautrāntika view. Nevertheless, Sapen appears to advocate a Discontinuous view of yogic perception, even when restricting himself to the *Pramāṇavārttika* and its attendant Sautrāntika realist

hermeneutic. It should be noted that our discussion for this rest of this section on Gelug-Sakya differences, unlike the previous section on the debate between Chapa and Sönam Tsemo, deals with their exegesis solely on Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's school and so will not invoke Madhyamaka.

This question of whether the object of yogic perception is corroborated by the other epistemic instruments led to an important taxonomic difference between the Gelug and Sakya schools. Sakyapas in general talk about two types of yogic perception, one that is without appearances and one with appearances. This does not seem to be a distinction recognized in the Gelug literature.[421] Take first the example of Sakya Paṇḍita's (1182–1251) definition of yogic perception in his *Tshad ma rigs gter*:

> Because [yogic perception] is free of subject-object duality, it is unmistaken. When subject and object are abandoned through meditation, there is an absence of error. If there is no error, then there is no conceptualization, and thus it is free of an object. Therefore, because yogic perception with and without appearances see [respectively] how things are deceptively and how they are ultimately, both are free of conceptualization and error.[422]

We notice immediately that Sapen equates yogic perception of ultimate reality with the absence of appearances, while knowledge of conventional reality involves appearances. Reminiscent of the MMM, the realization of nonduality entails an end to appearances. We also see what seems to be a precursor to Taktsang Lotsāwa's differentiation between a type of worldly, nominal yogic perception with appearances and true yogic perception without appearances. In Taktsang's view—albeit from the standpoint of Madhyamaka—yogic

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421 The only place I have found this distinction in the works of Tsongkhapa, Kedrub Gelek Pelzang, and Gyeltsab Darma Rinchen—considered the three foundational philosophers by the tradition—is in Gyaltab's commentary on the *Tshad ma rigs gter* itself. Dar ma rin chen, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rnam bshad," in *Rgyal tshab thams cad mkhyen pa dar ma rin chen gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 28 (Mundgod, India: Rje yab sras gsum gyi gsung 'bum sdud sgrig khang, 2019), 158. This commentary is accepted by Sakyapas themselves and so may reflect Gyeltsab's views as a Sakyapa before becoming a disciple of Tsongkhapa.

422 Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 304.

perception with appearances apprehends the Four Noble Truths. However, Sapen does not afford yogic perception with appearances the role of realizing the Four Noble Truths. Rather, yogic perception with appearances seems similar to the type of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing explored in chapter one. Sapen continues elsewhere in the same text:

> Dividing each [of the the Śrāvakas', Pratyekabuddhas', and Bodhisattvas' paths] into two, [those in training and those who need no more training], each of these divisions has two types [of yogic perception], with appearances and without, totaling ten aspects.[423] The supernormal powers dawn for the Śrāvakas with appearances when they have achieved concentration. But outside [of meditation], they do not [have those powers]. However, the five supernormal powers do not exist for the one liberated through wisdom (**prajñāvimukta*), for whom there are no appearances. [On the other hand], those who are liberated *both* [through wisdom and meditative concentration] (**ubhayatobhāgavimukta*),[424] the Prateykabuddhas, and full Buddhas see two thousand, three thousand, and then countless worlds respectively […].
>
> Through appearanceless wisdom, the Śrāvakas in training realize the selflessness of mental imputations, while the [Śrāvakas] of no more training realize the selflessness of the innate person. The Pratyekabuddhas realize one and a half[425] of the fact that the self apprehended [in relation to] phenomena is essenceless. Bodhisattvas realize both types of selflessness, [that of persons and phenomena]. [Full] Buddhas—[i.e., Bodhisattvas who are no longer in training]—achieve their realization through the method of abandoning the obscurations with their seeds.[426]

In contrast to Taktsang's view where realizations of selflessness are associated with appearances, Sapen argues that the realization of selflessness—even of only the person and not of phenomena—still constitute appearanceless yogic perception. Still, however, this

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423 This division concerns the Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas. When divided by whether they are in training (*slob pa*) or no longer training (*mi slob pa*), having completed the path, this results in five total divisions: because the Pratyekabuddhas have no teachers and learn independently, they have no training path. Śrāvakas and Bodhisattvas have both, and so this totals five paths. Each of these have an appearance and appearanceless version, and so this totals ten.

424 On the difference between *prajñāvimukta* and *ubhayatobhāgavimukta*, see Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 931.

425 This "one and a half" indicates that Pratyekabuddhas understand the emptiness of the self and of physical phenomena but still grasp to the mind as self-existent. Thus, they realize fully selflessness but only half of the emptiness of phenomena.

426 Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 280–81.

difference may just be an artifact of Taktsang arguing in a Madhyamaka context, where Sapen here is discussing the Sautrāntika view of Dharmakīrti. To put it succinctly, Sapen explains that the perception of discrete entities—the innumerable worlds in the Buddhist universe—is a yogic perception with appearances, while the realizations that concern the nature of reality occur through "appearanceless wisdom."

But even at the level of Sautrāntika, Sapen's view is vastly different from the Gelug view. In the previous chapter, we noted that Tsongkhapa argues that (at the level of Sautrāntika) yogic perception realizes selflessness "implicitly (*shugs rtogs*)" through the appearance of the selfless particular. In this way, Tsongkhapa makes cogent how the appearance of an object accords with the realization of its selflessness. This, we noted, is like perception's ability to recognize that an elephant is absent from an empty desk. Gelugpas thus argue that perception can implicitly recognize things that do *not* directly appear, like absences.[427] Yogic perception realizes the lack of self implicitly through perceiving the selfless particular. But the notion of implicit realization was vehemently opposed by Sapen, who argued that any possible cognition of a lack in relation to appearances must be

[427] Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 370–3. At the level of Madhyamaka, however, Gelugpas do indeed argue that yogic perception of emptiness initially does *not* involve appearances, exactly because it is a mere absence (*med dgag*). However, this is not a product of ultimate reality itself being bereft of appearances, such as argued by Sönam Tsemo and subsequent Sakyapas. Rather, it is merely because before buddhahood, the yogi is unable to cognize this emptiness simultaneously with appearances. The lack of appearances is a product of spiritual incompleteness, not an ontological fact of ultimate reality. Thus, the yogi oscillates between their cognition of emptiness and appearances until they can be seen simultaneously in the final goal. Blo bzang grags pa, "Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad," in *'Jam mgon bla ma tsong kha p chen po'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 16 (Mundgod, India: Rje yab sras gsum gyi gsung 'bum sdud sgrig khang, 2019), 161. In other words, the object of yogic perception (emptiness) is not beyond apperances inherently; it only appears that way due to a lack in the yogi's meditative skill. We saw Tsongkhapa make a similar point in the previous chapter, where the appearance of the deity in Deity Yoga does not appear alongside sensorial appearances merely because the mind does not have the capacity to grasp both simultaneously; but this fact does not vitiate sensory appearances.

conceptual.[428] In other words, there is no cogent sense in which perception can implicitly realize that an elephant is absent on a table—it just sees the table. Anything attributable to the table beyond its appearance must be the product conceptual thinking. Sapen argues this is the case because implicit cognition entails the ability to ascertain (*nges pa*) its object. On Sapen's interpretation, ascertainment is purely a conceptual enterprise, and thus it is barred from yogic perception.

While Gelugpas agree that yogic perception is not involved in ascertainment proper, it must have the power to *induce* ascertainment post facto. This is the role of implicit cognition.[429] Thus Gyeltsab Darma Rinchen (1364-1432), Tsongkhapa's other primary student, argues in his commentary on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, "The generation of a clear appearance is the object of a meditation culminating in yogic perception. However, there is not necessarily a clear appearance once one is in the post[-meditative state]. Having seen impermanence, etc., directly, that certainty does not degrade. And so, in the mind of an *ārya*, there is no lack of ascertainment about the appearance of momentariness."[430] Thus, Gyeltsab argues that yogic perception directly guarantees a post-meditative ascertainment about the nature of phenomena, their impermanence. Sapen, on the other hand, does not define yogic perception as an ability to induce an ascertainment *post facto*. According to Sapen, the question of yogic perception's ability to induce ascertainment is in fact irrelevant.

> First, all yogic perception must be a valid epistemic warrant. Because subsequent cognition (*bcad shes*) and ascertainment are both conceptual, they

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428 Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 264–65. Rongtön also deals with this issue extensively in Rong ston, "Rigs gter rnam bshad nyi ma'i snying po," 202–3.

429 Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 370–73. There was also debate in the Indian texts as to whether perception itself involved ascertainment. Dreyfus, 361–64.

430 Dar ma rin chen, "Rnam nges ṭika chen dgongs pa rab gsal," in *Rgyal tshab thams cad mkhyen pa dar ma rin chen gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 26 (Mundgod, India: Rje yab sras gsum gyi gsung 'bum sdud sgrig khang, 2019), 133.

> are not perception. Therefore, all yogic perception is a valid epistemic warrant because it is perception. Subsequent cognition and ascertainment are both conceptual, and thus not concordant with perception. Therefore, whether direct perception is an epistemic instrument that does or does not have the power to induce ascertainment need not be examined.[431]

Sapen's reasoning is straight forward. Yogic perception is perceptual. Therefore, it does not afford or induce any ascertainment. Ascertainment occurs *post facto* to perception—i.e., conceptually. According to Sapen, then, perception does not have some inherent power that determines what conceptual inferences are possible based thereupon. Such an ability would entail perception's capacity to recognize something beyond what appears to it directly. But this would vitiate its being perceptual, and thus implicit perception is an oxymoron.[432] However, Sapen's position leaves a couple questions dangling. If perception writ large always sees impermanent particulars, how is a yogic perception of impermanence any different from its sensory perception? Gelugpas argue that yogic perception is distinctive in its ability to induce an ascertainment of impermanence. Sensory perception does not have this intrinsic power. If Sapen rejects implicit perception, then it seems unclear how yogic perception affords a realization of impermanence where sensory perception cannot.

Also, why the reference to subsequent cognition? This cognition occurs when one realizes something that has already been realized prior. For example, the first moment in which one sees a particular chair, that knowledge is responding to a real, momentary particular out in the world. In the second moment, however, when one recognizes that chair as the same chair, recognition of an enduring chair overextends the particular, which only lasts for a moment and has no temporal extension. Recognitions of sameness, therefore,

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[431] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 283–84.

[432] Schwabland, "Direct and Indirect cognition and the Definition of Pramāna in Early Tibetan Epistemology," 803.

according to Sapen, can only be conceptual.[433] But why does Sapen reference subsequent cognition in relationship to yogic perception? Fortunately, Gorampa Sonam Senge's (1429-1489) commentary on the *Tshad ma rigs gter* offers some insight:

> [Objection:] *Omniscience is an epistemic instrument [toward some object] in the present moment. In the second moment [it cognizes that same object, however, omniscience] cannot rightly be asserted as a subsequent cognition. This is because [omniscience is perceptual and] all perception is nonconceptual and unmistaken. According to how epistemic instruments are substantiated, that [subsequent cognition of the same object in omniscience] is thus not epistemically warranted.* [Reply:] However, [the problem is worse than this, since] if perception does not ascertain its object [conceptually], then it is inappropriate to say it discriminates what characteristics [that object] may have, either to be appropriated or avoided. [Thus, because omniscience is nonconceptual, not only can it not be a subsequent cognition, it is unclear how it can ascertain anything at all.] You may object that therefore [omniscience] has to be a conceptual process. [But your qualm here poses] no problem [for our position]. It is [only] *normal* epistemic instruments that, through either their own power or another's, use ascertainment to make discriminations as to what objects to acquire and which to avoid (*'jug ldog byed pa*). When those *āryas*, who are not yet free of the propensity to conceptualize, rest in the natural state, or when ordinary people rest in the concentration that has fulfilled its intention, or another of the sort, they can discriminate through the power concentration [alone, without the need of conceptual ascertainment]. Thus, those free of conceptualization discriminate exclusively though concentration.[434]

Gorampa's interlocutor points out that if perception has no ability to ascertain or recognize the continuity of objects, then this is problematic for the notion of omniscience, since it would seem impossible for omniscient beings to have any ability to know such objects. Gorampa's strategy, therefore, is to differentiate ascertainment (*nges pa*)—which is a method used by ordinary folks—from the general ability to navigate what should be acquired and what should be avoided (*'jug ldog byed pa*). Although normal people must conceptually

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[433] We explored this issue in chapter three, where Sucaritamiśra argued that yogic perception cannot be a perception because it affords no new information, cognizing something that was already cognized.

[434] Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi don gsal," in *The Collection of the Eighteen Renowned Scriptures: Root Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Sachen International (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2011), 99.

ascertain an object's characteristics in order to accomplish this, omniscience and high meditative states engage in the latter without need of the former. This explanation actually appears to be a fair reading of Dharmakīrti's theory of causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*). Ascertainment is functionally defined as an ability to get us what we want and keep us away from what we don't. Gorampa circumvents the normal necessity of ascertainment for this function by appealing to realized beings' special ability to know this directly and perceptually through meditation.

Although Gorampa does not mention yogic perception in this passage explicitly, it gives a clear explanation of how yogic perception can make (functional) determinations independent of some innate ability to produce conceptual ascertainment. Both Sapen and Gorampa thus suggest that yogic perception is distinctive from other epistemic instruments in that it is able to do something functionally *like* ascertainment without actually engaging in ascertainment. How this occurs, however, still appears somewhat mysterious. Therefore, Sapen and Gorampa make similar concessions in their work that the ability for these meditative states to navigate the quotidian world is simply inconceivable (**acintya, bsam gyis mi khyab*).[435] In chapter three, we saw Ratnakīrti uses this notion of inconceivability to explain how it is that omniscience can be aware of past and future objects even though only the present exists. We noted that this was indicative of a Soft view, where yogic perception grasps irreal appearances that seem to represent external objects but in fact do not. Furthermore, this was indicative of a Satyākāravāda view, in which those appearances are real even though they do not refer to external objects. Here, however, Sapen's appeal to

[435] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 284–85; Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi don gsal," 100.

inconceivability is even more radical, since the omniscient yogi not only knows these objects without referents, but *without appearances.* Sapen again explains in the *Tshad ma rigs gter*:

> The third [part] is an analysis of wisdom that knows the three times. [Objection:] *If a buddha does not know the past and the future, they cannot be said to be omniscient. However, if they know [the three times] through appearances, then the three times would be established after the fact [and not directly]. Furthermore, if there are appearances [to that omniscient cognition], then [there cognition is conceptual, and] it cannot be said that [omniscient beings] have a perceptual [buddha] eye*. [Reply:] This inconceivable wisdom of [the three times] is not inferable. Even the inferential ability of some [ordinary person's] mind when awake is impaired merely by sleep. Surely, then, ordinary beings—whose vision on this side [of samsara] is impaired by subject-object duality—have no inferential ability [to comprehend] that wisdom, since [in that wisdom, the basis has been] transformed (**āśraya[pari]vṛtti, gnas [yongs su] gyur pa*).[436] Therefore, because [the basis] is transformed [upon awakening], knowledge of the three times and the transcendental mind [that comprehends them], etc., are inconceivable.[437]

The interlocutor argues a buddha must be omniscient and that omniscience of the three times must entails the appearance of those temporal objects. However, because the buddha's perception always engages in ultimate reality, it necessarily ceases to engage with appearances. Sapen could have just denied that buddhas do not engage with appearances. Earlier, we saw that Sapen admit yogic perception *both* with and without appearances of buddhas—specifically, those Bodhisattvas who have reached the path of no more training. Here, however, Sapen seems to agree with the interlocutor there is an issue in stipulating a buddha perceives appearances. Rather than allow for enlightened appearances, he argues that the apparent conflict between appearanceless perception via the buddha's eye and the necessity of appearances for comprehending objects of the three times is just a product of our

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[436] For a discussion of this term, see Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*, 82 ff. Dharmakīrti understands this as the destruction of dualistic thinking upon reaching Buddhahood.

[437] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi rang 'grel," 284–85.

limited inferential ability. Again, when it come to the ultimate and its perception, our normal epistemic instruments simply fall short. Sapen's rejection of enlightened appearances is thus indicative of Alīkākāravāda Discontinuous positions we explored in chapter three. Because our normal epistemic instruments rely on the fodder of appearances, the fact that ultimate reality transcends appearances necessitates it transcends our epistemic instruments, like inference.[438] We saw that Sönam Tsemo likewise agrees to this limit on inference, saying it has nothing probative to say about ultimate reality or its perception. Chapa, in contrast, reviles against this limit.

At the level of both yogic perception of ultimate truth and yogic omniscience of conventional reality, Sapen seems to reject a role for appearances. The position again reflects a Discontinuous view. In the domain of ultimate truth, Sapen argues appearances of quotidian objects have no continuity with ultimate truth. Selflessness must be realized independent of the appearance of selfless particulars. Thus, those Sakyapas following Sapen understand yogic perception's object as something antithetical to appearances in the everyday world. According to the Gelug position, appearances can afford an implicit perception of ultimate truth. Thus, Gelugpas argue that this realization can occur Continuous with those appearances. Sapen's Discontinuous view is also reflected in his discussion of omniscience. From the perspective of our limited inferential abilities, it seems contradictory to say a buddha is omniscient of all conventional appearances and yet no longer engages in appearances. Sapen insists this seeming contradiction is simply a result of our inference's inability to grasp the inconceivable. This again speaks to a Discontinuous view, where

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[438] Sapen's position here is actually similar to that of Dharmakīrti (*cum* Yogācārin) in the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*: "The omniscience of the Bhagavan is inconceivable because he is completely beyond objects of knowledge or linguistic designations." Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Saṃtānāntarasiddhi, Rgyud gzhan grub pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," 359a; Negi, *Santānāntarasiddhi kārikā ṭīkā*, l.89.

employing our inferential epistemic instruments toward ultimate truth only results in irreconcilable paradoxes.

iii. Gorampa versus Kedrub on Sautrāntika

The difference between Sakya and Gelug positions on yogic perception becomes clearer when we compare two different Sakya and Gelug commentaries on a common root text. It is in such a comparison that the differences between their Continuous and Discontinuous views comes to the fore. Both the commentaries I discuss concern the perception chapter of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavarttika* and each selection comments on verses 3.284-6. They also both intersperse Dharmakīrti's root verses within their own commentary, incorporating Dharmakīrti's phrases verbatim without explicitly demarcating what words are from his root text and what are their own commentarial additions. In my translation of each commentary below, therefore, I render any text that is either shared between both Gorampa and Kedrub's commentaries or found in Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* in normal font. The commentarial additions unique to each work are put in **bold**. Lastly, I have underlined and added subscript numbers to certain key phrases. These will form anchor points for comparison between the two works and are meant for the reader's reference. So, for example, when the translation of Gorampa's work reads, "<u>This is an epistemic warrant</u>$_1$," this phrase is meant to be compared with Kedrub's phrase marked by "<u>This is not an epistemic warrant</u>$_1$." These will be discussed in subsequent subsections corresponding with the subscript number. We start first with Gorampa's work:

> **[Objection:]** If **you assert that** through meditation **everything can arise as a** clear appearance, then **that contradicts your assertion that the object**

(*don*) of yogic perception **is real and** appears clearly. **[Reply:] Even when you meditate on an unreal object it will appear clearly**. [A meditator] manifests [the appearance of] unreal objects, such as bones and the like, repulsiveness, and the earth and water *kaṣinas* by meditating on them repeatedly. The produced **cognition** is nonconceptual. They are seen as clear appearances **by a valid epistemic instrument (*tshad ma*).**[1]

Therefore, **consider the mind of someone** who meditates upon something intensely—whether a real object, **such as selflessness**, or an unreal object, such as the earth *kasina*. When that meditation is perfected, the object of mediation will appear clearly and result in a nonconceptual mind [engaged in that meditation]. **This is because [that mind] becomes exceptional naturally, as a product of sustained meditative stability as well the fact that the mind has cultivated that meditative object** […]

There are two nonconceptual clear appearances that arise from meditation on true and untrue objects. **Consider** the first, [meditation on true objects]: **it is any mind**[2] **that has a clear appearance produced by mediation on how phenomena actually exist per** the Four Noble Truths **as explained in the second chapter [of the *Pramāṇavārttika*]**. **This [mind]**[2] **is** asserted to be a perceptual epistemic warrant, **since it is consciousness of a true object, free from conceptualizations, and** free from error (**avisaṃvāda, bslu med pa*). The rest, **such as meditative concentration on** the earth *kasina*, etc., despite being free of conceptualization, are not **yogic** perception,[3] since they are illusory (*nye bar bslad pa, upaplava*) and mistaken (*'khrul pa, bhrānta*) consciousnesses.[439]

Now consider the commentary of Kedrup Gelek Pelzang (1385–1438), who along with Gyeltsab and Tsongkhapa, eventually came to be considered one of the three foundational figures of the Gelug tradition.

However, if through **the power of** meditation, **an object (*yul*)** appears clearly, is it the case that **every instance of yogic cognition—in which there is a clear [appearance of an] object through the power of meditation—also constitutes** yogic perception? **When** one manifests and produces [an appearance of] unreal objects, such as **bare** bones and the like, repulsiveness, and the earth and water *kaṣinas*, by meditating on them repeatedly, those **objects upon which one meditates** [appear to] nonconceptual [cognition] and are seen[1] as clear appearances.

Therefore, whatever one meditates upon intensely—whether a real object, **such as the [sixteen] aspects of the [Four Noble] Truths,** or an unreal object, such as the earth *kasina*—that mediation **will be clear** and result in a nonconceptual mind when that meditation is perfected. **At that time, the**

[439] Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam par bshad pa kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer: Mngon sum le'u," in *The Collection of the Eighteen Renowned Scriptures: Root Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Sachen International (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2011), 92.

> **nonconceptual [appearance] of** the object of mediation appears clearly **and is a yogic cognition that results from meditation.**
>
> **Similarly**, there are two **types of cognition that are** nonconceptual clear appearances that arise from meditation on true and untrue objects. Concerning the first, [meditation on true objects]: **whatever [appears clearly] through meditation and** is free from error (**avisaṃvāda, slu ba med pa*) is asserted to be a perceptual valid epistemic warrant. **[Specifically], the object$_2$ of that nonconceptual cognition arises from meditation. That [meditation therefore] realizes a true object$_2$ established by a valid epistemic instrument, such as the sixteen aspects of** the Four Noble Truths, **beginning with phenomena's impermanence**. **However**, the rest, such as the [appearance of] the earth *kasina*, etc., may **appear clearly and** are nonconceptual, but they are not perceptual **valid epistemic warrants$_3$**, since they are illusory (*nye bar bslad pa, upaplava*) and mistaken (*'khrul pa, bhrānta*) consciousnesses.[440]

The two commentaries largely agree with each other: although meditative concentration can lead to the clear appearance of both real and unreal objects, this does not undermine the veracity of yogic perception. This is because, as both also agree, yogic perception, unlike meditation on just anything, must have a true object and thus constitutes a veridical (or free from error) perceptual epistemic warrant. This much we covered in chapter three. But there are three salient differences in the details.

(1) To be seen by a valid epistemic instrument (*tshad mas mthong ba*)

The first concerns the clear appearance of those things that are unreal— bones , the earth and water *kaṣinas,* etc. Gorampa interestingly claims that these are seen "by a valid epistemic instrument (*tshad mas mthong ba*)."[441] Kedrub, by contrast, just says they are "seen." This

[440] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang po, "Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi mngon sum le'u rgya cher bshad pa," in *Mkhas grub thams cad mkhyen pa dge legs dpal bzang gi gsung 'bum*, vol. 33 (Mundgod, India: Rje yab sras gsum gyi gsung 'bum sdud sgrig khang, 2019), 152–53.

[441] This is also not likely a typo, since it is found in at least three recensions of the text. Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam par bshad pa kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer: Mngon sum le'u," 2011, 92; Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam par bshad pa

does seem an odd claim on the part of Gorampa, given that he admits those objects are unreal but then says their appearance is epistemically warranted, or, at least, seen via a valid epistemic instrument. Dr. Venerable Tashi Tsering, a modern-day authority of the Sakya school, argues that instead of "seeing those appearances with an epistemic instrument," Gorampa may mean something like "*the fact that* those appearances *are seen* is established with a valid epistemic instrument."[442] This would resolve the issue, since it is not that those objects themselves are epistemically warranted, but the fact of their being seen by some people. On the other hand, this assertion would seem more felicitously rendered in Tibetan as "*mthong ba tshad mas grub,"* as in their being *seen* is epistemically warranted. But, as it is, "*tshad mas mthong*" seems to suggest that one sees those objects *with* a valid epistemic instrument.

Even if we were to grant this nuanced interpretation of Gorampa—that Gorampa means that the fact of their seeing is valid—this may be difficult to square with Gorampa's understanding of appearances. The claim that the fact of seeing those objects is validly established, even though their referents are not, suggests that appearances *qua* appearances are epistemically warranted independent of their relationship *qua* referent object. In other words, to say that it is true they see those things suggests their appearing is true, despite the fact that *what* appears—their referents—are not. But this supposition goes against a more general Sakya position that does not accommodate actual appearances of unreal objects. On

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kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer," in *Kun mkhyen go rams pa bsod nams seng+ge'i gsung 'bum*, TBRC W1KG16651, vol. 1 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2013), 385; Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam par bshad pa kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer: Mngon sum le'u," in *Kun mkhyen go rams pa bsod nams seng+ge'i gsung 'bum*, TBRC W1PD1725, vol. 1 (Derge: Dzong sar khams bye'i slob gling, 2014), 635.

[442] I am grateful to Dr. Ven. Tashi Tsering at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies for this interpretation (personal communication, January 19, 2021).

this position, a hallucination is not a real appearance of an unreal object—it is unreal full stop.[443] A person cannot be said then to validly see bones in meditation. They may think they do, but even the fact of anything appearing is illusory and therefore not epistemically warranted.

Gorampa seems to corroborate this position elsewhere when discussing the notion of the "appearing object (*snang yul*)": "In my estimation, while the *[Tshad ma] rigs gter* considers the second of these—[i.e., an erroneous (*log shes*) appearance to conceptual consciousness]—to be an appearance to consciousness, they are not generally considered to be appearing objects, [given that they are not of actual objects]."[444] Thus, illusions entail no appearing object. There is not some appearance the mind validly grasps despite that appearance's failure to refer. Gorampa therefore seems in general agreement with the Sakya position that appearances as such cannot be considered intentional objects in and of themselves or that thereby their being seen is validly warranted even though their referent objects are not. Their illusory nature vitiates their ability to be evaluated *qua* appearances independent of the objects they fail to represent.

Thus, when Gorampa says that the bones and *kasiṇas* are seen with a valid epistemic instrument, he cannot mean that they are valid *qua* appearances. What, then, does he mean? There is a more direct clue elsewhere in Gorampa's same commentary about how he understands "seeing with an epistemic instrument (*tshad mas mthong ba*)." The following comes from the beginning of his commentary on the perception chapter:

> The anti-essentialist argues that being functional cannot be the definitional basis of being a particular. They argue that there is no consciousness of an ultimately real functional entity. But this is untrue, since we see how seeds

[443] Stoltz, "Sakya Pandita and the Status of Concepts."

[444] Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi don gsal," 2.

> and fire have the power to produce sprouts and smoke. They may retort that we only see this conventionally, and so it is not applicable to the ultimate. If one were to define [a realization of the ultimate] in terms of [a conventional understanding that things function], this would be an overreach (*khyab ches*), [applying to the ultimate what only can be said conventionally]. Thus, it is not possible to define production ultimately. But whether it is conventional or ultimate, we define a functional entity as that which is seen by a valid epistemic instrument (*tshad mas mthong*). Why argue about whether this is called "conventional"? This is just quibbling about names, simply because we call [a functional entity] ultimate.[445]

Even from the Sautrāntika perspective, Gorampa appears to hedge on the question of what can be said about ultimate reality. Gorampa's anti-essentialist (*ngo bo nyid med par smra ba*) interlocutor likely proleptically anticipates Gorampa's final Madhyamaka, anti-essentialist position. But ventriloquizing the Sautrāntika, Gorampa is still reticent to claim that objects are ultimately functional. He simply dismisses this as a non-issue, since the real concern is whether seeing them as such is epistemically warranted. He does not counter by insisting that epistemic instruments can access the ultimate, but only that whether they do is irrelevant. This move relegates epistemic warrant to the conventional. It is only from our conventional standpoint that we can say our perception confirms some type of ultimate causality. But ultimately, such assessments fall short, since the ultimate itself is ineffable: our experience of causality cannot extend to things as they are. Our only recourse in discussing the ultimate is conventional epistemic warrants.

This is also the same position of Sapen, who argues that despite conventional talk about ultimately existing percepts, these objects (even in Sautrāntika) do not withstand analysis. We may *say* that we validly "perceive" a pot, for example. But ultimately, "pot" is a conventional abstraction about what perception gleans from ultimately existing particulars,

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[445] Go bo rab 'byams pa, "Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam par bshad pa kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer: Mngon sum le'u," 2011, 4–5.

the truth of which is ineffable.[446] This is in stark contrast to the aforementioned Gelugpa "moderate realism." In their interpretation of Sautrāntika, our labels get at commonsense objects in the world. Thus, the word "pot" picks out some object that is really there. The way our language divides up the world cuts at natural joints.[447]

Although we have meandered down a bit of digression concerning what Gorampa means by "to be seen by a valid epistemic instrument (*tshad mas mthong*)," this analysis reveals an important feature of Gorampa's understanding of yogic perception. Again, Gorampa, unlike Kedrub, claims that even *unreal* objects like the bones and *kasiṇa* are "seen by a valid epistemic instrument." Our analysis shows that on Gorampa's view of Sautrāntika, to be seen by an epistemic instrument only substantiates something's conventional existence. Our epistemic instruments simply cannot reach real, ultimate things. In some sense, epistemic instruments *only* capture illusions like bones and *kasiṇas,* since whatever appears conventionally is vitiated ultimately. Yogic perception, however, *does* reach the real. Thus, because epistemic warrant is not a function of the real, yogic perception is not differentiated from other meditative constructions by virtue of being a valid epistemic instrument. Instead, yogic perception is unique in having an appearanceless, epistemically transcendent window into the ultimate. Again, this bespeaks a Discontinuous view. Yogic perception's realization of ultimate reality transcends epistemically warranted conventional reality, in which all appearances are like bones and the *kasiṇa*—mere illusions.

This is not Kedrub's view of Sautrāntika. Epistemic instruments do pick out real, ultimately existing things in the world. His is a Continuous view. Yogic perception is only a

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[446] Jonathan C. Gold, "Sakya Pandita's Anti-Realism as a Return to the Mainstream," *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 2 (2014): 363–64.

[447] Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 116–19.

special case of epistemic warrant, since it has a unique ability to produce ascertainment about a certain dimension of these objects—their impermanence and selflessness. Thus, while one might "see" bones and the like in meditation, they are not epistemically warranted, which sufficiently differentiates their appearance from true yogic perception.

(2) Mind versus object as an epistemic warrant

We again see the contrast in Gorampa's and Kedrub's views at another point in the text. The next pair of sections comment on verse 3.286bc, "whatever meditation is free from error is asserted to be a perceptual valid epistemic instrument." There is a certain ambiguity here. What about this meditation makes it free from error (**avisaṃvāda, bslu med pa*)? Is it the object that is free from error—i.e., that object exists, is true, and not illusory? Or is the mind free from error—i.e., it does not distort reality? This ambiguity is exacerbated by the fact that "*pramāṇa*" or "*tshad ma*" can have two meanings, either referring to the instrument with which one sees validly—i.e., epistemic instrument—or a real object that corroborates one's valid seeing—i.e., epistemic warrant. We see Gorampa and Kedrub split on this exact ambiguity. Gormapa suggests it is *the mind* that is the valid perception: "This [mind] (*blo*) is asserted to be a perceptual epistemic warrant, since it is consciousness (*shes pa*) of a true object, free from conceptualizations, and free from error (**avisaṃvāda, bslu med pa*)." Kedrub's assessment, by contrast, emphasizes the object as the source of validity: "[Specifically], the object (*zhal bya*) of that nonconceptual cognition arises from meditation. That [meditation therefore] realizes a true object (*yang dag pa'i don*) established by a valid epistemic instrument." According to Gorampa, yogic perception derives its epistemicity from

its instrument, the meditative mind that realizes the ultimate truth. Kedrub, on the other hand, derives the validity of the meditation from the object it is cognizing. It is the truth of the object that affords yogic perception its epistemic warrant.

This subtle distinction, I argue, traces a key difference between Chapa's and Sönam Tsemo's views that we explored earlier. Chapa argued that the epistemic warrant of yogic perception is corroborated by an inference, which correctly ascertains the ultimate. Again, it is through this inferential object's connection with ultimate truth that yogic perception's clear appearance is epistemically trustworthy. Sönam Tsemo, by contrast, argued that true yogic perception is objectless: "The truth of ultimate reality [is established] in relation to the truth of the nature of mind, which is naturally empty of all mistaken intentional objects." In construing the epistemic warrant of yogic perception in relationship to the mind independent of objects, Gorampa thus may be setting the groundwork for a type of objectless yogic perception. Kedrub, by contrast, in emphasizing the veracity of the object as the determinant of yogic perception's epistemic warrant, may, like Chapa, mean to insist that yogic perception is always intentional and never objectless.

We must recall that while Gorampa and Kedrub are writing from the point of view of Sautrāntika, Chapa and Sönam Tsemo are discussing Madhyamaka. However, as I have argued earlier, it may be that Gorampa and Kedrub are construing Sautrāntika in a fashion that anticipates their final Madhyamaka view. For Gorampa, objects must be eliminated in the final analysis, and so he builds his Sautrāntika foundation in a manner that substantiates yogic perception in relationship to the mind rather than its object. Kedrub, however, is not object-phobic; objects are not eliminated by ultimate truth. Thus, he can cogently define

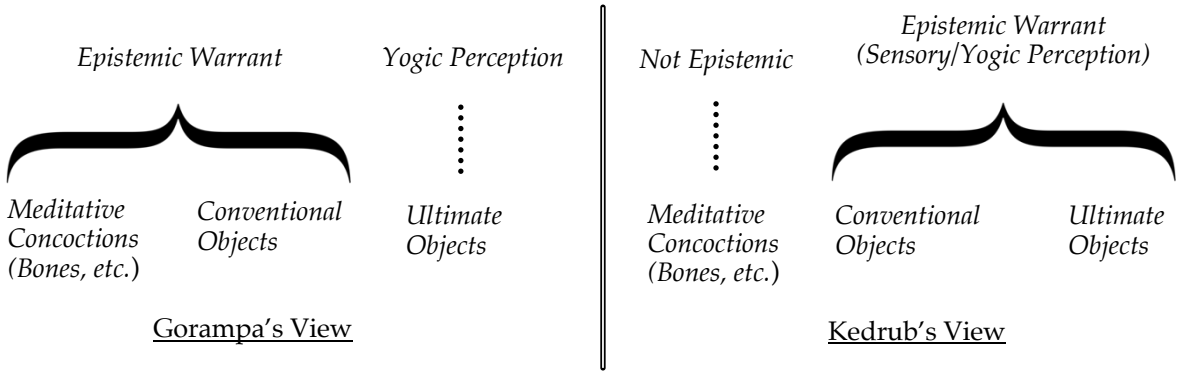
yogic perception's epistemic warrant at the level of Sautrāntika in terms of the object, without having to backtrack this claim within the more refined context of Madhyamaka.

Gorampa's and Kedrub's contrasting views on epistemic warrant—whether it is substantiated by the mind or the object—are again indicative of Discontinuous and Continuous views respectively. In alignment with the MMM, Gorampa foregrounds the mind in yogic perception as a steppingstone toward the elimination of appearances and objects. Yogic perception is the instrument by which one transcends the appearance of objects entirely. Kedrub, on the other hand, harbors a Continuous view; there is thus no need to disentangle yogic perception from epistemically warranted objects. Yogic perception thus does not capture something completely beyond objects but a certain dimension of those objects hitherto unrealized. Thus, yogic perception is Continuous with the other epistemic instruments involved in appearances.

(3) Yogic perception as like or unlike other epistemic instruments

There is one last piece of comparative evidence that speaks to this Continuous-Discontinuous distinction between Kedrub and Gorampa. While Gorampa considers meditation on unreal objects to be invalid because they are "not yogic perception," Kedrub argues that these same appearances "are not perceptual valid epistemic warrants." Again, we see Gorampa hesitant to differentiate the clear appearances of normal perception from those generated from meditation on unreal objects. Thus, he argues those meditative constructions are distinct from *yogic* perception but not from epistemically warranted perception in general, since even the appearance of bones and the *kasiṇa* are "seen by a valid epistemic instrument." Instead, yogic

perception is distinct in terms of its realization of ultimate truth, one that transcends the appearances that plague normal epistemic instruments. Ultimate truth is therefore beyond the scope of normal epistemic warrant. Kedrub, by contrast, has no problem with conventional epistemic perception and yogic perception's being Continuous with it. Because it is not the job of yogic perception to transcend normal epistemic warrant, there is no problem in differentiating yogic perception from meditative concoctions by virtue of its being epistemically warranted, just like normal perception. It is sufficient to differentiate yogic perception from meditative illusions by grouping it with epistemically warranted perception writ large. We can illustrate this difference in the diagram below:



In Gorampa's view, the meditative concoction of bones is similarly epistemically warranted as the normal apprehension of conventional objects. Yogic perception, by contrast, is beyond the epistemic instruments and so grasps ultimate reality. In Kedrub's view, both conventional and ultimate objects are within the ken of epistemic warrant. While yogic perception gleans the ultimate truth of those objects, the other epistemic warrants, like sense perception, glean their conventional truth—what they are, etc. Meditative concoctions are outside the scope of epistemic warrant simply because those objects do not exist.[448]

The distinctions I am identifying here between Gorampa and Kedurb may not be true philosophical disagreement as much as differences inchoate. To be sure, once Gorampa and Kedrub get to the level of Madhyamaka, these differences become much more pronounced.[449] My more circumspect argument, then, is that these subtle differences in commentarial choices between Gorampa and Kedrub may proleptically anticipate more pronounced differences at the level of Madhyamaka, even though they constrain themselves here to the interpretive framework of the Sautrāntika school. For example, the assertion that yogic

448 We saw Tsongkhapa make a similar point when he argued a failing hair is neither an epistemically warranted universal nor particular because it does not exist.

449 Sonam Thakchoe, *The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007); Go bo rab 'byams pa, *Freedom from extremes: Gorampa's "Distinguishing the views" and The Polemics of Emptiness*, trans. José Ignacio Cabezón and Lobsang Dargyay, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 115–202.

perception is beyond the appearances indicative of meditative concoctions and general epistemic warrant anticipate Gorampa's interpretation of Madhyamaka wherein appearances are absent at the level of the direct experience of ultimate reality.[450] According to Tsongkhapa's view of Madhyamaka, yogic perception does not transcend appearances: while it is true that non-Buddhas cannot see appearances and ultimate reality at the same time, they eventually occur together once one has reached full enlightenment.[451] Again, as should be clear, these differences trace the distinction between Discontinuous and Continuous views of yogic perception—the former problematizing quotidian appearances as something to be eliminated, the latter retaining them as something to be refined and nuanced.

iv. Śākya Chokden verus Tsongkhapa on Cittamātra

As I have been explaining throughout, a key point of contention in the Sakya-Gelug debate on Discontinuous versus Continuous views is whether yogic perception has an object in the proper sense. If it does, yogic perception is not appearance transcending, nor does it completely transcend the other epistemic instruments that have something to say about those appearances. If it does not, yogic perception is in a realm of its own. Because it has no object that we can speak of, it is ineffable. In our discussion of Tsongkhapa in the previous chapter, we saw him go through extensive efforts to guarantee that yogic perception has an epistemically warranted object. For example, in his analysis of Cittamātra, he argued that

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[450] *myu gu bdag las mi skye bar bsgrub pa'i skabs su/ thal 'gyur bas rang rgyud khas mi len pa'i gnad kyang de'i tshe chos can myu gu snang tsam nyid kyang ma grub pa'i phyir ro zhes pa 'di nyid bkod pa yin no//* Go bo rab 'byams pa, *Freedom from extremes: Gorampa's "Distinguishing the views" and The Polemics of Emptiness*, 196.

[451] Blo bzang grags pa, "Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad," 161.

yogic perception has a particular as its object, the Unchanging Absolute (*'gyur med yongs grub*). Tsongkhapa insisted that that this object was ontologically robust. Although from the point of view of Sautrāntika it was problematic to insist a particular could be unchanging, this is accepted in the Cittamātra school. Thus, Tsongkhapa preserves the intentionality of yogic perception as capturing a robust entity.[452]

Tsongkhapa's view is vastly different from Śākya Chokden's (1428-1507). Śākya Chokden was undeniably an independent thinker, one who broke with the Sakya party line on many occasions. However, his analysis of yogic perception of the Unchanging Absolute seems simpatico with Sapen and Gorampa's division of yogic perception with and without appearances:

> [As Dignāga says in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*], "[Yogis] see just the object, independently [from the guru's instructions]." Later commentators explained this as a nonimplicative negation (*med dgag*). It is not a knowable object, since it is neither a universal nor one mixed [with conceptualization]. Since that is the case, the Sautrāntikas separated [yogic perception into two]: yogic perception with and without appearances. Both see the object as a particular, since particulars are necessarily ultimate truth [and yogic perception must see the ultimate truth]. In the Vijñāptimātra system, they argue that yogic perception with appearances sees [various] particulars. The type without appearances is defined as seeing just one specific particular: it only sees the unmistaken Absolute. This Absolute is Unchanging (*'gyur med yongs grub) qua* nonimplicative negation. But since [to see the Absolute] is really to see nothing, it is only nominally called seeing. Thus, it is difficult to posit exactly what ultimate truth is, since it is not truly established.[453]

Unlike Tsongkhpa, Śākya Chokden analyses the doxographic distinction between Sautrāntika and Cittamātra through the taxonomy of yogic perception with and without appearances. Śākya Chokden and Tsongkhapa seem to agree that in both Sautrāntika and Cittamātra, yogic

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[452] Also see section chapter 4 section iib.

[453] Śākya mchog ldan, "Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi dgongs rgyan lung dang rigs pa'i 'khor los lugs ngan pham," in *The Collection of the Eighteen Renowned Scriptures: Root Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Sachen International (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2011), 488.

perception takes a particular as its object. But in the case of Śākya Chokden, this means something radically different. Because the object of yogic perception is a particular, it is *not* a knowable object (since it cannot be known conceptually) nor can its existence be posited (since it is not truly established (*bden par ma grub*)). Ultimate reality is without appearances, and thus to "see it" is "really to see nothing." The particular is thus completely Discontinuous with our normal ways of knowing. This position is reminiscent of Sönam Tsemo, Sapen, and Gorampa. Sönam Tsemo argued that yogic perception could not have a knowable object (*shes bya*). Sapen and Gorampa both advocated that while our epistemic instruments conventionally define particulars as functional entities like pots, that ultimately these attributions are fallacious, since the actual particular (rendered in yogic perception) is beyond verbal designations.

In sum, Śākya Chokden problematizes appearances as something that must be transcended to afford insight, while for Tsongkhapa, the challenge is to show how appearances accord with insight. Tsongkhapa keeps the relationship consistent between appearances and particulars within yogic perception: the particular that appears in yogic perception may be unique, the Unchanging Absolute, but is not categorically different than other appearances. It is thus available to epistemic instruments other than yogic perception, like inference, if only through a glass darkly. Śākya Chokden, on the other hand, pulls the Unchanging Absolute apart from appearances entirely. It is not a unique appearance; it is not even an appearance at all. Thus, yogic perception engages with an object completely beyond the pale of other epistemic instruments. While Śākya Chokden attempts to exacerbate the gulf between appearances and ultimately real particulars, Tsongkhapa consistently maintains a bridge between them.

v. An Interlude by Mipham

My analysis of Sakya and Gelug views thus far may make it appear that there only stark divides between Tibetan exegetes along the lines of Continuous and Discontinuous views of yogic perception, and that furthermore, their analysis at every level bespeak either one or the other framework. However, there are assuredly thinkers that are more liminal. I will briefly consider a passage from Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846-1912) in this regard. Although Mipham is much later than our other thinkers, he is perhaps the best representative of the Nyingma take on these issues. Mipham was seminal in the development of a scholastic voice for the Nyingma school. In fact, his project was partially informed by his frustration that his school did not have monastic textbooks of their own. Up until his time, Nyingma monasteries borrowed (or had been forced to use) Gelug textbooks, despite the fact that the Nyingma view is vastly different from the Gelug.[454] Thus, it is in Mipham that we have the clearest articulation of a unique Nyingma take on Dharmakīrti's theory of yogic perception.

In our discussion of Discontinuous views in this chapter, we noted that the Sakya position initiated by Sapen rejects any cogency to the notion of epistemic warrant to appearances *qua* appearances. There is no such thing, according to Sapen, of a *real* appearance of an *unreal* object. I argued that this Sakya position is ultimately a strategy to relieve appearances of any ontological status, since yogic perception of the real transcends

[454] Mi pham rgya mtsho, *The Wisdom Chapter: Jamgön Mipham's Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of "The Way of the Bodhisattva,"* trans. Padmakara Translation Group, 1st ed. (Boulder: Shambhala, 2017), 8–9.

appearances entirely.[455] As we noted in the previous chapter, however, Tsongkhapa grants appearances independent ontological status to make cogent their relationship to real objects. Once real appearances are established, Tsongkhapa can argue that it is a fact of the matter as to whether those appearances really refer. Yogic perception and the clear appearance of a falling hair both involve real appearances, but only the former is epistemically warranted. This is because falling hairs have no corresponding reality in the world. Although the falling hair itself "is not an object," "the mental image of the appearance of a falling hair" is. I deemed this a Hard view, since it insists that yogic perception's object is not irreal like a falling hair—it is appearances' representational relationship to existing objects that determine their epistemic warrant, not merely if those appearances have some pragmatic efficacy.

Mipham gives an explanation similar to Tsongkhapa's on the nature of appearances in relation to yogic perception. However, his final analysis of appearances drifts from this Hard view. The following section comes from Mipham's own commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika*

> Thus, while it is entirely true that there are clear appearances that arise from meditation, it is not the case that they are all yogic perception. Some meditative perceptions have an appearance that accords with the reality of objects, like the aforementioned Four Noble Truths, including impermanence, etc. Yogic perception arises from meditation on those types of objects that are free from error, and so [yogic perception] is asserted to be a valid epistemic instrument. Furthermore, the appearing object of repulsiveness, etc., may appear clearly, but is not epistemically warranted. Since it is a [magical] emanation, in which one is convinced that [that object exists] in a manner other than it [actually does], that mind [grasps at] an illusion. Furthermore, although the [earth] *kaṣina* and the rest [are illusions] *qua* external objects, they are not false appearances. Because merely discerning their appearance is not [necessarily] tantamount to grasping [to that appearance] as an existing object, they are not erroneous with respect to their appearance to reflexive awareness. Likewise, the appearance of two moons may be erroneous with

[455] Again, it is worth noting that this is indicative of an Alīkākāravāda Discontinuous view, where Tsongkhapa's desire to maintain the reality of appearances is that of a Satyākāravāda Continuous view.

> respect to an [external] object, but it is not erroneous with respect to the appearing object (*snang yul*) of reflexive awareness.[456]

Mipham thus argues, like Tsongkhapa, that even illusions *qua* appearances are valid independent of the status of their referents. This is in stark contrast to Goramap's view, who argued that illusions have *no* appearing object (*snang yul*). However, Mipham specifically substantiates this validity by the fact of their appearance to reflexive awareness. Though appearances may or may not entail cognition of an external object, all appearances are an object of awareness itself. This awareness is reflexive: since appearances and awareness are both mental, the cognition of appearances is an instance of the mind apprehending itself. The appeal to reflexive awareness to substantiate appearances *qua* appearances is not found in Tsongkhapa's analysis of appearances to yogic perception. Is this a salient hermeneutic difference between Tsongkhapa and Mipham?

I argue that Mipham may be recapitulating an argument we saw Ratnakīrti offer against Bhāsarvajña in chapter three. There, Bhāsarvajña argued that because all appearances only appear to reflexive awareness, the Buddhist can never claim with certainty that yogic perception has omniscience of all objects. In response, Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti both doubled down on the irreality of both yogic perception's object and objects in general. Ultimately, *no* appearance refers to external objects. Thus, the fact that reflexive awareness cannot differentiate between appearances of "real" and "unreal" objects is inconsequential, since there are no external objects which adjudicate appearances in this regard. Mipham seems to offer a similar suggestion here. He argues that, yes, the appearance of bones and the *kasiṇa* may be unreal from the standpoint of external objects. But this does not undermine

[456] Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi gzhung gsal bor bshad pa legs bshad snang ba'i gter*, TBRC W22313 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 435–36.

their validity in terms of their appearance to reflexive awareness. In fact, once one transcends the framework of external objects, the question of real and unreal appearances becomes moot. There seems to be a sense in which Mipham is reminding the reader that invalidation of the bones and *kasiṇa* is only circumspect, relegated to the provisional framework of external objects.

At this part of the text, it is not entire clear that Mipham goes full irreal on yogic perception. He seems to hedge, reminding the reader that the notion of appearances' being real or unreal is only from the perspective of external objects. But he does not offer any particular hierarchy between the framework of external objects and reflexive awareness *sans* external objects or if ultimately yogic perception depends on one over the other. However, later on in this same text, Mipham's view here becomes more explicit. His discussion in this next section concerns a debate we explored from Dharmakīrti's **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* in chapter two. That is, how is it that yogis can perceive other's minds without taking on their afflictions? With the help of Shinya Moriyama's work, we discussed how this question is endemic to the Buddhist construal of reflexive awareness. Reflexive awareness grants experience its affective content. Yet it is also the basis of all perception. How can a yogi thus *perceive* others' emotions without thereby similarly *experiencing* them? Mipham presents this issue and offers his analysis.

> [Objection:] *Yogic perception is a perception. Thus, since it's [object] appears clearly, who would fail to experience [another person's suffering]?*
> [Reply:] [Any] perception indeed involves clear appearances. But this clear appearance is only an approximation of the other person's experience. It is not the same as the experience of the other person's mind. [The yogi's mind and] the mind [of whom they read] are separate because they have different propensities (*bag chags*). Therefore, from the point of view of Satyākārvāda, although yogic perception perceives [others'] happiness, etc., it has no experience [of those emotions]. From the point of view of Alīkākāravāda, [however, the yogi] *does* experience something similar [to the emotions of the

> person's mind they are reading]. This is because there is no distinction between one's own object, like happiness, etc., or another's when it is apprehended nakedly […] Thus, while yogic perception that has yet to transform [into the cognition of a buddha] has clear appearances of that sort, there are actually no appearances at all. We simply cannot say how it is that a buddha, whose basis has been transformed (**āśrayaparivṛtti, gnas yongs su gyur pa*),[457] knows ordinary minds in all their aspects.[458]

Mipham immediately cites the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* after this section. It is interesting that he would choose to analyze this text within a commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika.* As we have noted, the *Pramāṇavārttika* appears to maintain a Sautrāntika view, while the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* shifts to Yogācāra. But the choice is fortunate, since it reveals Mipham's analysis of the nature of appearances. He first approaches the question of yogic perception of other minds from the viewpoint of Satyākārvāda (*rnam pa dang bcas pa'i lugs*). They argue that indeed yogis have an appearance of others' minds, but they do not experience their emotions. From the point of view of Alīkākāravāda (*rnam med pa'i lugs*), however, there can be no distinction between one's own and another's appearances. This nonduality, however, does not result in solipsism, but in the realization that in reality, there are no appearances at all. This view is in fact shared by Śākya Choken in the context of Madhyamaka. In stark contrast to Tsongkhapa, who says that yogic perception engenders nonconceptual appearances of a particular, Śākya Choken argues that unlike normal nonconceptual cognition, yogic perception and reflexive awareness have no appearance whatsoever.[459] Furthermore, "[Although] we say that selflessness is an appearing object

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457 For a discussion of this term, see Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*, 82.

458 Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi gzhung gsal bor bshad pa legs bshad snang ba'i gter*, 414.

459 Śākya mchog ldan, "Tsahd ma rigs gter gyi dgongs rgyan rigs pa'i 'khor los lugs ngan pham," in *Paṇ chen śākya mchog ldan gyi gsung 'bum legs bshad gser gyi bdud rtsi*, TBRC W00EGS1016899, vol. 10 (kathmandu, nepal: Sachen International, Guru Lama, 2006), 17.

(*snang yul*) to yogic perception, [it is actually] luminous reflexive awareness empty of the two kinds of self [of persons and phenomena]."[460]

As we have been repeatedly identifying throughout, then, Alīkākāravāda is essentially in line with the MMM, where the realization of mind-only is part of a progression that leads to a nonduality free of appearances. Furthermore, how buddhas thus freed of appearances know conventional objects, like others' minds, is inconceivable. Mipham notes that "We simply cannot say how it is that a buddha […] knows ordinary minds in all their aspects." The **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* reaches this same conclusion: "The omniscience of the Bhagavan is inconceivable because he is completely beyond objects of knowledge or linguistic designations."

We thus see Mipham employ a synthesis of the views we have explored so far. Like Tsongkhapa, he argues that appearances do have some ontological weight independent of their referents. This appears to be in contrast to Sapen's view. By denying appearances are real, Sapen seems to set the groundwork for appearanceless yogic perception. Tsongkhapa, we saw, leveraged the ontological status of appearances as a method to differentiate and thus make cogent the question of their reference. This set his groundwork for a Hard view of

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460 Śākya mchog ldan, 21. George Dreyfus argues that Śākya Chokden's assessment here is not found in Dharmakīrti. Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and its Tibetan Interpretations*, 413–14. However, given our analysis of the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*, Śākya Chokden's position appears less infelicitous to Dharmakīrti then Dreyfus may give credit. Leonard van der Kuijp claims that the Kagyupa Drikung Jigten Gönpo (1143-1217) also equates yogic perception and reflexive awareness. Leonard W. J. Van Der Kuijp, "An Early Tibetan View of the Soteriology of Buddhist Epistemology: The Case of 'bri-gung 'jig-rten Mgon-po," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (1987): 63. In contrast to this view of yogic-perception-*cum*-reflexive-awareness, Geshe Ngawang Sangye, an important instructor (*dpe khrid rgan*) at Sera Jey monastery, explained to me that in the Gelug view, yogic perception is actually a type of mental perception (personal communication, June 25, 2019). If this is the case, the categorization of yogic perception as either reflexive awareness or mental perception speaks to Discontinuous versus Continuous views. If yogic perception only perceives the mind, it is indicative of the MMM, where the goal is to achieve nonduality and transcend appearances. If it is mental perception, it is necessarily directed toward some intentional object, since this is the role of mental perception.

yogic perception, wherein yogic perception is an epistemic warrant *qua* those external objects it represents.

Mipham, however, uses this same ontological affordance to appearances toward completely different ends. Because these appearances are real *qua* appearances from the perspective of reflexive awareness, he can eventually skirt the issue of external objects entirely. This becomes clear in his analysis of yogic perception of other's minds. He first offers a Satyākārvāda point of view. The yogi can see other minds without experiencing their emotion. But this is all explained from the point of view of mind only without an appeal to external objects. Mental appearances may not refer to external objects, but the flow of mental appearances in each mind is distinct because each one has its own propensities. Mipham here thus embraces a Soft view. Yogic perception indeed has an object that can be corroborated by other epistemic instruments—the existence of other minds is inferable[461]—but only on the understanding that all appearances are irreal: they appear to represent an external world that's not really there.

When Mipham transitions to Alīkākāravāda, however, even these appearances must be transcended. The realization that there is no cogent difference between one's own and other's emotions becomes testament to the fact that at the level of Buddhahood, there are no appearances at all. This is tantamount to the Discontinuous view we have been exploring throughout this chapter. Enlightened yogic perception involves a vision of reality completely divorced from how the world appears now but somehow stills cognizes this world in ways that completely escape our comprehension.

[461] In fact, this is the very aim of the **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi,* literally "The Proof of Other Minds."

Mipham thus borrows both from Sautrāntika and Yogācāra to flush out a full analysis of yogic perception. His interpretation marshals both Satyākāravāda and Alīkākāravāda viewpoints, which is made possible by his reliance on both the *Pramāṇavārttika* and the *Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*. But Mipham was not the only thinker to be widely read in developing his interpretation of yogic perception. The final figure we explore in this chapter, Mikyö Dorje, pulls from a dizzyingly expansive array of sources, bringing together several disparate elements in his analysis of yogic perception. Like Mipham, he also affords reflexive awareness a crucial role in the final realization of buddhahood.

vi. Mikyö Dorje's Unique Synthesis

Up to this point, we have exclusively explored theories of yogic perception from the perspective of those Buddhist schools deemed "sūtric"—i.e., Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, and Madhyamaka. However, most Tibetan Buddhist schools regard the tantras, which describe the most expedient means for achieving enlightenment, as holding a distinct philosophical view that transcends that of the sūtras. This is not accepted by Gelugpas, who argue that tantra is only distinctive in its method, not its philosophical view.[462] Non-Gelug schools by and large disagree. Thus, because the ultimate realization in tantra is distinct from sūtra, yogic perception is thus given a different explanation in this context. I have mainly centered my study of yogic perception around its articulation by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. How yogic perception is understood in tantra would be a book unto itself. However, there is one

[462] For a discussion, see Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang po, *Stong thun chen mo*, 1:371–79.

formulation in particular whose synthesis of sūtric and tantric yogic perception is so compelling, it is worth stepping outside these delimitations to explore here.

We thus look next at the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* by the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje (1507–1554). He was a seminal figure in the Karma branch of the Kagyü school, both incredibly prolific and influential. The *Sku gsum ngo sprod* takes the *Kālacakratantra,* specifically its commentary, the *Vimalaprabhā,* as its primary hermeneutic. The *Kālacakratantra* was a late, 11th century Tantra that was met with some skepticism when it first arrived in Tibet.[463] However, it eventually became accepted as canon and even considered by some to be a Nondual tantra (*gnyis med kyi rgyud*) superior to the Father and Mother Tantras. Mikyö Dorje begins with a synthetic comparison between the four types of perception—sensory (*indriya*), mental (*mānasa*), yogic (*yogi*), and reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*)—as discussed in the Sautrāntika system and the five types of eyes. We explored these five eyes in chapter one, but I list them again here for reference. The standard Mahāyāna list is as follows:

M1. The physical eye (*māṃsacakṣus*)

M2. The divine eye (*divyacakṣus*)

M3. The wisdom eye (*prajñācakṣus*)

M4. The dharma eye (*dharmacakṣus*)

M5. The Buddha eye (*buddhacakṣus*)

The *Vimalaprabhā,* however, offers yet another enumeration of the five eyes. Using the *Vimalaprabhā* as his guide, Mikyö Dorje synthesizes these two lists of the four perceptions

[463] Tsongkhapa's own teacher, Rendawa Shönu Lordrö (1348-1413), was skeptical of *Kālacakratantra*. Cyrus Stearns, *The Buddha from Dölpo: A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen*, The Tsadra Foundation series (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2010), 56.

and the five eyes into a complex epistemo-soteriological system. I have placed codes next to each of the eyes below so that the reader can trace their membership in the standard Mahāyāna (M) list.

> There are four types [of perception]: sensory, mental, yogic, and reflexive […] There are five eyes that relate to perception. These eyes comprehend without attachment. The Great Commentary, [the *Vimalaprabhā*], says
>
> > First (1) the beginner yogi sees with the physical eye (**māṃsacakṣus*) [M1], without higher knowledge. Then (2), at the point at which one gains higher knowledge, they see with the divine eye (**divyacakṣus*) [M2]. Then (3), at the point at which they are free from desire, they see with the Buddha eye (**buddhacakṣus*) [M5]. Then (4), at the point at which they gain *bodhicitta*, they see with the wisdom eye (**prajñācakṣus*) [M3]. Then (5), at the point at which they gain perfect enlightenment, they see with the gnosis eye (**jñāncakṣus*).[464]
>
> On [the relationship] between the four types of perceptions and the enumeration on the [five] eyes, Taktsang Lotsāwa explains that [the fourth of these, the wisdom eye], is yogic perception in name only. The fourth [eye] is still afflicted (*myong ba*). Actual yogic perception, [however], denotes a first-hand experience (*nyams su myong ba*) of reality (**dharmādhatu, chos dbyings*). This nominal [yogic perception] is how the Pramāṇavādins, like Dharmakīrti, define it, and in that school, this is the way they must assert it. Dignāga and his heirs have clearly discussed yogic perception as the fourth [eye]. Because it is impossible for ordinary people [to understand actual yogic perception], it must be accepted in the manner I have explained.[465]

The *Vimalaprabhā* changes the order of the standard Mahāyāna list. The fourth eye replaces the dharma eye (M4) with the wisdom eye (M3), while the third eye becomes the Buddha eye (M5). Furthermore, a new eye is introduced in the fifth place, the gnosis eye, only to be had by Buddhas. Mikyö Dorje first discusses yogic perception from the point of view of the Pramāṇavādins, namely Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. In the introduction, we noted that Dignāga's construal of yogic perception seemed to be an extension of the dharma eye, since

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464 Tshul khrims rin chen, ed., "*Vimalaprabhā, Dri ma med pa'i 'od," in *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, Toh. no. 1347, vol. Rgyud, da (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1744), 87a.

465 Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, TBRC W3CN511, vol. 2 (Khams nang chen: Skyo brag dgon thos pa dga' rtsom sgrig khang, n.d.), 112.

it is both the dharma eye and yogic perception that affords an insight into reality independent of the teacher. Mikyö Dorje argues, however, that in Dignāga's school the fourth eye, the wisdom eye, is synonymous with yogic perception. Although the fourth eye is the wisdom eye in the *Vimalaprabhā* list, we noted that the standard Mahāyāna list has the dharma eye in the fourth place. Furthermore, the *Vimalaprabhā* does not mention the dharma eye at all. If the *Vimalaprabhā* thus means by the wisdom eye what the Mahāyāna list designates as the dharma eye, then perhaps Mikyö Dorje's assessment of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is felicitous. If we take the five eyes as a progressive framework, then Mikyö Dorje's assessment reflects our own analysis. Dignāga did indeed construe yogic perception as a direct, penultimate realization of reality—the fourth of five stages?—that graduated one to stream entry or the path of seeing but not all the way to Buddhahood.

However, Mikyö Dorje notes that this construal of yogic perception as the wisdom(-*cum*-dharma?) eye is not *true* yogic perception. This is because the fourth eye in the traditional list is still afflicted (*myong ba*). Mikyö Dorje cites Taktsang Lotsāwa as corroborating this position. Indeed, Mikyö Dorje's assessment here seems to agree with Taktsang's position as explored in the previous chapter. While Dharmakīrti argues that the Four Noble Truths, including impermanence, are the object of yogic perception, Taktsang argued that this was not its true object, since impermanence still involves appearances. Given, as I identified in the introduction, that the dharma eye is also said to realize the Four Noble Truths directly, Taktsang would seem to agree that yogic perception as the wisdom-*cum*-dharma eye would only nominally be a type of yogic perception. However, I have not found a source in Taktsang's works that describe yogic perception as one of the five eyes.

In referencing Taktsang, it is clear that Mikyö Dorje is gesturing toward a Discontinuous view of yogic perception. Although the lower schools, such as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavāda, argue that yogic perception involves an appearance of the Four Noble Truths to the fourth eye, this cannot be *real* yogic perception, since that nominal yogic perception still operates in the realm of epistemically warranted appearances. Mikyö Dorje makes this point explicit elsewhere in the text, arguing specifically against Dignāga's definition of yogic perception: "How is it that yogis, who are beyond the world, could see those things established by perceptual valid epistemic instruments?"[466] Mikyö Dorje thus posits that it is the *Kālacakratantra* that encapsulates the definitive articulation of yogic perception, superseding these lower interpretations. Mikyö Dorje makes his tantric understanding of yogic perception explicit as he continues. This time, he cites the *Hevajra Tantra* to support his interpretation.

> In [Vajragarbha's] commentary [on the *Hevajra Tantra*], the classification of the perceptions into four types is not the same as the explanation of four perceptions known to the causal vehicles of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, etc., [who belong to] the Sautrāntika or Cittamātra schools. Perception, per [Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's] explanation, is posited as the four types of perception involving a conscious subject that has functional conventional entitles as their objects. But this explanation is mistaken. The four perceptions of this [Tantric system, on the other hand], are error free. [This system] defines the four perceptions as the gnosis of a subject with the object of emptiness, endowed with all the supreme aspects, and devoid of both functional and non-functional entities, which are merely conventional. For this reason, these [two different sets of] four perceptions are like day and night. [The tantric set is] not the same [as the four perceptions described by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti], since they have completely different objects. Why? It says in the *Hevajra [Tantra]*,
>
> > The essence of the vajra is great compassion. One is freed from the essentialization of entities and from bondage by the fetters of entities. Knowing this completely, one is free. Through complete knowledge of the absence of entities, one has the wisdom begot by meditation on

[466] Mi bskyod rdo rje, 2:116.

> entities. One should meditate on Heruka with complete knowledge of the absence of entities.[467]

Mikyö Dorje thus advocates another set of four perceptions that supersedes the model put forth by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. The essential difference is that while the four perceptions described by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti engage with entities (*dngos po*), the transcendent, tantric perceptions only engage with emptiness, devoid of either entities or their absence. Furthermore, the fact that the lower set of perceptions engage with entities at all entail their error. The tantric perceptions, by contrast, do not fall prey to either entities or reifications of their absence. This is again indicative of Discontinuous formulations of yogic perception. We saw a similar position put forth by Sönam Tsemo, where the goal of yogic perception is to have no intentional object at all.

At this point in the text, Mikyö Dorje returns to the five eyes discussed in the *Vimalaprabhā* as a hermeneutic on these new and improved tantric set of four perceptions. The physical eye "sees several forms other than emptiness" and so is outside the scope of these objectless, transcendent perceptions. However, "once one develops uninterrupted meditative concentration, the physical eye becomes the divine eye. This gives rise to [tantric] sense perception." But Mikyö Dorje adds that "this does not mean that when one has a physical eye [that has transformed into the divine eye] that there is an absence of sensory perception."[468] In this sense, both the physical eye and the divine eye are brought into the fold of transcendent sensory perception: it is through meditation that the physical is transformed into the transcendental divine eye, culminating in a transmundane type of sensory perception.

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[467] Gayadhara and Śākya ye shes, trans., "*Hevajratantra, Kye'i rdo rje," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, Toh. no. 417, vol. Rgyud, ka (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 335b; Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, 2:113.

[468] Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, 2:117.

He thus explains: "[That transformed] physical eye no longer denotes physicality that exists as the result of atomic substance. Instead, subject and object appear as the vajra, the core of all-pervading empty space based on wisdom."[469] Thus, tantric sensory perception (mysteriously) perceives the world without the accretions of physicality.

Mikyö Dorje explains the remaining three tantric perceptions by equating them with the remaining three eyes: mental perception with the Buddha eye, yogic perception with the wisdom eye, and reflexive awareness with the gnosis eye.[470] I focus below on the section that discusses the relationship between yogic perception and the wisdom eye:

> Concerning the method [to transition] from the path of preparation onto to the path of seeing, one engages with yogic perception by relying on the wisdom eye. "Yogic perception" denotes direct perception accomplished by yoga through the power of meditation on the profound path of nonduality, which itself arises from the highest (**anuttara*) Mother and Father Tantras. [Advancement on the path of the Mother and Father Tantras] is itself a product of the special yoga of mantras.[471]

Mikyö Dorje, like most of the texts we have explored, argues that yogic perception is the instrument by which one graduates to the path of seeing. However, Mikyö Dorje's description of this process gives it a tantric twist, citing the necessity of tantric practice according to the Father and Mother highest yoga Tantras. In Mikyö Dorje's system, it is appropriate that yogic perception would involve the Father and Mother Tantras; just as yogic

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469 Mi bskyod rdo rje, 2:117.

470 It is interesting to remark that while in n460 we saw Gorampa, Drikung Jigten Gönpo, and Śākya Chokden equate yogic perception with reflexive awareness, Mikyö Dorje argues that reflexive awareness supersedes yogic perception. However, it also must be clarified that Mikyö Dorje means that only this specific, *tantric* form of reflexive awareness is superior. He differentiates this "supreme" form of reflexive awareness from that described in Dignāga's system. Mi bskyod rdo rje, 2:116. The normal sort still reifies the mind and thus has not reached nonduality. It is on this point that Mikyö Dorje rebukes Śākya Chokden's equation of yogic perception with reflexive awareness. For a discussion, see David Higgins and Martina Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way: Post-Classical Kagyü Discourses on Mind, Emptiness and Buddha-nature* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2016), 435–37.

471 Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, 2:118.

perception is penultimate—the path of seeing as penultimate to Buddhahood—the Father and Mother Tantras are second to nondual tantras like the *Kālacakra.* This nondual realization, on the other hand, is afforded by reflexive awareness *qua* the gnosis eye. We thus see a similar articulation here to Mipham's in the previous section. While yogic perception of other's minds has yet to transform into the cognition of a buddha, it is the ultimate realization of all appearances as reflexive that affords their disappearance. Mipham and Mikyö Dorje thus appear mutually sympathetic in their suggestion that reflexive awareness affords the ultimate insight indicative of Buddhahood. (However, see n470 for some important caveats.)

There is a final compelling section from Mikyö Dorje's *Sku gsum ngo sprod* worth exploring. In addition to the various Tantras he references, Mikyö Dorje also makes extensive use of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra.* As we noted in chapter three, this text's articulation of the MMM has been incredible influential for Discontinuous theories of yogic perception via Asaṅga. Mikyö Dorje also cites the same section of this text we explored in chapter three concerning meditations on bones. There, we noted the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* cites "the tathāgata's meditation" as supreme in a fourfold hierarchy of meditative methods. When this meditation is achieved, *"*Buddhas bless [the yogi] on his head*,* and this is a sign [the yogi] has followed them thus."[472] Mikyö Dorje cites these same *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* verses outlining these four meditations. He appears to associate the tathāgata's meditation with yogic perception without appearances, commenting "when one cultivates the supramundane path of seeing without appearances, it is said that the Buddhas themselves bless you with their hand on your head."[473]

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[472] Vaidya, *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtram*, 41 v.2.162; 'Gos chos grub, "*Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Lang kar gshegs pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo," 149b.

[473] Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, 2:119.

Miykö Dorje's description here is thus indicative of the MMM method we explored in chapter three, moving from appearances to their slow dissolution in appearanceless yogic perception. Miykö Dorje understand this as afforded by the tathāgata's meditation on the path of seeing. Unlike his analysis of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, however, whose formulation of yogic perception was limited to a provisional view, Miykö Dorje argues the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* is also authoritative in Tantra. He begins by again quoting the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

> *Reaching mind only, external objects are not conceptualized.*
> *Reaching the correct object, one goes beyond mind only.*
> *Passing beyond mind only, one must pass beyond non-appearance.*
> *Reaching non-appearance, the yogi sees the Mahāyāna.*
> *Their state is effortless and peaceful, purified through concentration.*
> *That supreme wisdom of selflessness does not see no appearance.*[474]
>
> [This could be interpreted to mean the following:] The object realized on the Mahāyāna path involves the mere absence of intention on the appearance of dualistic objects, as well as the afflictions abandoned on the path of seeing. But, in contrast to that, on the Tantrayāna path [one does not concentrate] on the mere absence of intention toward erroneous objects. [Instead], one concentrates on the actual appearance of emptiness endowed with all aspects, free from the conceit of whether this nonerroneous object exists or not. But this [distinction between the Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna] is not entirely clear. That distinctive object endowed with all supreme aspects is free from the error of [being merely an absence, and thus it is not merely] a non-object. [It is realized] on the tantric path of seeing. It is a perception that is beyond that of the yogi on the mantric path of accumulation. Thus, [there are tantric paths below the tantric path of seeing that still have yet to realize that distinctive object without reifying it as an absence]. The incredibly profound quick path of Mahāmudrā is established as the path of supreme mantra and contains the steps of *all* the paths. Thus, it is a path common to generation and completion stages of the Sūtras, not to mention the Tantras.[475]

Mikyö Dorje's articulation here marks the height of his synthesis. The MMM as described in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* essentially describes Mahāmudrā, which harmonizes the Mahāyānic

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[474] Vaidya, *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtram*, v.10.256-8; 'Gos chos grub, "*Laṅkāvatārasūtra, Lang kar gshegs pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo," 270a.

[475] Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam bshad*, 2:121.

and Tantric paths. The realization of nonduality occurs on the tantric path of seeing, presumably a form of tantric yogic perception. But below this realization, the tantric path of accumulation involves a philosophical view indicative of Mahāyāna. The progression from the realization of the mere absence of objects to a realization of nonduality forms a continuum along the path of Mahāmudrā, which thus unites both Sūtra and Tantra.[476] Interestingly, this notion of the harmony of the Buddhists paths is also endemic to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* itself*,* which also expresses the theory that the nonduality of reality necessitates that there is only one path (*ekayāna*) of which all three individual paths of the Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva are a part.[477]

Mikyö Dorje's interpretation *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* thus follows in a long heritage of Indian thinkers that construe yogic perception as Discontinuous. The goal of yogic meditation in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* constitutes the original articulation of the MMM as Discontinuous. The yogi aims to transcend appearance of the world entirely. Mikyö Dorje makes the connection to yogic perception explicit when he argues this appearanceless and objectless meditation occurs on the path of seeing, since he recognizes that graduation to the path of seeing is afforded by yogic perception. Mikyö Dorje's Discontinuous view is also corroborated by his use of the five eyes as a hermeneutic on the four perceptions. Like Taktsang, he notes that yogic perception construed by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is only provisional yogic perception, since it is still enmeshed in appearances. True yogic perception

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476 The notion of a Mahāmudrā being common to both Sūtra and Tantra was highly debated in this period. For a history, see Roger R. Jackson, *Mind Seeing Mind: Mahāmudrā and the Geluk Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2019), 203 ff.

477 Vaidya, *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtram*, 54–55.

is found among a tantric set of four perceptions, all of which have emptiness free from appearances as their sole provenance.

vii. Conclusion

This chapter explored various Tibetan Discontinuous views of yogic perception. Just as we identified Chapa as a founding theorist for Continuous views in Tibet, Sönam Tsemo, his student, appears to be a founding figure of Tibetan Discontinuous views. Two elements from Sönam Tsemo's thought seem consistent in subsequent Discontinuous formulations of yogic perception: that ultimate reality is objectless and not inferable. We saw this aspect in both Gorampa's and Sapen's views. Appearanceless yogic perception vitiates the role of intentional objects in its apprehension of ultimate truth. Perception in general is also said to be beyond verbal designation. The particular—which forms the percept of perception—is completely ineffable. Thus, Gorampa argues that although we perceive ultimately existing particulars, our descriptions of what those particulars—such as "pot"—are only conventions. Those particulars themselves are completely beyond conceptual thinking and inference. The ultimate as inferred is thus wholly Discontinuous with the ultimate perceived in yogic perception. Gelugpas we saw resist this view; perception picks out commonsense objects that we can cogently label "pot" or the like. Thus, our inference of ultimate truth is Continuous with how it is perceived in yogic perception.

I argued that although the disagreement between Chapa and Sönam Tsemo is within a Madhyamaka context, that these differences manifest even when thinkers in each one's respective lineage discuss other schools. My insight here is meant to build off of Sara

McClintock's notion of a sliding scale of analysis. Although Buddhists argue differently in different hermeneutical contexts, these stages of analysis must fit together like well-carved jigsaw puzzles. Thus, each author's final Madhyamaka position is proleptically reflected in their analysis of lower schools, such that there is an efficient progressive continuum from the lower schools up to the higher ones.

We saw this reflected in Gorampa's and Kedrub's differing interpretations of Sautrāntika. Gorampa appears to grant epistemic warrant to illusions, warrants yogic perception in terms of the mind, and sequesters yogic perception beyond the other epistemic instruments. This bespeaks an MMM type of Discontinuous yogic perception, where the yogi overcomes appearances through meditation on the mind. Kedrub does the opposite: he denies epistemic warrant to illusions, warrants yogic perception in terms of its object, and argues yogic perception is continuous with the other epistemic instruments. His view is thus thoroughly Continuous. We observed a similar distinction between Śākya Chokden's and Tsongkhapa's differing interpretations of Cittamātra. Śākya Chokden sought to distance the Unchanging Absolute from appearances, arguing that to see it is really to see nothing. Tsongkhapa makes no such concession, arguing that yogic perception's realization of the Unchanging Absolute constitutes insight into an epistemically warranted particular.

Lastly, Mikyö Dorje catapults these Discontinuous articulations of yogic perception into a tantric context. Drawing on Taktsang Lotsāwa, he argues that yogic perception as defined by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—that is, as insight into the Four Noble Truths—cannot be true yogic perception. This is because the Four Noble Truths involve epistemic warrant, and true yogic perception must transcend what is epistemically warranted. In place of the four types of perception described by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, he thus offers a tantric

equivalent to the four perceptions, each of which take emptiness as their object. His Discontinuous view is further corroborated by his tantric reading of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra.* As we saw in chapter three, this text is the origin of the MMM, the preeminent description of yogic realization as transcending appearances. Mikyö Dorje argues this texts describes the tantric path of seeing and thus conceivably tantric yogic perception. It furthermore demonstrates that the sūtric and tantric paths form a continuum in Mahāmudrā.

My chapters have thus far covered three main components to yogic perception: its understanding as a type of remote seeing, as omniscience, and spiritual insight. As I noted in the introduction, these themes became apparent in gestalt. As I acquainted myself with the relevant sources, they continually reappeared as salient features. I was particularly astounded by both the temporal and geographic durability of these themes. Could this durability have an explanation? As I noted in the introduction, my research methodology has been qualitative. Instead of beginning with a theoretical construct and seeking its corroboration in the data, I have attempted to let the data impart its own consistent themes—themes which I was pleased to find have also been voiced in secondary literature. Because this qualitative process does not seek to confirm a fully formed theory but is rather descriptive, it is hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing. In other words, rather than using data as a means to evaluate a hypothesis, it reveals salient features that become the fodder for new hypotheses. I have revealed the features—the presence and stability of my three themes. What remains to be generated from the fodder of these *explananda* are potential *explanans*, hypotheses that may explain the presence of these themes in particular. It is this speculative project to which I turn to in the next chapter, borrowing from Cognitive Science of Religion methodology.

Chapter 6: Cognitive Underpinnings

My previous chapters were grouped thematically. Chapter one addressed yogic perception as remote seeing. Chapter two, yogic perception as omniscience. Chapter three, yogic perception as spiritual insight. Chapters four and five investigated Tibetan debates on the themes discussed in chapter three. While Chapter four discussed Continuous views of yogic perception—such that the object of yogic perception is epistemically warranted just like any other object—chapter five discussed Discontinuous views—which argue that yogic perception's object transcends epistemic warrant. The question then becomes why do these three themes—remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight—have their particular endurance.

The challenge in proposing some explanation is to resist falling into a false perennialism. Just as Buddhism teaches that all is impermanent, so too does a naturalist framework emphasize change. To hypostatize these three themes as essential facets of "yogic perception," as if it were some platonic form dangling mid-air, would lose sight of diachronic realities. If we are to make sense of why yogic perception has certain recurrent intellectual themes, then it must be within the recognition that ideas, theories, and philosophical viewpoints morph with circumstance and historical context. If the intellectual history of yogic perception reveals certain stable elements, then this requires a particular causal explanation, since these elements are swimming upstream, as it were, against the currents of unrelenting change. Change is the rule. Stability is aberrant. That yogic perception's intellectual history would reveal more fluctuation than consistency seems not only natural to history but to physics. Any organized system undergoes transformation due to the inherent

laws of thermodynamics: its state will naturally increase toward entropy. As physical systems become naturally more chaotic over time, so too does it seem reasonable any stable elements in the intellectual history of yogic perception would eventually be mangled in the hands of history.

However, physical systems can resist this natural movement toward entropy through the injection of new energy: if there is a constant influx of energy to maintain a system's organization, it does not accrue additional chaos, remaining stable. If we take this analogy seriously, then my analysis of these three enduring intellectual tropes throughout the intellectual history of yogic perception cannot be construed passively—as something that just persists due to being unaffected by transformational forces—but as an active process, entailing some mechanism that maintains that stability. Put another way, that these features are retained through time bespeak some type of constructive process that buffers them against their natural erosion over the *longue durée. "*Stability," then, in some ways, is not the most appropriate appellation, for these structures are not simply amply rigid such that they stay firm against intervention, but they are continually being recreated and re-formed.

What, then, is the mechanism that may explain how the three themes I have discussed are not simply change adverse but are continually recreated anew throughout yogic perception's intellectual history? I argue that turning to cognitive science may help provide the required *explanans*.[478] There are several cognitive mechanisms that may explain my three theme's endurance. Given I argue that these three themes are not only temporally but

[478] The brain, in fact, is a wonderful example of an entropy resistant system that utilizes energy in order to maintain organizational stability. While we think of the brain as increasing in complexity and acquiring more and more information over time, from a physical point of view, the brain requires large amounts of energy to maintain its organization and thus resist the amount of information accrual that would occur if it were to stop functioning and deteriorate.

geographically (and thus culturally) enduring, any such mechanism would have to be cross cultural. The line between what is a universal element of human experience as dictated by such cognitive mechanisms inherent in human brains and what is culturally unique due to the brain's incredible malleability is difficult to discern. Recent research shows that our ability to distinguish colors, something the empiricist might deem as a basic element of human experience, is highly dictated by language.[479] Thus, we have to proceed with caution when we assume that *x* experience is not culturally specific and can be extrapolated as endemic to human experience writ large. Along with such caution creeps the well heeded critique of the post-structuralists, which reveal that ideologies favoring universality often belie demonstratable exercises of power more so than good-faith pursuits of common ground.[480] Furthermore, we should be suspicious of understandings of the brain that assume a strict line—wherever it may lie—between what is a universal cognitive mechanism and what is culturally learned. Such construals ascribe hardware-software analogies to the brain that do not adequately reflect its actual function.

However, if based on these well heeded critiques we therefore completely abandon an appeal to shared, human ways of thinking, we have thrown out the baby with the bath water. That the task is difficult, wrought with potential for misconstruals, and may easily be co-opted toward colonialist ends, does not erase the cogency of their being cross-cultural cognitive mechanisms that constrain culture and which may explain the stubbornness of certain intellectual notions through space and time. For example, there is no single animal

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[479] Rachel Adelson, "Hues and Vews: A Cross-Cultural Study Reveals How Language Shapes Color Perception," *Monitor on Psychology: A Publication of the American Psychological Association* 36, no. 2 (2005): 26.

[480] The Traditionalist school of Perennialism, for example, had close ties with Fascism and Nazism. Often the rallying cry of "we are all one" is a veiled authoritarian decree "you are not us."

along the evolutionary chain that exemplifies the transition from one species to another—the change is too gradual. But that does not make distinctions between a dog and its ancestor, the gray wolf, incoherent. Just as dogs and the gray wolf have persisted to this day and we can cogently speak of their common ancestry without being able to make firm demarcations between dog and wolf in the historical tree, so too, I argue, can we analyze the persistence of these three themes through an appeal to common human ways of thinking without having to demarcate exactly where those pan-human cognitive tendencies end and where their unique cultural manifestations begin.

This chapter therefore proceeds in three sections reflecting the three themes discussed throughout this work. The first section concerns yogic perception as remote seeing. In chapter one, I explored how this ability is intimately related to a theory of perception known as *"prāpyakārin,*" or extramission. I discuss why the notion of projective sight may be a continually appealing explanation of yogic remote seeing in the texts we discussed. In the next section, I discuss yogic perception as omniscience as explored in chapter two. I argue that this construal not only piggybacks on what seems to be a cross-cultural penchant for the inclusion of omniscient agents in religious frameworks, but that yogic perception, given its close relationship with seeing, may have been a particularly salient candidate for understanding how omniscience functions. The last section concerns spiritual insight and the ambiguous irreality of yogic perception's object as discussed in chapter three, as well as four and five in the Tibetan sources. Here, I argue that some of the analogies for yogic perception and some of the methods described to induce it point to hallucinatory experiences that are inherently difficult for those experiencing them to determine as real or illusory. The inherent ambiguity in this experience continually regenerates the ambiguity of whether yogic

perception has a real or unreal object. I should note, of course, that I do not have the space here to make a conclusive argument for the connections between the themes I have identified in the Indian and Tibetan texts and the cognitive science research I will discuss. To do so would also require more robust experimental data. The analysis in this chapter is thus largely speculative but at minimum provides compelling evidence warranting future research.

i. Extramission as a Human Intuition

Chapter one revealed a complex interaction between *prāpyakārin* theories of perception and yogic perception specifically. We found that while later Buddhists post Vasubandhu seem to uniformly reject *prāpyakārin,* possibly as a way to distinguish themselves from the Naiyāyikas, the Pāli texts do not reflect a similar consensus. For example, though Buddhaghoṣa rejects *prāpyakārin,* his description of the divine eye as "spreading light" seems patently extramissive. His description of normal sight also relies on extramissive language. For example, in one section he describes vision as like a bow (the eye) shooting an arrow at a target.[481] Furthermore, the relationship between *prāpyakārin* and extramission is not entirely clear. While David White describes *prāpyakārin* as "projective," our analysis revealed that it more aptly describes the eye's *physically* coming in contact with its percept. While physical contact does indeed entail a projective notion of sight, it is not at all clear that to reject *prāpyakārin* is to reject projection. Śrīdhara, for example, describes consciousness, a non-physical entity, as exiting the body to join with another's soul in yogic perception. This is extramissive but not *prāpyakārin*. The issue is further complicated by Amṛtacandra, who

[481] Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, *Visuddhimaggo*, 1998, 1:44.

describes the same ability as the *soul's* extending out and coming in contact with another soul in yogic perception but this time under the explicit moniker of "*prāpyakārin*."

The relationship between post-Vasubandhu Buddhism and *prāpyakārin* is also complex. Many of these thinkers rely on an idealist Yogācāra framework that denies physical contact of any sort. But as we saw, to deny physical contact is not necessarily to deny projection. So, is the Buddhist rejection of *prāpyakārin* also a rejection of extramission? This is unclear. It may be, like Śrīdhara, that Buddhists conceive of the mind as extramissive yet (obviously) not *prāpyakārin.* For example, Saṃghabhadra rebukes Vasubandhu's theory of perception that it is the mind and not the physical eye that is responsible for seeing on the grounds that if it is the mind that sees, so Saṃghabhadra argues, one would be able to see behind walls, since "without physical resistance, [a cognition] should arise even with regard to an obstructed object."[482] It appears that Saṃghabhadra's *reductio* of Vasubandhu's position entails something like mental extramission, where the mind is able to extend out, unobstructed, to see behind physical barriers to normal vision.

On the other hand, one might rightly wonder how cogent any notion of extramission is within an idealist framework. Idealism undermines the role of space and distance, without which the notion of projection becomes incoherent. However, my point in this section is not to demonstrate that Buddhists "really believe" in extramission despite their rejection of *prāpyakārin.* Rather, I aim to complicate the notion that philosophical thinking is perfectly consistent, that all views held by any one thinker or tradition are perfectly self-congruent.

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[482] Collett Cox, "Saṅghabhadra, Nyāyānusāra," in *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Volume VIII, Buddhist Philosophy from 100 to 350 A.D.*, ed. Karl H. Potter (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 670. Unfortunately, this work only survives in Chinese, so I have had to rely on Collette Cox's summary. I am indebted to her for taking the time to help me decipher these difficult passages (personal communication, October 28, 2020).

Such a view assumes a philosophical topology like a perfectly homogeneous, flat plane, where from the perspective of any one point all the other points appear the same as viewed from any other perspective. Instead, I argue philosophical thinking is incredibly bumpy. The landscape appears differently from different perspectives. From one perspective, a mountain side appears steep and treacherous. From the perspective viewing its other side, it is slow-sloping and easily traversable. Thus, philosophical thinker is always contextualized and circumspect. As scholars, we should not proceed with the hermeneutic of a flat topography, assuming a thinker's reasoning in one domain necessarily pervades to all others, even if this is necessitated by logical entailment.

Thus, even if extramission is logically excluded by idealism, or *prāpyakārin* explanations excluded by the Buddhist rejection of that theory, I argue that *prāpyakārin* theories can still do work "in the background" of Buddhist thinking, even despite their explicit denial. But my aim here is not simply to substantiate some banal gotcha thesis, showing how Buddhist thought is somehow inconsistent. Such a point would only be interesting under the spell of what I have identified as a false assumption—the notion that we should expect *any* philosophical system be cogent under a flat hermeneutic. Rather, I seek to demonstrate how it is possible that Buddhist descriptions of yogic perception as remote seeing—which seem consistently extramissive—existed alongside both their rejection of *prāpyakārin* as well as their seeming favoritism that emphasizes its more soteriological capacity toward liberation. In the Hindu texts, the continuity of remote seeing is less mysterious—they accept *prāpyakārin.* But in the Buddhist stratum, this deserves a more pointed explanation, since there appears to be several elements working against the retention of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing in the Buddhist milieu. Nevertheless, remote seeing

continually appears to make a comeback. In Buddhaghoṣa, we saw (a seemingly extramissive) remote seeing in the function of the divine eye persist alongside his rejection of *prāpyakārin*. Similarly, Prajñākaragupta was quick to hedge and soften Dharmakīrti's rejection of remote seeing. So, given that remote seeing (as historically predicated on extramission) is potentially problematic for Buddhist epistemology, why the resistance to dispensing with it entirely? What keeps Buddhists holding on?

But perhaps we can flip the burden of proof here. Perhaps philosophical incongruity is not as threatening as it may initially appear. In fact, I argue, such inconsistency is endemic to thinking. This has been corroborated by recent cognitive science research. With an increasing portion of the U.S. population sympathetic to conspiracy theories, researchers have tasked themselves with understanding not only how individuals come to believe unsupported conspiracies, but how they can hold mutually conflicting conspiracy theories. Michael Wood, Karen Douglas, and Robbie Sutton recently theorize that the ability to accommodate mutually conflicting conspiracies—such as that Princess Diana faked her own death and that she was murdered—are the result of the fact that both are attractive to conspiracy theorists because they corroborate a belief that authorities are not reliable.[483] In other words, philosophical or logical congruity is not the most important criterion that dictates what beliefs cohere to form one's world view. Other concerns can override the need for logical consistency. If two mutually contradictory views support the same world view, they remain coherent in human consciousness. This is not to equate Buddhist epistemology with a conspiracy theory but only to demonstrate that the human mind is able tolerate

[483] Karen M. Douglas, Michael J. Wood, and Robbie M. Sutton, "Dead and Alive: Beliefs in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, no. 6 (2012): 768, https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611434786.

incongruities when logical consistency is not the primary goal. We might expect, then, that when Buddhists are focused on specific polemical goals that they may be less aware of the possible contradictions that their argument may entail for their overall epistemology. For example, while the Buddhist denial of *prāpyakārin* helps bolster their rejection of Naiyāyika theories, the Buddhist incorporation of extramissive theories helps explain their formulation of the divine eye and yogic perception *qua* remote seeing. Thus, because both, though mutually contradictory, help bolster their theology, Buddhists may have been less sensitive to how they fail to be perfectly congruent.

Cognitive science commonly explains the presence of internal cognitive conflicts under "dual process" theories of cognition, in which two different cognitive mechanisms, while most often working in tandem, can sometimes produce conflicting conclusions. Furthermore, the mind appears to have a high tolerance for incongruity in certain instances. Martin Kerwer and Tom Rosman examined the effects of diverging information and its effect on epistemic change, theorizing that when participants were presented with evidence that conflicted with beliefs that this would provoke epistemic change in those beliefs. While they "assumed that any kind of diverging information would promote epistemic change," they were surprised to find that "this is true for topic-specific beliefs but not for domain-general-beliefs."[484] This again speaks to the difference between *ad hoc* reasoning and more generally held theoretical beliefs: while the former seems more fluid, such as when trying to respond to specific *explananda,* the latter stays relatively stable, even in light of contravening

[484] Martin Kerwer and Tom Rosman, "Epistemic Change and Diverging Information: How Do Prior Epistemic Beliefs Affect the Efficacy of Short-Term Interventions?," *Learning and Individual Differences* 80 (2020): 9, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2020.101886.

evidence.[485] Thus, the mind does not always tend toward the resolution of cognitive dissonance, as is stipulated by classical cognitive dissonance theory, as well as the philosopher's tendency to assume that texts are logically consistent. It is therefore not inconceivable that, while Buddhists authors have domain-general rejections of *prāpyakārin,* during topic-specific reasoning on subjects like the divine eye, *prāpyakārin* sympathies can creep back into the mix. In such instances, the cognitive systems involved in reasoning about that specific case are not constrained by domain general beliefs and thus extramissive predilections exert a greater effect.

Nicolas Baumard and Pascal Boyer have extended dual-process models of cognition to religious beliefs, describing them as the product of deep-seated intuitions' working in tandem with reflective beliefs.[486] Dan Sperber describes a similar theory in his description of "attractors." Certain theoretical interpretations diffuse more widely in a culture due to their cognitive "stickiness;" they gain greater traction and proliferation due to their being naturally attractive to our intuitions.[487] If we assume that extramission is intuitively appealing or sticky, this dual-process model may explain Nyāya *prāpyakārin*, which makes extramissive intuitions explicit. However, it may also explain the vestigial aspects of *prāpyakārin* reasoning latent in Buddhist formulations. Reflective, religious beliefs can contradict these

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485 For the difference between domain-general beliefs and topic-specific beliefs, see Krista R. Muis, Lisa D. Bendixen, and Florian C. Haerle, "Domain-Generality and Domain-Specificity in Personal Epistemology Research: Philosophical and Empirical Reflections in the Development of a Theoretical Framework," *Educational Psychology Review* 18, no. 1 (2006): 10; Ivar Bråten, Helge I. Strømsø, and Marit S. Samuelstuen, "Are Sophisticated Students Always Better? The Role of Topic-Specific Personal Epistemology in the Understanding of Multiple Expository Texts," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 33, no. 4 (2008): 819, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2008.02.001.

486 Nicolas Baumard and Pascal Boyer, "Religious Beliefs as Reflective Elaborations on Intuitions: A Modified Dual-Process Model," *Current Directions in Psychological Science: A Journal of the American Psychological Society* 22, no. 4 (2013): 295–300, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413478610.

487 Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 98–118.

intuitions. When these intuitions provoke conclusions that do not accord with reflective theology, adherents may make claims that are not strictly "correct" per their own larger dogma. The surprisingly frequent occurrence of this contradiction has received thorough treatment in the work of Jason Slone, who dubbed it "theological incorrectness." This describes the tendency for religious adherents to describe religious phenomena in a manner that counters orthodoxy.[488] Presumably, intuitive aspects of *prāpyakārin* remain sticky in *ad hoc* reasoning about perception even within larger theoretical frameworks that contradict them. Thus, extramissive intuitions may influence our topic-specific reasoning in a way that generates some beliefs that exist alongside, though in contradiction with, domain general beliefs. It is thus possible that Buddhists can both reject *prāpyakārin* at one general level and yet retain it in particular, topic-specific instances.

The question then, is extramission intuitive? Even if we grant the potential conflict between theoretic knowledge and topic specific reasoning, and that topic specific reasoning may be more subject to influence by those intuitions that shape experience, I have yet to give any substantial evidence that extramission comprises an intuitive way of understanding perception and thus that it can exert this type of influence. The status of extramission as an intuition can partly be corroborated by its cross-culturally ubiquity, since it is a common perceptual theory across cultures. Extramissive theories of perception are not unique to India. Theo C. Meyering identifies how extramission arose as early as Euclid and Ptolemy.[489] In 13th century medieval Europe, Roger Bacon argued for extramission by studying cats, arguing it

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488 Jason D. Slone, *Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Also see J. L. Barrett, "Theological Correctness: Cognitive Constraint and the Study of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11, no. Part 4 (1999): 325–39.

489 Theo C. Meyering, *Historical Roots of Cognitive Science: The Rise of a Cognitive Theory of Perception from Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989), 27–36.

explained their night vision.[490] If we take the mind as a type of projective entity in Buddhist thought, Bacon's reasoning here is reminiscent of Jñānaśrīmitra's discussion of the night vision of owls, which he argues is afforded "by the inconceivable power of the mind to see [at night] by leaping beyond (*ullaṅghana*) the other [senses]."[491]

European sources also explain the ability of squinting to sharpen visual focus through extramission. Andreas Laurentius (1558–1609) explained the effectiveness of squinting as a result of the ability to focus extramissive beams.

> Wherefore should the eye grow weake with looking, but because there commeth out of it too much light, and that all the spirits vanish and fade away? Whence commeth it that such as would see a very little thing a far off, do claspe their eyes, & halfe close their eyelids? Is it not that so they may vnite the beames, and joyne together the spirits, to the end that afterwards they may cast them out more forcibly and directly?[492]

Squinting focuses not by reducing *incoming* scattered light but by better directing outwardly projected beams. Jñānaśrīmitra again also seems to explain the ability of squinting to produce clarity as a product of mental projection.

> Why, then, does [vision] maintain a connection to a far-off place with a squinted eye while [it is restricted] to a nearby place when the eye is relaxed? How can it be said to be anything other than the power of karma? Therefore, it is the mind-stream [of that person with remote seeing abilities] to which that sense organ belongs that has a special power.[493]

Therefore, it is not the eye but the power of the mind as dictated by karma that determines visual range. If we assume that the mind is projective, this seems to suggest that squinting

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490 Raynaud, "Les normes de la rationalité dans une controverse scientifique:le cas de l'optique médiévale," 451.

491 Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 334.

492 Andreas Laurentius, *A discourse of the preservation of the sight: of melancholic diseases; of rheumes, and of old age*, trans. R. Surphlet (London: The Shakespeare Association, 1938), 38–39. The Bible also discusses increased visual focus as a result of the eye's becoming more "far-beaming." Joel Marcus, "A Note on Markan Optics," *New Testament Studies* 45, no. 2 (1999): 254.

493 Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 334.

focuses the mind's ability—perhaps, its mental rays?—to reach distant objects. A more powerful mind belonging to those with remote seeing is able to do this without the assistance of squinting.

The appeal to extramissive theories across disparate times and cultures seem to confirm its presence as a particularly sticky human intuition. But there is also strong psychological research that confirms this supposition. The tendency of children to think of perception extramissively was documented by Jean Piaget.[494] The work of Jane E. Cottrell also confirms that children commonly harbor an extramissive folk psychology.[495] What is even more compelling, however, is how resistant this intuition is to theoretical interpretations which should override those intuitions. This speaks again to extramission's role in a dual process model of cognition, where intuitive and reflective beliefs can contradict. In another one of Cottrell's studies, up to 50% of college students gave some type of extramissive-like response when describing perception. Even more surprising, these results came after an educational intervention meant to instruct how perception is *not* extramissive! The authors thus concluded:

> We have shown that many college students believe in visual extramissions […] and what we find most significant and surprising is that this belief is extremely resistant to standard educational experiences that seem as though they should counteract the misunderstanding. In fact, even when many college students showed evidence of overcoming the misconception because of a specific type of educational input, over time the gains proved to be transitory. The results […] show that the belief in extramission is apparently deeply

494 Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World*, trans. Joan Tomlinson and Andrew Tomlison (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971), 48.

495 Jane E. Cottrell, "Development in the Understanding of Perception: The Decline of Extramission Perception Beliefs," *Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 2 (1994).

> ingrained and that this misconception is like other misconceptions in science in its resistance to educational efforts.[496]

This demonstrates that extramissive thinking remains consistent despite theoretical training to the contrary, again suggesting its intuitive nature. Another ingenious study by Guterstam et al. demonstrated that the depiction of eyes staring at an erect plank effected participants estimation of at what degree it would tilt over. Participants were able to manipulate the tilt angle of a narrow standing plank in a computer simulation. They were tasked with positioning the plank at the exact angle at which they believed it would tip over. The computer simulation included a depiction of a profiled face at the opposite end of the table toward which the plank would tilt. Participants were randomized into two groups, one where the face was turned toward the tilting plank and another where the face was turned away from the plank. Interestingly, the direction of the face significantly skewed the angle at which participants anticipated the plank would fall. When the face was turned toward the plank, participants overall anticipated the plank required a steeper angle in order to fall over. The authors hypothesized that this discrepancy suggest an implicit belief that the eyes emitted some pushing force on the plank, keeping it propped up and resistant to falling. What is more, less than 5% held any explicit extramissive theories about perception.[497] This suggests that extramission beliefs can work in the background of reasoning, even when such beliefs are explicitly rejected. Again, this suggests that extramissive intuitions may influence reasoning about instances like night vision despite those thinkers' explicit belief that extramission is not a viable theory.

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[496] Gerald A. Winer et al., "Fundamentally Misunderstanding Visual Perception.," *American Psychologist* 57, no. 6/7 (2002): 423.

[497] A. Guterstam et al., "Implicit Model of Other People's Visual Attention as an Invisible, Force-Carrying Beam Projecting from the Eyes," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 116, no. 1 (2019): 328–33, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1816581115.

Language can also reveal instances of intuitive thinking. In fact, metaphors may be the exemplar of dogma-defying intuitions. Metaphors, by definition, are explanations that are intuitively appealing despite our more reflective understanding that they are not literal. My formulation here borrows from the work of George Lakoff, who has long argued that language and analogy reveal implicit ways of thinking that can even run counter to explicit beliefs.[498] Thus, for example, Buddhaghoṣa can describe vision like a projective arrow despite literally arguing that vision is receptive. As expected, extramission is also endemic to English. Winer et al. notice the intuitive albeit optically incorrect phraseology of notions like "not being able to see out of a dirty window."[499] Leonard Tamly remarks how language is rife with fictive motion in its prepositional formulation of perceptual verbs, such that looking into, toward, past, or away are intuitive despite their extramissive connotations.[500]

Buddhist texts also record pervasive use of extramissive language to describe yogic perception, particularly considering their description of consciousness as a projective light. We already saw Buddhaghoṣa discuss "extending light (*ālokaṃ vaḍḍhetvā*)" per the divine eye. Drawing on the work of Alex Watson, I also argue Buddhist luminal analogies for yogic perception betray extramissive intuitions. As Watson explains, Sanskrit conceptualizes light in two ways: (1) the source of light, like the sun, and (2) the light that spreads out from that source to illuminate objects. Words like "*prabhā"*—and its derivatives "*pratibhāsa*" and

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498 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

499 Gerald A. Winer, Aaron W. Rader, and Jane E. Cottrell, "Testing Different Interpretations for the Mistaken Belief That Rays Exit the Eyes During Vision," *The Journal of Psychology* 137, no. 3 (2003): 244, https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980309600612.

500 Leonard Talmy, "Fictive Motion in Language and 'Ception," in *Speech, Language, and Communication*, ed. Joanne L. Miller and Peter D. Eimas (San Diego: Academic Press, 1995), 224–26.

"*prabhāsvara*"—denote the second, while "*dīpa*" connotes the first.[501] Watson's distinction maps snugly onto Buddhist uses of light to explain yogic perception if we take extramissive intuitions into account. For example, when Dharmakīrti's **Saṃtānāntarasiddhi* discusses yogic perception in its capacity as a type of telepathy, he uses Sanskrit terminology denoting light's extension (*pratibhāsa*).[502] This is to stress yogic perception's intentionality. In contrast, when Kamalaśīla and Śāntarakṣita describe yogic perception as a form of consciousnesses—that is, as the source of this intentionality—they gesture to light *qua* source (*dīpa*)—"the pure and unwavering light of knowledge (*jñāna-dīpa*)."[503] Thus, just as Śrīdhara argued that consciousness can exit the body, Buddhist notions of consciousness describe a luminous entity that extends outward to either cognize objects, read others' minds, or even literally create the external world. For, example, in true idealist Yogācara fashion, the mind's luminosity becomes its own cosmogony in later tantric works. The eight century *Pañcakrama* argues that the cause of the world itself is the luminosity (*prabhāsvara*) born from mental concentration, "the luminous emptiness of everything."[504] Āryadeva's commentary on this verse explains:

> From luminosity (*prabhāsvara*) comes great emptiness and from that comes the source of means (*upāya*). / From that, wisdom (*prajñā*) arises and from that wisdom comes wind. // The origin of fire is from

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501 Watson, "Light as an Analogy for Cognition in Buddhist Idealism (Vijñānavāda)," 408–10. Dan Lusthaus adds *prakāśa* to this list, arguing that it describes a projective theory of sight. Dan Lusthaus, "A Pre-Dharmakīrti Indian Discussion of Dignāga Preserved in Chinese Translation: The Buddhabhūmy-upadeśa," *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 6 (2009): 28. In the texts I have examined, this term is often used to denote that something is visible and so suggests an etymologic connection between vision and projection, but I have not seen it directly used toward a projective theory of visual perception.

502 Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Saṃtānāntarasiddhi, Rgyud gzhan grub pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa," 359a; Negi, *Santānāntarasiddhi kārikā ṭīkā*, l.92.

503 Śāstrī, *Tattvasangraha of Shāntarakṣita*, 2:719 v.3268.

504 Louis de la Vallée Poussin, ed., *Études et texte tantriques: "Pañcakrama"* (Gand: H. Engelcke, 1896), 37 v.13 and 15.

> wind and from wind comes water. / And from water earth is born and then come its living beings.[505]

This description again seems strikingly extramissive. In place of rays of visual sight extending out to *perceive* external objects, here mental light extends out—as denoted by "*prabhāsvara"*—to create the physical world. There is thus ample evidence that Buddhist luminal language describing yogic perception and consciousness in general reveal subtle extramissive intuitions despite their explicit rejection of *prāpyakārin* theory.

All of this reveals that Buddhist thinking is still subtly informed by extramissive intuitions. If this is the case, it is probable that yogic perception as a type of remote seeing retained its intuitive appeal and stickiness among Buddhist exegetes despite its *prāpyakārin* accretions. However, even if we admit there is some evidence for extramission as a deep-seated intuition and that Buddhist thinking is informed by them, I have yet to offer the kind of causal, diachronic explanation I set out to offer in the beginning. My analysis here risks tautology—we can observe that extramissive intuitions influence thinking and we know that they are human intuitions because of how people think. Structural identification of extramission's prevalence—albeit across time and cultures—is insufficient to demonstrate that it is somehow intuitive and thus that it exerts an independent force on thinking. Intuitions are not merely happenstance similarities in the way humans think, else they would be highly mutable, and there would be no reason to suspect they can have the type of force that cause people to contradict their learned, reflective beliefs. Intuitions therefore must *do* something. Their influence must be due to some function, something that maintained their presence despite cultural forces to the contrary.

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[505] Samdhong Rinpoche and Vrajvallabh Dwivedi, eds., "Svādhiṣṭhānaprabheda," *Dhih: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Project* 10 (1990): 21 v.18–19.

I am gesturing here toward an evolutionary framework. That is, if we want to take extramission seriously as a type of intuition that effects thinking, it must have some type of fitness-increasing aspect. Else, it would have been swept aside by the forces of evolution long ago. There is a mounting body of research which suggests that extramission is in fact linked with an evolutionary adaptive trait. For instance, numerous studies have showed that eye direction is an especially salient feature of facial recognition in human cognition. Using neuroimaging, Reginald Adams et al. found that the gaze direction of perceived faces is instrumental in how humans understand the source of the emotion portrayed by others' faces. They demonstrate that "recent research demonstrates that gaze direction differentially modulates the perceptual clarity of anger and fear facial displays. Anger faces coupled with direct gaze and fear faces coupled with averted gaze are recognized more quickly and accurately than either anger faces coupled with averted gaze or fear faces coupled with direct gaze." In other words, the mind is primed to recognize when oneself—as indicated by another's direct gaze—is a source of anger or when something else—as indicated by averted gaze—is a source of fear. It makes evolutionary sense that both cases should be particularly salient, since when oneself is the source of anger they face "impending aggression on the part of the expressor" and when something else is a source of fear it indicates an "environmental threat perceived by the expressor."[506] This study suggest that the gaze acts like a pointing mechanism in human cognition.[507] Furthermore, this process appears to be wholly

[506] Reginald B. Adams et al., "Effects of Gaze on Amygdala Sensitivity to Anger and Fear Faces," *Science* 300, no. 5625 (2003): 1536. Also see Adams RB Jr and Kleck RE, "Effects of direct and averted gaze on the perception of facially communicated emotion.," *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)* 5, no. 1 (2005): 3–11.

[507] Nouchine Hadjikhani et al., "Pointing with the Eyes: The role of Gaze in Communicating Danger," *Brain and Cognition* 68, no. 1 (2008): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandc.2008.01.008.

unconscious.[508] Thus, humans naturally conceive line of sight as coming out from the eye toward the object. This is an evolved adaption to exploit the perception of others, using a combination of emotional facial recognition and gaze direction detection to better assess the environment. It is therefore likely that the human penchant to understand perception extramissively is an extension of human intuitions that process eye gazes as directed outward to indicate potential threats. These intuitions are sometimes formalized in extramissive theories like *prāpyakārin* or remain influential in topic-specific reasoning, like about night vision.

In this section, I sought to demonstrate how conflicting understandings of perception within Buddhism are not as mysterious as we initially may think.[509] In chapter one, I argued that Buddhist theorists retained notions of yogic perception as remote seeing despite their being long-steeped in Hindu perceptual theories of *prāpyakārin.* Is this section, I was therefore charged with showing how these elements—extramissive connotations of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing within an intromissive epistemology—could co-exist despite their incongruity. First, I demonstrated that the mind has a stronger tolerance for incongruity

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[508] Yi-Chia Chen and Su-Ling Yeh, "Look into My Eyes and I Will Wee You: Unconscious Processing of Human Gaze," *Consciousness and Cognition* 21, no. 4 (2012): 1703–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2012.10.001.

[509] I should note (although it may be obvious) that I in no way only intend this approach for non-Western philosophy, as if to prejudice Tibetan or Buddhist philosophy as more open to this type of analysis because, unlike its superior Western counterparts, it is more prone to logical inconsistency and incongruity. Rather, this same lens should equally be applied to all traditions, even (and especially) Western philosophy and science. The point is that when we examine any philosophical system *as a tradition,* assumptions of consistency obviate historical factors and the fact of the mental capacity for incongruity. When incongruity is allowed to be in play, we are more likely to understand the historical forces that shaped a given system. The assumption that all systems of thought must have been formulated out of strict demand for logical consistency equally bespeaks a type of imperial projection on foreign material, not much less egregious, I argue, then the Catholic assumption that all of Tibetan Buddhism was descendent of Manichaeism. When we can agree that the presence of incongruity is not indicative of stupidity, but of being human, we can more transparently study foreign philosophical systems without our myopic projection of what it means to take these thinkers seriously as smart and sophisticated theorists, as if to do so also admits no possibility for incongruity.

then we might think. Some research demonstrates that conflicting knowledge can cohere in the mind of those motivated by other factors. Furthermore, two conflicting beliefs are more likely incorporable in a single mind when they are separated into topic-specific reasoning, which may be more fluid and influenceable by intuitions, and domain-general and analytic beliefs that tend to resist those intuitions. Buddhist thus may have been motivated by a need to maintain theological distinctiveness, such that in the realm of domain-general beliefs they distanced themselves from Nyāya *prāpyakārin* epistemologies, while retaining *prāpyakārin* in topic-specific formulations of the divine eye, within which extramissive intuitions could still hold sway. By appealing to several studies, I further demonstrated that extramission indeed compromises a stubborn human intuition that is resistant to analytical reasoning and thus can influence more mutable *ad hoc* explanations. The presence of implicit extramissive intuitions is also revealed by language. Buddhist uses of language to describe yogic perception seem to carry metaphoric accretions of extramissve thinking, as does English as well. Lastly, I showed how these extramissive intuitions are not just a happenstance occurrence but a product of evolutionary evolved traits that favor gaze detection.

ii. Omniscience as Seeing

In this section, I explore the themes of chapter two, namely, yogic perception as omniscience. As I argued in that chapter, the identification of yogic perception as the means to gain omniscience is longstanding. The task here, then, will be to offer plausible reasons as to why omniscience has had its demonstrable stability over the *longue durée*, again, not as a phenomena impervious to change but one that reflects continual maintenance through some

underlying force. The speculative project of this section will then be to show cognitive mechanisms that may explain both (1) the durability of omniscience as well as (2) its connection to yogic perception.

Per (1), much research has demonstrated that notions of omniscience may be more fundamental to our thinking than an artifact of complex theological philosophy. Apropos to our discussion in the previous sections on intuitions versus reflective beliefs, omniscience may in fact constitute our most intuitive epistemology. Research has shown that children have difficulty understanding the limits of others' knowledge of the world.[510] Justin Barrett argues that this may constitute an intuitive understanding of others thinking that lends itself to the construal of omniscient agents.[511] In other words, the conceptual differentiation between the world as it is and the fact that each individual carries limited perspectives on that world is a *post facto,* learned, reflective form of thinking. It may therefore be more natural to think of everyone as omniscient, since the distinction between the world as is and as known is itself learned. Before gaining this understanding, young children conflate them and thus assume everyone knows the world in whole—there is no epistemic-ontological distinction. This (surprisingly) more natural way of seeing the world may (like extramission) persist in spite of learned epistemologies to the contrary that account for perspectivalism. Thus, although omniscience is only theoretically attributed to certain special individuals in

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[510] Rebekah Richert, Justin Barrett, and Roxanne Moore Newman, "When Seeing Is Not Believing: Children's Understanding of Humans' and Non-Humans' Use of Background Knowledge in Interpreting Visual Displays," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 3, no. 1 (2003): 91–108, https://doi.org/10.1163/156853703321598590; Henry M. Wellman, David Cross, and Julianne Watson, "Meta-analysis of Theory-of-mind Development: The Truth about False Belief," *Sage Family Studies Abstracts* 23, no. 4 (2001): 411–568; Lane Jonathan D., Wellman Henry M., and Evans E. Margaret, "Sociocultural Input Facilitates Children's Developing Understanding of Extraordinary Minds," *Child Development* 83, no. 3 (2012): 1019, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01741.x.

[511] Justin L. Barrett, "Coding and Quantifying Counterintuitiveness in Religious Concepts: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (2008): 328.

Buddhist philosophy, the "stickiness" (*à la* Sperber) of omniscience as a socio-religio concept is owed to its immediate appeal to these early intuitions.[512]

Not only is omniscience intuitive, but belief in it may also carry adaptive advantages. A fair amount of research demonstrates that shared belief in omniscient agents is conducive to prosocial behavior. Cultures that accommodate the presence of omniscient agents may have a better ability to incentivize members' adherence to moral standards. Pascal Boyer summarizes the point nicely, discussing "full-access agents" as those that have full epistemic access to the world:

> Given this expectation of full access, it is not surprising that in many human groups people are concerned with other people's views of religious agents. To assume that there is a fully informed agent around is likely to change my behavior. But then if others assume that there are such agents it will change their behavior too, which is why their representations are of great interest to me. This is one aspect of religion that we cannot understand if we stick to the common idea that gods and spirits are just very powerful persons who can move mountains, send people plagues or good fortune. If that was the main feature of gods and spirits, we could understand why they mattered to a believer; but we could not explain why believers are often so keen to know whether they matter to other people.[513]

In other words, belief in omniscient agents also serves a social function. It is shared belief in omniscient agents that guarantees that members of a society all play by the same rules. If I believe I will be punished by God for stealing, but I am not convinced that *you* believe that *you* would be punished for stealing, then this disincentivizes mutual trust. God may punish you for stealing my goods, but this does not guarantee me recompense. However, if I am

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[512] In some ways, may argument here is similar to Freud's account of God as an extension of psychological attitudes toward the father. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton & Co., 1950), 142. Just as theology describes God as a proxy and special instance of attitudes toward the father, here I describe omniscience as a special instance of our intuitive failure to limit the knowledge of others.

[513] Pascal Boyer, *Religion explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 167.

certain that we share the same beliefs, then we can more easily cooperate, since we are both confident that our own motivations for moral restraint are operable in the other person. Thus, the prosocial effect of belief in full-access agents depends not just on how an individual represents such beings to oneself but also on how each individual represents others' representations of these beings.

Guilt is another form of moral incentive that only functions via the representation of others' representations. Guilt is predicated on one's own understanding that someone else can understand and therefore morally censure one's own wrongdoing. If no one else knows your wrongdoing, there is no occasion for guilt, and it cannot function as a deterrent. The introduction of full-access agents could effectively increase the incentivizing power of guilt by positing agents that are aware of *whatever* you do, even if there is not an immediately present agent that is watching one's actions. In this sense, communities become invested in its members' belief in such agents, since it secures the function of guilt in dissuading immoral behavior even in cases when actors may be able to slip by the eyes of other normal, non-full-access agents. Belief in full-access agents thus may help elevate calculative pragmatic moral reasoning based on consequentialism to more universal, virtue-based ethics, where actors do what is categorically "right," not simply what will minimize unpleasant consequences. Because omniscient agents obviate the ability to calculate when and where one can get away with wrongdoing, moral principles are elevated to the status of unconditional maxims. In other words, the presence of full-access agents reduces the feasibility of moral opportunism, since there are no cases in which actors could escape the repercussions of immoral behavior—the Buddhas, like Santa Claus, will always know what

you did: *He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake!*[514]

We do see some evidence of this appeal in Buddhist works. The famed *Avataṃsakasūtra*, for example, employs guilt in the face of omniscient Buddhas as a buffer against pride and failing to be of service to humanity: "Feigning yourself an unsurpassed, perfect, and complete bodhisattva under the influence of guiltlessness[515] only disappoints the buddhas of the past, present, and future. Thus, strive now to actualize your unsurpassable, perfect, and complete awakening and thereby teach the dharma in accord with reality to humankind."[516] Being puffed up and conceited is an occasion for opprobrium by full-access buddhas. Thus, the striving bodhisattva is instructed to remain humble and teach. The *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* expresses a similar sentiment:

Because clinging and attachment disappoints the buddhas, anyone who is a yogi

Teaches the maṇḍala *of* Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa *and highest* (*anuttara) *Tantra.*[517]

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514 Also, like in Freud's theory (see n512), this belief in full-access agents likely finds its genesis in one's parents. Buddhas and God are an extension of one's initial sense of one's parents as full-access agents. Even to see one's parent's as full-access agents, however, requires certain intuitive proclivities, which I again argue is ode to an intuitive epistemic-ontological conflation.

515 The term here is normally translated as "shamelessness (**anapatrāpya, khrel med pa*)," as is the closely related term "*āhrīkya*" or "*ngo tsha med pa*." Although this the standard English translation, this convention does not square well with current psychological research, which strongly differentiates shame from guilt. Shame is a nonmoral, as in morally neutral, sense of self defect, whereas guilt has a moral valence—it is a particular type of negative self-assessment that arises when one recognizes one's own wrongdoing. Miceli M and Castelfranchi C, "Reconsidering the Differences Between Shame and Guilt.," *Europe's journal of psychology* 14, no. 3 (2018): 710–33, https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v14i3.1564. In the scientific vernacular, then, Buddhists texts more appropriately are condemning guiltlessness by using these terms. Because I am attempting to present omniscience as operative in moral coercion, it is important I use the term "guilt" in translation to align it with current scientific usage.

516 Vairocanarakṣita, trans., "*Avataṃsakasūtra, Phal po che'i mdo," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, Toh. no. 44, vol. Phal chen, kha (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 116a.

517 Ratnaśrī and Grags pa rgyal mtshan, trans., "*Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra, Khro bo chen po'i rgyud," in *Lha sa bka' 'gyur*, Toh. no. 431, vol. Rgyud, nga (Lhasa: Zhol bka' 'gyur par khang, 1934), 370b.

The point seems to be that selfishly keeping the teachings of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* to oneself and not teaching it to benefit others invites censure in the eyes of the buddhas. Again, the specter of all-knowing buddhas serves as an incentive to behave selflessly, even when the failure to do so would have no immediate societal consequence: the teachings of this Tantra are purportedly secret, so it is not immediately clear that there would be some direct social pressure on the isolated yogi to share this information, which other members of the larger society are not even aware that the yogi possesses. The disappointment belongs to invisible and temporally strewn full-access agents that still exert sufficient moralizing power over the yogi to teach.

Norenzayan et al. formulates the moralizing effect of such agents in his "Big Gods" thesis, remarking that the role of full-access agents had increasing prominence in the Axial Age, a period from about 800-200 BCE in which religious traditions became increasingly focused on developing moral norms and systems of ethics. "Big Gods" primarily denotes theistic traditions, where such omniscient gods are not only aware of individual behavior but have a vested interest in enforcing moral adherence. They thus hypothesize that, "All things being equal, commitment to Big Gods should produce more norm compliance in difficult-to-monitor situations, relative to belief in supernatural agents that are unable or unwilling to omnisciently monitor and punish."[518] In other words, such agents help assure moral adherence in those situations that escape a society's ability to directly police and enforce such norms. In this formulation, however, the influential power of Big Gods is not just their knowledge of everyone's wrong acts. Big Gods seem to work in the capacity of dolling out

[518] Ara Norenzayan et al., "The Cultural Evolution of Prosocial Religions," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 39 (2016): 6, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X14001356.

punitive retribution, fear of which keeps actors in line, since even private actions are known by these full-access agents and can serve as a justification for punishment. As Norenzayan et al. identify, the fear of retribution is also operative in Buddhism and other religions with Indic origins but through theories of karma. In place of Big Gods, it is karma that keeps track of all deeds, public and private, and deals out compensatory reward or punishment. They thus note it may be fear of karma, instead of Big Gods, that furthered prosocial behavior in much of the Indian (and perhaps Tibetan) milieu.[519]

However, if karma serves this moralizing function in the stead of full-access agents in Buddhism, then it seems that yogic perception *qua* omniscience—as the means by which full-access agents know what private actors are doing—no longer fulfills the adaptive function I theorized at the outset. Although karma is undeniably instrumental in social cohesion, this does not negate that omniscient actors may also be involved. As I suggested earlier, a sense of guilt toward other agents may be an evolved trait that encourages cooperation. While karma provides fear of retribution, it cannot trigger our powerful inborn mechanisms for guilt, which may provide an even stronger coercive force then fear of retribution.

There is a plethora of scientific research that corroborates the coercive power of publicly facing guilt. One study found that participants who had a stronger history of public service were less likely to be incentivized by concerns over public image, since through their prior volunteership they had already secured positive public regard.[520] In other words, the incentive of guilt toward prosocial behavior is inversely correlated with past history of

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519 Norenzayan et al., 9.

520 Christine Exley, "Incentives for Prosocial Behavior: The Role of Reputations," *Management Science* 64, no. 5 (2018): 2460–71, https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2016.2685.

prosocial behavior. Seemingly, it is guilt in face of having not participated in public service that functions to incentivize public service. This also seems to transfer into religious behavior. Another study found that predispositional guilt—guilt that arises in relation to failing to perform some moral duty—in contrast to chronic guilt—the generalized feeling of guilt—was predictive both of lowered hostility, volunteerism, as well as participation in religious activity. Chronic guilt, by contrast, was associated with depression and psychopathology.[521] This suggests that religion may increase guilt proneness in response to publicly facing deontological failings in a manner that facilitates prosocial behavior.

Given the connection between prosocial incentive and public image, I hypothesize that part of the reason why religion may increase a sense of guilt—and with it, society-benefiting volunteerism—is that belief in full-access agents increases the scope of the "public" eye. In other words, if one feels guilty about their actions not only in front of a physical public, but also in front of a slew of invisible full-access agents, then the range of morally questionable actions about which one may feel guilty greatly increases, encompassing not only private actions but uncouth thoughts. As Norenzayan et al. suggest, full-access agents would thus extend guilt—which previously only functioned to curtail public-facing immoral actions—to deincentivize immoral behavior even in "difficult-to-monitor situations" when there is a lack of (normal) public awareness. In other words, belief in full-access agents piggybacks off of social guilt mechanisms, allowing those mechanisms to be operative even in the absence of other physical members of the society. Omniscient

[521] Zandra N. Quiles and Jane Bybee, "Chronic and Predispositional Guilt: Relations to Mental Health, Prosocial Behavior, and Religiosity," *Journal of personality assessment* 69, no. 1 (1997): 121.

buddhas, therefore, may also increase moral adherence by extending the coercive power of guilt.

There is other compelling evidence that omniscient buddhas may sociologically function like Big Gods, despite theology to the contrary that buddhas are not involved in retributive judgement. Norenzayan et al. thus argue:

> Although the official theology of some forms of Buddhism, for example, might involve a completely impersonal karmic order, once we leave the scholar's or monk's study, anthropomorphic beings often reappear with a vengeance. These include not only punishing and rewarding deities, but also fearsome demons portrayed in popular religious art as the personifications of the karmic order, gripping the wheel of samsara in their teeth and talons. In fact, most Buddhist traditions as actually practiced focus on the veneration of particular deities, who are typically portrayed in anthropomorphic form, and Buddha treated as a Big God.[522]

Norenzayan et al. argue that the anthromorphization of karma as a demon clutching the wheel of samsara in depictions of the *Bhāvacakra* reveal the vestigial functioning of Big God reasoning in conceptions of karma. This suggests that supernatural beings may cognitively perform the moralizing role of Big Gods that enforce moral compliance despite Buddhism's explicit non-theistic formulations. Other research has corroborated such suspicions concerning Tibetan Buddhists. Benjamin Purzycki conducted research with Tyvan participants, the majority of whom were Tibetan Buddhist.[523] Tavyans have a cosmology of spirit-masters (*cher eezi*), similar to the notion of local deities. Much like the incorporation of local Tibetan deities into Tibetan Buddhism, these Tavyan local deities have become highly

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522 Norenzayan et al., "The Cultural Evolution of Prosocial Religions," 49.

523 Purzycki only identifies 56 of the 88 participants as "Buddhist" and 26 as "Buddhist and Shamanist." The primary Buddhist tradition in the Tyva Republic is Tibetan. Benjamin Grant Purzycki, "The Minds of Gods: A Comparative Study of Supernatural Agency," *Cognition* 129, no. 1 (2013): 169, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2013.06.010.

integrated into Tyvan Buddhist practice. Although Tavyans express that such spirits are not directly concerned with moral conduct, Purzycki notes

> [T]he wider the breadth of knowledge Tyvans attribute to spirit-masters, the more they attribute moral concern for behaviors that transpire beyond their jurisdiction. These results further demonstrate that there is a significant gulf between expressed beliefs and intuitive religious cognition and provides evidence for a moralization bias of gods' minds.[524]

In other words, although there is no explicit theological expression of the role of spirit-masters in moral enforcement, the moral concern of these agents seems to increase proportionally with the scope of their knowledge. There is a natural affinity between our intuitive sense of what others know about us and our sense of their concern for our moral conduct. Thus, our degree of guilt should increase proportionally with the breadth of knowledge we assume other agents have about us. Conceivably, Buddhas mark the pinnacle of guilt inducement, given the unlimited scope of their awareness about our actions.

While these spirit-masters are propitiated through apotropaic ritual—and thus their role in reward and punishment may be more evident—buddhas, despite being theologically said to not dictate the fortune and misfortune that results from karma, may also be the object of such propitiation, belying their conceptualization as moral judges. Matthew Kapstein, for example, illustrates the prevalence of pure land practices in Tibet, despite their normal association with Eastern forms of Buddhism in Japan and China. In these practices, adherents beseech buddhas to be reincarnated in heavenly realms. Kapstein recounts a story of his stay at the *Rol ba gling* valley on the border of Nepal and Tibet while backpacking through the area. Conversing with an elderly monk, Gelong Pasang, a village woman burst in distraught that there had been a robbery. After the monk consoled her and she had left, Pasang said to

[524] Purzycki, 163.

Kapstein, "You'd never have this sort of trouble in Sukhāvatī." Sukhāvatī is a well-known pure land in the Tibetan tradition. Kapstein continues:

> Rebirth in Sukhāvatī, he taught me, was a move to a much better neighborhood. Sukhāvatī was an actual destination, to which, after a life of back-breaking labor and hardship in what only foreign trekkers took to be a paradise, you aspired if you had any sense at all. The liturgies and prayers for rebirth in Amitābha's realm were part of an elaborate marketing campaign, highlighting the inconveniences of one's present circumstances, and promising in their stead a gentle land, with such amenities as hot and cold running water, wishing trees, birds singing dharma-songs, and offering goddesses in place of (heaven forbid!) human women.[525]

This on-the-ground example appears to corroborate Purzycki's supposition about the disconnect between theological non-theistic formulations of karma as the primary dictate of moral retribution and the level of praxis, where adherents beseech full-access agents—in this case, the Buddha Amitābha—to intercede on their behalf.[526] Moreover, Kapstein indicates that—in distinction to some Japanese antinomian formulations of pure lands—that rebirth in Amitābha's pure land cannot occur "by grace alone" but requires "moral effort."[527] Again, there is an appeal here to a Big God as responsible for rewarding moral behavior. Kapstein further argues that this often-overlooked feature of Tibetan Buddhism is more dominant then current scholarship gives credit:

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525 Matthew Kapstein, "Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhāvatī to the Field of Great Bliss," in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha*, ed. Richard Karl Payne and Kenneth Ken'ichi Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 17.

526 Though Tibetan Buddhist descriptions of buddhas as *deux ex machina*—being able to swope in to save ardent believers—are rare outside of praxis, it is not completely unheard of at the level of orthodoxy. Mipham differentiates between self-power (*rang stobs*) and other-power (*dngos po'i nus pa*) as two ways in which pure land practice functions. In the latter, though the practionner must be well-trained and deserving, it is through the Buddha's power that one takes rebirth in the pure land. Lowell Cook, "'Ju Mi Pham on Pure Land Doctrine and Practice" (Masters Thesis, Kathmandu, Kathmandu University, 2016), 45–50.

527 Kapstein, "Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhāvatī to the Field of Great Bliss," 30. Also see Richard Karl Payne, "Introduction," in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha*, ed. Richard Karl Payne and Kenneth Ken'ichi Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 5.

> The recent study of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly in the United States, has tended to emphasize the rarified domain of scholastic philosophy, while popular writings in English stress such topics as ethical advice on the bodhisattva's path and meditations on the nature of mind. The foregrounding of these interests has obscured in large measure the religious phenomena that were and still are predominant in traditional Tibetan settings, phenomena such as donative merit-making and contrition for sin, purposeful rituals of many kinds, devotion, and prayer.[528]

Kapstein thus echoes Purzycki's notion of the gulf between strict Buddhist theology and practice. The practices he identifies as primary—"donative merit-making and contrition for sin, purposeful rituals of many kinds, devotion, and prayer"—most often take full-access buddhas as their object of devotion. That buddhas are essential for the efficacy of such practices suggests their role in reward, if not explicitly punishment. Coupled with the belief that praxic success also depends on good moral conduct further evinces that buddhas are crucial in incentivizing the type of prosocial behavior indicative of moral compliance. This praxic tendency of Buddhism toward "theological incorrectness"—to emphasize the role of Buddhas in moral desert despite the theological emphasis on karma—has also been explored by Jason Slone, who gives a convincing analysis of the importance of the Buddha as a devotional figure.[529]

Although I have thus far offered an analysis of how omniscient actors may incentivize prosocial behavior within Buddhism, it remains unclear how this has any immediate connection to yogic perception. I argue, however, that yogic perception also likely exploits another intuition that, when coupled with belief in full-access agents, further extends those agent's capacity as moral deterrents. This is owed to yogic perception's close association with gaze or its construal of a type of seeing. Norenzayan devotes an entire

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[528] Kapstein, "Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhāvatiī to the Field of Great Bliss," 18.

[529] Slone, *Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't*, 74.

chapter in his book on Big Gods about how the moral incentivizing presence of full-access agents is largely a function of gaze awareness. He states that the first principle of Big Gods is that "watched people are nice people."[530]

> Experiments in social psychology have also shown that any cue that increases the feeling of being watched, such as exposure to cameras, mirrors, and audiences, increases prosocial tendencies, and those that encourage feelings of being hidden from view, such as ambient darkness or wearing dark glasses, license more selfishness and cheating.[531]

Although we have seen in Buddhist debates that yogic perception has been theologically emphasized as a method for "seeing" the ultimate truth, it is noteworthy that these discussions have retained the understanding that yogic-perception-*cum*-omniscience *also* includes a buddha's ability to literally see all phenomena. Most importantly for our purposes here, the actions of each individual are within the scope of this seeing. This capacity is evident in the earliest textual stratum we evaluated, where yogic perception seems associated both with the dharma eye—connoting a spiritual insight—and the divine eye—connoting remote seeing. Note that the divine eye was also responsible for seeing who transmigrated where based off of their moral conduct. Not only might you end up in hell, but all the yogis will know it. This parallelism between the dharma eye and divine eye also occurs in the Tibetan sources, where Sapen and other Sakyapas differentiate yogic perception with appearances—the ability to see an increase number of worlds—and without—spiritual insight. This type of dual role for yogic perception, as both being able to see all quotidian objects as well as deep spiritual truths, may be another form of the theological-intuitive amalgam we have been exploring throughout this chapter, where yogic perception's role in

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530 Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 19.

531 Norenzayan, 20.

spiritual insight denotes a theological framework while its role in perceiving discrete objects preserves the prosocial adaptive function of a sense of being watched that exploits natural intuitions.

Norenzayan concentrates on how the depiction of physical eyes—for example, the famed pair of eyes on the Boudhanath stupa in Kathmandu—can induce moral behavior.[532] Similar to the anthropomorphization of the demon of the *Bhāvacakra*, he argues that repeated depictions of Big Gods in the forms of eyes reveals a deep seated intuition about gaze awareness and how that influences prosocial behavior: "It is easy to see how the idea of supernatural monitoring is rooted in the more ancient and mundane human preoccupation with social monitoring. If the notion of powerful and perceptive people watching is something people already intuitively accepted, it is not a giant step from that notion to powerful and perceptive gods who see when no one else can."[533] We also discussed in the previous section how humans are naturally attentive to eye gaze and its associated expressed emotion. What is even more compelling is a body of evidence that suggests that this feeling of being watched can be induced even without the presence of physical eyes.[534] For example, as Norenzayan himself noted, even the dimming of lights has been shown to increase dishonest behavior, presumably because participants intuitively suspect that in the shadows their cheating behavior will not be observed.[535] This may also explain why the texts we

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[532] Also see Stefan Pfattheicher and Johannes Keller, "The Watching Eyes Phenomenon: The Role of a Sense of Being Seen and Public Self-Awareness," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 45, no. 5 (2015): 560–66, https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2122.

[533] Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*, 26.

[534] See Forman, "Double Hiddenness: Governmentality and Subjectivization in Gelug Buddhism," 2–5. I argue this point using Focault's notion of the panopticon.

[535] Chen-Bo Zhong, Vanessa K. Bohns, and Francesca Gino, "Good Lamps Are the Best Police: Darkness Increases Dishonesty and Self-Interested Behavior," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (2010): 311–14.

explored described extraordinary visual abilities in terms of both night vision and seeing behind walls. These descriptions of remote seeing attenuate our innate confidence that we might get away with things in the dark or behind closed doors, since the buddhas will still know.

Another study also suggests that while the depiction of eyes may be a strong intuitive reminder of being watched, that the belief that one is being watched independent of such depiction also has an effect. Participants were found to fixate *less* on a person's face—particularly, their mouth—when they believed a video recording was of a live actor who could see and hear them as opposed to when they correctly understood that it was pre-recorded. The authors concluded "people engage in avoidance of potentially useful speech-directed fixations when they believe their fixations are being observed."[536] The avoidance of speech-directed fixations may be connected to a sense of social decorum, where staring at someone's mouth in order to understand them better may be interpreted as rude. As the authors note, "social contexts draw fixations away from the face compared to when social context is not a factor […] This may suggest that participants are more comfortable looking directly at the mouth of a speaker when they do not believe their fixations can be observed."[537] These two studies suggest that the sense of being watched can have an operative effect independent of the presence or absence of an observer. In the case of the dimmed lights, the sense of being watched could be modulated by the lights with no one else present. In the video experiment, the sense of being watch could be modulated despite the consistent

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[536] Michael J. Kleiman and Elan Barenholtz, "Perception of Being Observed by a Speaker Alters Gaze Behavior," *Attention, perception & psychophysics* 82, no. 5 (2020): 2195, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13414-020-01981-9.

[537] Kleiman and Barenholtz, 2199.

depiction of a face on the monitor. In other words, when yogic perception is associated with omniscience, it exploits our intuitive responses to being watched, which can operate independent of whether any observer is or is not physically present. Thus, when omniscience is understood as a type of gaze afforded by yogic perception, it triggers our intuitive response to gaze awareness, which allows belief in full-access agents to have a greater prosocial effect, since they are exactly the type of observers that are purported to watch without making their presence known.

Such presuppositions are preliminary and need to be taken with caution. One meta-analysis study, for example, found that the sense of being watched has a much weaker prosocial affect than the presence of actual passive observers.[538] Although actual observers, therefore, are much better deterrents then the mere psychological sense of being watched that is engendered by belief in full-access agents, the latter may still hold some sway in those "difficult-to-monitor situations," which by definition preclude the presence of physical observers. All this to say, that there are some good preliminary reasons to suspect that belief in omniscience may have a discernible adaptive effect when coupled with yogic perception. This combination exploits both our intuitive predilection to care about what others think of us and our natural heightened awareness of this factor when we have a sense of being watched. While the belief in full-access agents expands our sense of guilt to include conduct in difficult to monitor situations, that they know this through yogic perception further exploits the morally coercive force of the sense of being watched, given yogic perception's close relationship with vision. Like many religions of the Axial Age, Buddhism might also be

538 Alex Bradley, Claire Lawrence, and Eamonn Ferguson, "Does Observability Affect Prosociality?," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 285, no. 1875 (2018): 20180116, https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2018.0116.

indicative of those religious movements whose exploitation of prosocial intuitions furthered their ability to maintain large-scale societies.

iii. Yogic Perception as Experience

In chapter three, I identified that discussions of yogic perception as spiritual insight involved debates surrounding the reality of yogic perception's object. These were not only endemic to the Indian sources but to secondary scholarship as well. I extended this observation to the Tibetan sources in chapters four and five, where Sakyapas and Gelugpas disagreed about whether the inferential object that marks the starting point for yogic perception corresponds with the reality that yogic perception perceives once that meditation culminates. Part of my aim in that chapter was to demonstrate that the debate between Dunne and Eltschinger concerning Dharmakīrti's intention about the reality of yogic perception's object may be the result of substantial ambiguity in his epistemology more so than a product of either's failing to fully interpret Dharmakīrti's work. Furthermore, I argue that this ambiguity did not begin with Dharmakīrti himself. In fact, Dharmakīrti was importing a longstanding ambiguity present in the sources he draws from. If this is in fact true ambiguity, and not merely an artifact of incomplete exegesis, then it demands explanation. Again, per the introduction to this chapter, it is not sufficient to appeal to this ambiguity's inertia, toughness, or rigidity to explain its endurance. Rather, there must be something that is keeping the ball in the air, as it were, something that is exerting a maintaining force against its entropy.

In order to explain what this force may be, I borrow from a method outlined by Ann Taves, who argues that experiences deemed religious can often be captured by the methods

of other disciplines, especially psychology, and that it is often *post facto* appraisals of those experiences that determine whether they are, for example, mystical or pathological.[539] In other words, within a phenomenological reduction of mystical experience, no one interpretation is predetermined. I argue that if we examine the phenomenology of yogic perception as an experience, the reality of its appearances is inherently ambiguous, just as, for example, the experience of hearing voices is sufficiently ambiguous that it can be deemed either a sign of divine communion or schizophrenia given the cultural context that attempts to make sense of it. Similarly, I argue that the experience of yogic perception can be interpreted in a myriad of ways—as evinced by its many theoretical construals in Indian and Tibetan literature. This entails two assumptions, (1) that these texts are in fact theorizing about a particular experience and (2) this pre-theorized experience is sufficiently ambiguous to accommodate multiple differing interpretations. I argue that the types of meditation practices described by Buddhists—namely, intense concentration on a particular mental object—do in fact create vivid, irreal appearances.[540] This irreality continually provokes anew discussions about yogic perceptions' object, keeping the debate ongoing over the course of a millennium.

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[539] Ann Taves, "Psychology of Religion Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience," in *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Experience*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Chad V. Meister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[540] The notion that yogic perception invariably involves appearances would seem incompatible with Sapen's and the general Sakya taxonomic differentiation between yogic perception with and without appearances. However, in the Sakya context, appearancelessness (*snang ba med pa*) should not be conflated with being contentless, even though the substance of that content is ineffable. Rongton Sheja Kunrik (1367 1449) defines appearancelessness as "free of the mistaken appearances (*'khrul pa'i snang ba med pa*)." Rong ston, "Mngon rtogs rgyan gyi 'grel pa'i rnam bshad tshig don rab gsal," in *The Collection of the Eighteen Renowned Scriptures: Root Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Sachen International (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2011), 293. Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382-1456) further explains "In reality (*bden par)*, there are none of those appearances whatsoever," because, according to Candrakīrti, "all phenomena are a dream, so when one sees them, they are not external to the mind. Thus, anything that appears as a visual distortion is actually one's own mind and comes from nothing else but one's own mind" (We should note, however, that Ngorchen does not take Candrakīrti to be arguing idealism, saying that the mind itself also is illusory, again indicative of the MMM). Yon tan bzang po, "Rgyal bas dri med lung gis bsngags pa'i rdo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang po'i zhabs kyi gsung rab glegs bam gnyis pa las dpal kye rdo rje'i sgrub thabs kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gnad kyi zla zer," in *Sa skya'i lam 'bras*, TBRC W1KG13617, vol. 14

Per (1), is there are any plausible reason to suspect that discourse on yogic perception is connected to any actual experience, meditative or otherwise? Or it is purely theoretical? Thankfully, Dharmakīrti gives a key analogy describing yogic perception that links it with a clearly identifiable experience:

> *One is driven crazy by desire, fear, and sorrow*
> *And haunted by dreams, robbers, etc.*
> *They see what does not exist*
> *As if it were right in front of them*.[541]

While the other analogies that Dharmakīrti offers—like the perception of bones or the earth *kaṣina*—gives us little fodder for determining phenomenological content, the notion of hallucinations provoked by strong emotions, particularly sorrow, gives a workable phenomenological basis from which we might surmise what the experience of yogic perception is like. In flushing out this experience, it is important to distinguish hallucinations *qua* experience from the appraisal of those experiences as hallucinations. Phenomenologically, a hallucination includes the conviction that that appearance is *not* a hallucination. To hallucinate something is for it to appear *as real.* If it appears *as* a hallucination, then it is not a real hallucination. Thus, the *post facto* appraisal "I just

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(Kathmandu: Sachen International, Guru Lama, 2008), 16. In other words, to negate *snang ba* is not to negate mental content per se—with the caveat, of course, that even calling such ultimate content "content" fails, since the ultimate is trans-linguistic—but to negate the mental superimpositions that obscure actual cognition of reality. To put it succinctly, *snang med* or appearancelessness does not denote a blank slate but seeing without mental projection. It is not, as we might assume per Śākya Chokden, to literally "see nothing" but see in a manner that transcends our normal way of perceiving, which when cleared away, reveals reality as it is. Thus, appearanceless perception is thus not *a priori* incompatible with the clear and vivid "appearance" (*gsal ba nyid du snang ba*) described by Dharmakīrti per yogic perception. Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v3.281; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a. It is apperanceless as in being completely discontinuous with our normal superimposition on the world—again a notion that Gelugpas find an over-refutation of our normal ways of seeing the world. Blo bzang grags pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 3:126. But, again, this is not to say it has no vivid "content." In fact, its vividness is what it precludes its being adulterated by mentally projected appearances.

[541] Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavarttika-kārikā: (Sanskrit and Tibetan)," v3.282; Tshul khrims rin chen, "*Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa," 129a.

hallucinated" is in excess of the phenomenological reduction, since within the experience, the percept appears to be real.

It's important I clarify that I don't mean to say that when someone hallucinates that they never can make a judgement that they experienced a hallucination. Rather, my point is phenomenological: to *experience* a hallucination means something appears real and, just as Dharmakīrti notes, "right in front of them." Whether they later conclude upon reflection that it was a hallucination or not is irrelevant. And, in fact, this is exactly the intention of the phenomenological reduction: what we denote *post facto* as a "hallucination" is not quite felicitous to the experience. Better to say that we saw something irreal, something that appears real but brings us to question that appearance's reality. Because this appearance is irreal, the appearance alone does not necessitate its determination as either real or a hallucination. And it is thus because this experience necessitates neither conclusion that the debate on the ontological status of those appearances in yogic perception ensues.

But this is again a presupposition, specifically (2): do experiences of hallucinations preclude their experience *as* hallucinations, such that they can be interpreted *post facto* as either real or illusory? One revealing if heartbreaking example comes from an interview with Susan Schneider Williams, the wife of the late Robin Williams. At the conclusion of the interview, she cryptically says:

> "But Robin still tends to show up when I need him. About an hour before this interview I saw him in the yard," says Schneider Williams. "But when he's not there, I think of my friend, my love, and I miss him."[542]

[542] Hadley Freeman, "Robin Williams's Widow: 'There were so Many Misunderstandings about What Had Happened to Him,'" *The Guardian*, January 1, 2021, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/01/robin-williamss-widow-there-were-so-many-misunderstandings-about-what-had-happened-to-him.

Of course, we should not take this to mean that Williams actually believes that her late husband is alive and well in the yard. However, nor does she dismiss the experience as hallucinatory. The experience offers comfort, as if her husband was actually there, "show[ing] up when I need him." The ambiguity expressed here is reminiscent of the same ambiguity we saw in the earliest examples of yogic perception, meditating on bones or the *kasiṇa*. Collectively, it is not clear if these authors mean that Robin Williams, the bones, or *kasiṇa* are actually present or not.

Apropos to Dharmakīrti's choice example for yogic perception, grief hallucinations are in fact well-documented in psychological literature. They are also not uncommon. Anna Castelnovo et al.'s critical overview of post-bereavement hallucinatory experiences reveals that 30%-60% widowed subjects have had such experiences.[543] Christopher Baethge has examined these grief hallucinations under the common psychological differentiation between hallucinations and pseudohallucinations. While hallucinations describe illusions that are convincingly real to those to whom they appear, pseudohallucinations describe the occurrence of those same appearances under the recognition that they are unreal. We may think of pseudohallucinations as being like a movie or other optical illusion: although movies seem to show people acting out scenes, no audience member experiences those characters as actually in the room in which one watches the movie. But as Baethge points out, grief hallucinations are *not* adequately described as pseudohallucinations:

> The difficulties with the term pseudohallucination, which is the psycho-pathological category grief hallucinations are labeled as generally, has been shown with two clinical vignettes of patients with grief hallucinations. In conclusion, the term should be abandoned and hallucinations should be

[543] Castelnovo et al., "Post-Bereavement Hallucinatory Experiences: A Critical Overview of Population and Clinical Studies."

> described more properly. Moreover, the cases indicate that grief hallucinations can have all of the characteristics of 'true' hallucinations […][544]

In other words, grief hallucinations are not appropriately described as instances of apparitions, which the griever knows are false. The ambiguity of the hallucination's reality is not due to a worldview that accommodates ghosts and spirits, but likely to its vividness and sensorial clarity. Another example from Oliver Sack's titular work on hallucinations corroborates this point. The interviewee has recently lost their father:

> I awoke in the night. I did not feel groggy or disoriented and my thoughts and vision were clear. I saw someone sitting on the corner of my bed. It was my Dad, wearing his khaki slacks and tan polo shirt. I was lucid enough to wonder initially if this could be a dream but I was certainly awake. He was opaque, not ethereal in any way, the nighttime Baltimore light pollution in the window behind him did not show through. He sat there for a moment and then said—did he speak or just convey the thought?—"Everything is all right." I turned and swung my feet to the floor. When I looked [back toward] him, he was gone. I stood and went to the bathroom, got a drink of water, and went back to bed. My dad never returned. I do not know whether this was a hallucination or something else, but since I provisionally do not believe in the paranormal, it must have been a hallucination[545]

This is a prime example of the type of ontological ambiguity inherent in grief hallucinations. We see the participant explain just what they experienced: they woke up, clear headed, not in a dream, and saw their father sitting "right in front of them," as Dharmakīrti would say. The consideration of whether this experience was real or illusory comes *post facto.* We see the participant attempting to reconcile in real time their experience with their world view. Because they "do not believe in the paranormal," the conclusion is the experience must have been a hallucination. But we can appreciate that given another worldview or philosophical

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[544] Christopher Baethge, "Grief Hallucinations: True or Pseudo? Serious or Not?," *Psychopathology* 35, no. 5 (2002): 301, https://doi.org/10.1159/000067067.

[545] Sacks, *Hallucinations*, c.13.

outlook that it may have been interpreted differently, perhaps as an actual visitation from their late father.

If we assume, based on Dharmakīrti, that yogic perception engenders a particular experience akin to grief hallucinations, we thus can equally appreciate that it is also open to a myriad of different interpretations, some realist, some not. But we ought also note that the vividness of this experience provoked Sack's participant to *question* their world view. There was a true dilemma here: either jettison rejection of the paranormal or chalk up the experience to hallucination. I argue that yogic perception similarly re-provokes this same crisis, since even phenomenologically its ontology is ambiguous. Just like the participant's father who appeared completely real and yet suddenly disappeared, so too do meditative objects likely appear equally vivid and yet behave strangely, popping in an out of existence. In both cases, this creates an inherent tension indicative of the irreal. It is the continual re-creation of this crisis as meditators had grief-hallucination-like experiences that—I contend—kept intellectual history from resolving on just one interpretation of yogic perception's reality. Just as we see the strain on this participant's worldview in light of something so seemingly real yet strange, so too would peak meditative experience resist being pinned down as either real or unreal, keeping the debate active and alive.

Phillip Gerrans furthermore discusses a cognitive mechanism by which hallucinations may be either incorporated into one's belief structures or rejected—i.e., whether they are interpreted as real events (and thus not hallucinations) or identified as hallucinations. Gerrans argues that the brain has an evolved mechanism to be able to entertain and contemplate perceptual experiences that do not necessarily accord with our wider world view. This, he argues, is the role of imagination:

> Imagination uses the mind's cognitive resources, such as perceptual, doxastic and emotional processing, to create simulations. It thus inherits the intentional structure of these counterpart processes. However, *qua* simulations, imaginative states do not have congruence conditions. This is an adaptation for planning.[546]

In other words, the mind is able to run imaginative simulations that are free from the constraints of the actual in order to plan and reason about hypothetical and therefore unreal situations. This ability increases fitness by allowing humans to prepare for such situations should they arise, thus affording an advantage. Furthermore, Gerrans conceives of these simulations working in tandem with perceptual experience: "In the case of delusion, people act 'on the basis of' a default simulation: an imaginative state triggered by a sensory or perceptual anomaly."[547] This could be a fair model of yogic perception. The hallucinatory experience had in yogic perception provokes an imaginative state that, albeit a simulation, becomes the basis for action, or, in the context of the texts we have explored, the formulation of a new philosophical system that accommodates the reality of yogic perception's object.

Gerrans names these instances of when imaginative simulations influence or alter one's belief system "incorporations." He argues that this occurs as a failure of metacognitive evaluation. That is, someone simply believes what one has imagined by bypassing the meta-level evaluation of their imagination's veracity and whether it accords with existing knowledge about the world.[548] If we borrow from the notion of appraisal from Ann Taves we explored earlier, Gerrans seems to suggest in such cases that the appraisal process is relatively weak, seemingly completely naive of the distinction between perception and

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546 Philip Gerrans, *The Measure of Madness: Philosophy of Mind, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Delusional Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2014), 140, https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262027557.001.0001.

547 Gerrans, 137.

548 Gerrans, 137.

reality. The incorporations model is problematic for my formulation of yogic perception for two reasons: (1) none of the authors we have examined are naively incorporating accounts of meditative experience into a philosophical framework. All the analyses we have explored are highly metacognitive, and indeed this is what makes them epistemological. (2) To foreclose imaginative processes that do not concur with current belief systems as "delusional" *a priori* damages the phenomenology that we are seeking to recover, within which such judgements are bracketed. The framework we are looking for does not locate delusion as something absolute in an imaginative experience but as something that occurs *post facto* in combination with a larger belief system. In this sense, what is "delusional" is, at least from an anthropological point of view, relative to the belief system that is making an attributional appraisal.

It would seem more felicitous to a phenomenological approach, therefore, to construe of imagination more broadly, not as the capacity of the brain to have "delusional" thoughts, but as a process that allows the mind to think and muse independently of one's wider belief system. Again, this does not denote an instance of the brain decoupling from the real, per se, but of its ability to suspend its more general belief system. This description fits nicely with our discussion in the first section concerning topic-specific beliefs and domain-general beliefs. In other words, the brain has an adapted ability to suspend its larger, domain-general belief system, both so that it can anticipate unexperienced situations that have not yet informed those general beliefs and also through experience correct for errors in that general belief system. Thus, when experiences of yogic perception become incorporated into a philosophical system that now accommodates the reality of yogic perception's object, this does not mark a simple absence of the metacognitive act. Rather, this marks an example of a

perceptual experience opening up the possibility of new appraisals through the process of imagination, which then are *reflectively* and metacognitively incorporated with existing beliefs, perhaps with some revision of those beliefs, if necessary.[549] In other words, the incorporation of imaginative processes into belief systems is not always the result of a failure to account for what we know better or of ignoring some innate commonsense about what exists and what does not. Rather, our imagination allows us to suspend our culturally learned world view in order to interpret novel experiences and then compare the conclusions of this imaginative process to our learned, wider worldview. Sometimes the final dialectic with our worldview causes us to dismiss our imagination and experience, as in the case of Sack's grieving participant who said they could not be perceiving their father because they do not believe in the paranormal. Other times, the imagination wins out, causing a shift in those belief systems. If those new belief systems become widely enough accepted, they become a

[549] I suspect that the cognitive model I'm proposing here may help offer some way out of the stalemate surrounding coherhentist-foundationalist debates in Western epistemology. While the coherentist argues that knowledge is a combination of existing beliefs and experience's working in tandem, the foundationalist argues that knowledge is built unilaterally, with empirical experience informing beliefs. One can appreciate the immediate problems with both: coherentism can quickly devolve into relativism: if belief works in conjunction with experience, is there no shared epistemic world? Is knowledge relative to a given belief system, and there is no common ground to adjudicate between conflicting belief systems? Foundationalism solves this problem but carries its shortcomings for the opposite reason. Is reality so transparent that we can know it simply through direct experience? Does culture play no role in dictating experience? But if it does, what hope is there for a universal foundation to knowledge? The notion of imagination as a come-and-go system may be able to accommodate and reconcile both of these epistemologies. In our day to day processing, our knowledge of the world is largely coherentist: how we experience the world is largely dictated by our worldview. However, with imagination, the brain is able to decouple its reasoning from these general belief systems and encounter the world without those constraints. Because such experiences may be private, they do not serve as universal foundations per se. However, the fact that we are able to turn on and off our coherence to belief systems both allows us to be open to experiences that may unilaterally affect our belief systems as well as be able to inhabit other coherent systems that are not our own through imagination. In this way we can account for the role of belief in knowledge without the pains of relativism—since we can also inhabit and understand other coherent spheres—as well as allow for the entrance of belief changing experience without the pains of naive realism.

culture of their own, informing a new generation's learned worldview—perhaps in the form of a religion.[550]

Gerrans actually makes room for such an interpretation elsewhere, where, in place of incorporation as the absence of metacognition, he describes processes that dictate when simulations are retained based on their "congruence or incongruence" with existing belief systems. Gerran's account is still overly normative, arguing that congruence is a function of consistency between "true" beliefs, such that as an amalgam they "conduce to truth or probability" or "support the construction of true or probable hypotheses."[551] But it seems equally plausible that we could speak of congruence and incongruence in relation to existing beliefs *simpliciter,* bracketing the question of whether those prior beliefs are "true." In this sense, my argument is more phenomenological: truth is a *post facto* function of an experience's congruence with belief, not something *a priori* that is merely confirmed by true beliefs.[552] Furthermore, our discussion reveals that the directionality of epistemic warrant between experience and belief is not unilateral. While congruent experiences are invariably retained as epistemically warranted, incongruent experiences are sometimes dismissed and sometimes prompt change in the belief system. In either case, the reflective system seeks

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[550] Ann Taves notes this same process, pointing out that when such beliefs become widely accepted, the experiences that precipitated them are no longer technically "delusions" from a diagnostic perspective. Ann Taves, *Revelatory events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), c11. This is further evidence against Gerrans notion that we can cogently categorize delusions as the result of a paucity of metacognitive processing. It is cultural context that determines this more so than some innate cognitive power that either succeeds or fails at capturing the "real" world.

[551] Gerrans, *The Measure of Madness: Philosophy of Mind, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Delusional Thought*, 139.

[552] Again, this is a coherentist picture, but see n549.

consistency, either by dismissing the experience as unreal or accommodating it in a manner that revises existing beliefs.[553]

The texts post-Dharmakīrti that I have explored already developed sophisticated belief systems concerning the reality of yogic perception's object. Each one has thus created plausible yet differing interpretations of an ambiguous experience. Yogic perception becomes true or untrue based on its congruence with each belief system.[554] On one extreme, we have Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, who argue yogic perception cognizes—in fact, generates—actual objects. Thus, yogic perception has a real object because that object is congruent with their understanding of yogic perception's generative capacity. On the other extreme, we have Sack's participant, who ultimately decided that their grief hallucination was incongruent with their rejection of the paranormal. In the middle, we have various Buddhist conceptions, whose debates on epistemic warrant construe the reality of yogic perception's object in different ways—sometimes real, albeit intangible, other times pragmatically irreal. But again, because yogic perception *qua* experience occurs in conjunction with imagination, existing belief systems do not immediately rush in to necessitate a predetermined ontology. As Gerrans identifies, thanks to imagination, that experience can engender new interpretations that counter existing domain general beliefs.

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553 It is important to note that this is type of congruence does not contradict my point about incongruity between intuitive and reflective systems in previous chapters. Here, we are only discussing the level of reflective theology, or domain-general reasoning. Although it is true that this worldview system as a whole can contradict with *ad hoc* reasoning and topic-specific thinking, our concern here is how meditative experiences shape an individual's and their embedded community's larger ontology. This domain-general system, in isolation, assuredly seeks to be consistent, since this consistency is what guarantees the affordances of a worldview.

554 Interestingly, Catholic policy makes this requirement explicit. Visionary experiences of the Virgin Mary or another saint are deemed authentic to the degree they adhere with accepted doctrine. Veronika Nela Gašpar, "Le apparizioni mariane nel nostro tempo. Il significato e i criteri del discernimento nella teologia," *IKON* 6 (2013): 17–26. Thank you to Ann Taves for pointing out this parallel.

This mechanism explains how the experience of yogic perception as a "seemingly real" appearance resists any finality to its interpretation. Thanks to imagination and yogic perception's irreality, questions of yogic perception's correct interpretation are continually re-opened. Because that experience has the latent power to put one's general beliefs in question, those beliefs constantly undergo revision, as evinced by the proliferation of yogic perception's theoretical interpretations in Indian and Tibetan epistemological literature.

Immediately we have to wonder, however, in what way yogic perception may be like seemingly real hallucinations. Although Dharmakīrti associates yogic perception with grief hallucinations via analogy, is there any plausible reason to suspect meditation—the *sine qua non* of yogic perception in almost all of the Indian and Tibetan traditions we have discussed—could generate any experience akin to a grief hallucination? If we have no probable mechanism, the connection between yogic perception and grief hallucinations is relatively weak, even with Dharmakīrti's analogy. I argue that in fact there is a likely causal connection between meditation and hallucination of this sort. Although Gerrans speaks of imagination about perceptual anomalies, I suspect the reverse is also possible: imagination can equally produce perceptual "anomalies."[555]

There has been a fair amount of research demonstrating that hallucinatory experiences occur when participants stay in the dark for prolonged periods.[556] Jared Lindahl et al. have specifically connected this phenomena to the meditative apparition of lightforms

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[555] I use scare quotes since I take seriously that attributions of such experiences as anomalous, hallucinatory, or illusory foreclose the very phenomenology they are meant to indicate. In many ways, my point is like Sapen and Gorampa's in the previous chapter: what we can say conventionally about experience is always a conventional label that erases the very thing we are trying to capture.

[556] R. Sireteanu et al., "Graphical Illustration and Functional Neuroimaging of Visual Hallucinations During Prolonged Blindfolding: A Comparison to Visual Imagery," *Journal of Vision* 8, no. 6 (2010): 1806, https://doi.org/10.1167/8.6.68.

described in the Dzogchen tradition that occur during dark retreats.[557] However, the mechanisms for these hallucinations appear to be an excitable visual cortex that occurs in the absence of stimulus. Yogic perception seems to be more effortful, something more akin to the provocation of the visual cortex via an active process. It is here that recent research on hypnosis may be helpful. There has been recent debate about the mechanism of hypnosis. A hallmark aspect of hypnotic states is suggestibility, the idea that hypnotized individuals are more open to the suggestions of others. While this trait is indeed a veritable dimension of hypnosis, it is also the source of some of its caricatures, such as the hypnotized participant who clucks around stage when the hypnotist suggests they are a chicken.

Arne Dietrich first proposed the hypofrontality hypothesis, arguing that the suggestibility that occurs in hypnosis is a result of deactivated prefrontal systems. With decreased activity in the centers of the brain that control critical thinking, discrimination, and attention, the brain is more open to hypnotic suggestion.[558] If this is the case, it would seem that hypnosis is the antithesis of meditation, since the latter seems highly discerning, discriminating, and focused, especially in relationship to yogic perception, which demands constant attention on a conceptualized object. Indeed, meditation has been correlated with high activation of the attention centers of the brain.[559]

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557 Jared R. Lindahl et al., "A Phenomenology of Meditation-Induced Light Experiences: Traditional Buddhist and Neurobiological Perspectives," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2014).

558 Arne Dietrich, "Functional Neuroanatomy of Altered States of Consciousness: The Transient Hypofrontality Hypothesis," *Consciousness and Cognition* 12, no. 2 (2003): 231–56, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-8100(02)00046-6.

559 V. Pizzella et al., "Brain Activity of Buddhist Monks During Focused Attention Meditation: A MEG Study," *NeuroImage* 47, no. Supplement 1 (2009): S156, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-8119(09)71629-5.

The hypofrontality thesis has been challenged by numerous studies that demonstrate that hypnosis is in fact indicative of increased activity in prefrontal attentional systems.[560] What is more, both meditation[561] and hypnosis[562] produce activity in the visual cortex, a phenomenon that equally occurs during hallucination.[563] In one landmark study, researchers were able to verify that hypnosis induces hallucination by tracking nystagmus, eye movements that occur when perceiving an external object. As a control, eye movements were also tracked when participants were only imagining an object, in which case eye movements did not resemble nystagmus. In other words, the researchers were able to distinguish when those under hypnosis were simply *imagining* an object—something akin to the process of meditation—or actually *seeing* something—akin to the culminative effect of meditation as yogic perception, the clear appearance of that previously only imagined object. The researchers thus concluded that hypnotic hallucinations can occur in the complete absence of

560 Andrew A. Fingelkurts, Sakari Kallio, and Antti Revonsuo, "Cortex Functional Connectivity as a Neurophysiological Correlate of Hypnosis: An EEG Case Study," *Neuropsychologia* 45, no. 7 (2007): 1452–62, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2006.11.018; Sakari Kallio et al., "Anterior brain functions and hypnosis: A test of the frontal hypothesis," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 49, no. 2 (2001): 95–108; Sakari Kallio et al., "The MMN amplitude increases in hypnosis: a case study," *NeuroReport* 10, no. 17 (1999): 3579–82.

561 A. Berkovich-Ohana et al., "Alterations in Task-Induced Activity and Resting-State Fluctuations in Visual and DMN Areas Revealed in Long-Term Meditators," *NeuroImage* 135 (2016): 125–34, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2016.04.024; Pizzella et al., "Brain Activity of Buddhist Monks During Focused Attention Meditation: A MEG Study."

562 Fingelkurts, Kallio, and Revonsuo, "Cortex Functional Connectivity as a Neurophysiological Correlate of Hypnosis: An EEG Case Study"; William J. McGeown et al., "Suggested Visual Hallucination without Hypnosis Enhances Activity in Visual Areas of the Brain," *Consciousness and Cognition* 21, no. 1 (2012): 100–116, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2011.10.015.

563 Paul Allen et al., "The Hallucinating Brain: A Review of Structural and Functional Neuroimaging Studies of Hallucinations," *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 32 (2008): 175–91.

an external object.[564] Other research also reveals that hypnosis can change the perception of colors into other colors via suggestion.[565]

This evidence suggests three things: (1) both meditation and hypnosis activate attention. (2) Meditation, hypnosis, and hallucination all demonstrate increased visual cortical activity. (3) Hypnosis can induce hallucination. In tandem, this evidence suggest that hypnosis may provide an analogue to meditation, revealing an underlying common mechanism explaining the vivid hallucinations endemic to yogic perception. For example, Jñānaśrīmitra expands on Dharmakīrti's analogies for yogic perception to someone who is lovesick, so obsessed with their lover that they appear vividly and clearly before them. Thus, "one's lover remains clear as long as they are fixated (*abhyasasyamāna*) upon them."[566] In the language of hypnosis, I argue that this fixation—analogous to a kind of lovesick obsession—may occur through a type of (albeit unintentional) autosuggestion leading to hypnotic hallucination

While all these studies describe the occurrence of hypnotic visual hallucination through the introduction of an external suggestion, there is no *prima facie* reason that autosuggestion, or suggestions given to oneself, would be any less capable of inducing comparable visual activity. Discussing the placebo effect, J. L. Mommaerts and Dirk Devroey argue:

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564 John Paul Brady and Eugene E. Levitt, "Nystagmus as a Criterion of Hypnotically Induced Visual Hallucinations," *Science* 146, no. 3640 (1964): 85–86; Sakari Kallio et al., "The Existence of a Hypnotic State Revealed by Eye Movements," *PLoS ONE* 6, no. 10 (2011): e26374, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0026374.

565 S. Kallio and M. Koivisto, "Seeing Blue As Red: A Hypnotic Suggestion Can Alter Visual Awareness of Colors.," *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 64, no. 3 (2016): 261–84, https://doi.org/10.1080/00207144.2016.1171088; Mika Koivisto et al., "A Preconscious Neural Mechanism of Hypnotically Altered Colors: A Double Case Study.," *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 8 (2013); McGeown et al., "Suggested Visual Hallucination without Hypnosis Enhances Activity in Visual Areas of the Brain."

566 Ṭhakkura, "Yoginirṇayaprakaraṇa," 325.

> A lot of mental processing happens beyond the level of conscious processing. A good example of this is vision. Conscious vision is only a distinct end-product of a tremendous amount of processing on a subliminal level. Moreover, this subconscious level is already full of "meaning": a lot of decisions have been made before we actually consciously "see" something. In the human mind/brain, this mechanism is all-pervasive. A meaningful lot happens on a subconscious level, and taking this into account may well be very important for health and well-being. Autosuggestion is where the subconscious fits in.[567]

Given hypnosis's ability to induce hallucination and Mommaerts and Devroey's assessment that even in the case of vision autosuggestion has a potent effect, it seems reasonable that hypnotic autosuggestion equally may induce visual "hallucinatory" experiences. Autosuggestion further seems to be an appropriate way to describe meditative fixation. By repeatedly bringing to mind a conceptualized object, the meditator may be auto-inducing a hypnotic state that eventually leads to visual apparitions. Like in the nystagmus study, this may start only as imagination, which produces no hallucination. But through repeated practice, the autosuggestion of the presence of the meditative object may lead to a hypnotic state that produces its hallucinatory appearance.[568] This would be a corollary to Dharmakīrti's insistence that yogic perception requires repeated practice.

Most of these studies, however, also indicate that these effects only occur with highly suggestible participants, and so it is not clear that the mechanism I am proposing is trainable for just anyone. If this is the case, there may only be a small percentage of avid meditators that actually have experiences akin to the vivid appearances indicative of yogic perception.

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567 J. L. Mommaerts and Dirk Devroey, "The Placebo Effect: How the Subconscious Fits in," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 55, no. 1 (2012): 52, https://doi.org/10.1353/pbm.2012.0005.

568 It is important to reiterate that this hypnotic state is not some type of "trance state." This does seem suggested by the hypofrontality thesis, but it's not what I am advocating here. Rather, this hypnotic state is an active attentive practice in which, through repeated autosuggestion, the meditator gains increased control of visual functions in the brain normally not consciously activated. See *Revelatory Events* for a similar discussion. Taves, *Revelatory events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths*, c11.

Nevertheless, if imaginative concentration and attention can induce hypnotic hallucination, then, given the cognitive similarities between hypnosis and meditation, this may provide a cognitive mechanism explaining how yogic perception occurs. Even if this experience only occurs for some select, predisposed meditators, testimonies from such yogis within their wider community—through oral teaching, their writings, etc.—could have weighty effects, especially given the reverence afforded elite spiritual practitioners in both Indian and Tibetan cultures. Hypnosis is also a likely analogue to yogic perception given most texts', namely Dharmakīrti's, association of yogic perception with hallucination and acute attention. Furthermore, that Dharmakīrti analogizes yogic perception's vivid appearances to types of hallucinations that can plausibly be the product of meditation-like processes, namely, autosuggestive hypnosis, gives credence to the supposition that discourse on yogic perception proceeded in conjunction with, and not independently of, the experiences of actual meditators. Again, I argue that the seeming reality of these experiences were causal in that discourse, keeping debate about yogic perception's object afloat.

In summary, this section revisited the debates concerning yogic perception's object adumbrated in chapter three. I first started with grief hallucinations, Dharmakīrti's analogy for yogic perception and a well-attested phenomenon in the psychological literature. Borrowing from Ann Taves' methodology, I argue grief hallucinations are sufficiently ambiguous on a phenomenological level to provoke multiple interpretations, sometimes corroborating their reality and sometimes dismissing them. I then invoked Gerrans to provide an explanation of what mechanism may undergird the assimilation and rejection of these experiences. Namely, the imagination provides a domain that suspends domain general beliefs and makes new conclusions around the ontologically ambiguous experience of yogic

perception possible. Although Gerrans discusses the incorporation of such conclusions as a result of failed metacognitive processes, I argued that they are either congruent or incongruent with pre-existing belief systems, and it is these belief systems that determines how they are appraised.

Lastly, I drew on literature from hypnosis as a proxy for meditation, suggesting that imagination may also provoke visual experiences via autosuggestive hypnosis. This all lends credence to the possibility that the prevalence of disparate theories surrounding yogic perception's object may be the result of various imaginative analyses of an ambiguous "hallucinatory" experience.

iv. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to explain the historical stability of the themes of remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight in chapters one, two, and three respectively. I argued that it would be insufficient to simply describe their durability as a function of some rigidity or stubbornness. Rather, like a system that resists entropy, there must be some operative factor that maintains belief in these notions not only across time and cultures but across religious traditions. As a possible explanation, I appealed to cognitive science, arguing that there are certain cognitive mechanisms that may be pan-human and may explain the recurrence of these themes in discourse surrounding yogic perception. Although speculative, this discussion at least offers some hypothetical account for their stability. A more in-depth attempt to substantiate these suppositions could be the topic of future research.

I argued that in the case of remote seeing, the discussions are highly informed by extramissive intuitions, which understand sight as something projective rather than receptive. Psychological research reveals that these intuitions remain present and even functional despite reflective beliefs to the contrary. This may explain why many Buddhist discussions of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing seem extramission-sympathetic despite their explicit rejection of *prāpyakārin.*

Per yogic perception as omniscience, I argued that understanding yogic perception in this capacity may have an adaptive prosocial function that explains its durability. While omniscience exploits our fear of guilt by extending the scope of what actions enter into others' awareness, yogic perception in tandem exploits our intuitions about how others come to know about our inequities—through the gaze. By extending the times at which we have a sense of being watched, belief in omniscient yogic perception augments the power of guilt to curtail bad behavior.

Lastly, concerning the ambiguity of yogic perception's object, I argued that preoccupation with this question in Indian and Tibetan epistemological discourse is at least partially responsive to the actual experience of yogic meditators, who, through fixation on mental objects, have "hallucinatory" experiences whose reality is inherently phenomenologically ambiguous. I argued that psychological research suggests not only the actuality of such experiences but that they may be inducible through hypnotic fixation, creating activity in the visual cortex phenomenologically indifferentiable from veritable perceptions of the outside world.

Furthermore, each of the cognitive mechanisms undergirding these explanations are not happenstance but the result of adaptive traits described by evolution. Extramissive

intuitions appear related to an evolved penchant for gaze direction detection that allows us to recognize other sources of danger or when we ourselves are considered by others to be dangerous. Yogic perception as a form of omniscience is related to prosocial behavior, an adaptive feature that allows for society-level group cohesion. The ambiguity of yogic-perception-*cum*-experience is related to (*à la* Gerrans) an evolved imaginative capacity that allows for planning for (currently) unreal but hypothetical situations, which requires decoupling from congruence restraints. Thus, by giving a functional account of these mechanisms, I can better substantiate their status as deep-seated intuitions that affect both the experience and theorization of yogic perception.

Conclusion: Lessons from Intertextualism

This dissertation approached yogic perception both thematically and chronologically. The first three chapters explored three different recurrent themes that are prevalent within discussions of yogic perception in Indian and Tibetan texts. I centered the conversation on the earliest recorded Buddhist mention of "yogic perception" we have recorded. This was in Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya.* I gave a brief history in the introduction exploring possible precursors to Dignāga's definition—Pāli texts on the dhamma eye—and traced how Dignāga's thought was elaborated by Dharmakīrti. The Pāli identification of the dhamma eye with stream entry appears instrumental in Vasubandhu's and Asaṅga's formulations of the Paths and Grounds, perhaps through the *Āgamas*. Here, we saw concentration and insight as instrumental for the realization that graduates the meditator to the path of seeing. We saw how later commentators, both Indian and Tibetan, came to understand yogic perception as necessary to reach the path of seeing and that furthermore, yogic perception required mastery of concentration and insight.

Dignāga's dialogue with the Nyāya school, from whom he borrowed much of his Pramāṇa framework, prompted the discussion in chapter one. We find the early Nyāya commentaries describe yogic perception as a type of remote seeing afforded by extramissive *prāpyakārin.* Although Buddhaghoṣa rejects *prāpyakārin*, his description of the divine eye seems undeniably similar to the Nyāya formulation, denoting a type of eye that "spreads light" to see distant objects. These descriptions harkened back farther to Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* 3.25, which itself seems to be drawing on much older tropes. Reaching this source revealed a myriad of debates over yogic perception. Early Mīmāṃsakas were aware of

Patañjali's definition and took it as the basis of their critique, since yogic perception had the potential to undermine what was recorded in the Vedas—namely, its description of the heavens and what is *dharma* and *adharma*—through appeal to direct experience. This prompted a slew of responses from the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Buddhist schools. All of these rebuttals suggest that yogic perception had two roles: seeing distance objects and giving rise to spiritual realization. Even though Dharmakīrti appears at one point to balk at the notion of yogic perception *qua* remote seeing in his quip about vultures, elsewhere he seems more amenable to bringing it into the fold.

Chapter two explored notions of yogic perception as a type of omniscience. Secondary literature identifies Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla—specifically the latter's commentary on the *Tattvasaṁgraha*—as the source of this idea. This text relies heavily on Dignāga's works. Although not in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya,* there is another text attributed to Dignāga that seems to suggest yogic perception as a type of omniscience, the *Yogāvatāra.* This further seems corroborated by Akalaṅka's summation that Dignāga intends omniscience when he defines yogic perception. Exploring these themes in both the *Yogāvatāra* and *Tattvasaṁgraha*, I identified precursors even in Vātsyāyana's and Bhartṛhari's works, such as yogic perception's capacity for simultaneous cognition and proto-articulations of yogic perception as type of *practical* omniscience sufficient for gaining liberation. Dharmakīrti appears to have been influenced by Bhartṛhari, perhaps through Dignāga, in understanding yogic perception as practical, but not total, omniscience. However, it appears in Dharmakīrti's more Yogācāra leaning works that he accommodates yogic perception as a type of total omniscience, the ability to know every discrete object. This discussion was

carried forward by Jñānaśrīmitra, who at one point rejects yogic perception as pertinent to total omniscience but in the end appears to accept its role there.

Chapter three took Dharmakīrti's extrapolation of Dignāga as a starting point. We saw that his analogies for yogic perception left some key ambiguities. If yogic perception is like meditation on bones or the *kasiṇas,* then does yogic perception have a real object? I traced descriptions of these meditation methods back to the Pāli and Sanskrit sutras, revealing that even there the ontology of these meditated objects are ambiguous. Candrakīrti, for example, argued that the bones appeared privately to the meditator—and thus seem to be a hallucination—but also asserted that *for* that meditator, the bones are external objects. Buddhist thinkers subsequent to Dharmakīrti seemed to be more conclusive about the ontology of yogic perception's object. Hard theorists argued that yogic perception's object was as real as any other object, epistemically warranted in the same fashion as normal, external objects. Soft theorists agree that yogic perception's object is epistemically warranted but with the caveat that all appearances are in fact irreal. We think that some appearances represent real objects and some do not, but in fact there are no external objects that can adjudicate true from false appearances. Their epistemic warrant is merely a question of their pragmatic efficacy.

We saw both Jñānasrīmitra and Ratnakīrti switch between Hard and Soft views in reaction to different interlocutors. Against Sucaritamiśra, they assume a Sautrāntika, realist view and thus argue a Hard position. Against, Bhāsarvajña, they opt for a Satyākāravādin Yogācārin Soft view, which still argues that appearances are epistemically warranted but not in relation to external objects, which do not exist. However, both Hard and Soft Continuous views are distinct from Discontinuous views indicative of the Alikākāravādin, who argues

that ultimate reality is beyond epistemically warranted appearances. We saw a host of meditative manuals in the lineage of Asaṅga through Dignāga and up to Kamalaśīla who advocate that yogic perception transcends appearances. Thus, yogic perception is *beyond* epistemic warrant, not corroborated by it.

I continued the discussion of both Continuous and Discontinuous views in chapters four and five. I identified Chapa and Sönam Tsemo as perhaps the earliest Tibetan proponents of Continuous and Discontinuous views respectively. Chapa's thought in this regard found its fullest expression in the Gelug school founded by Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa's works reflect a sustained effort to grant yogic perception's object epistemic warrant in a manner consistent with external objects and that prevents irreality from slipping in the back door. Yogic perception has a true object that is not just pragmatically effective but is instantiated in external objects. Selflessness is a real property of objects, not just an abstraction. Furthermore, meditation can have a clear appearance that *is* pragmatically effective but *not* true, such as during Deity Yoga. Thus, he decouples epistemic warrant from mere pragmatic efficacy, requiring stronger criteria.

Taktsang Lotsāwa rejected Tsongkhapa's Hard view, arguing that yogic perception must transcend appearances. Thus, he rejects Tsongkhapa's idea that there can be yogic perception of the Four Noble Truths before the path of seeing: because yogic perception transcends appearances, it cannot perceive impermanence, which entails the appearance of impermanent objects. This is indicative of a Discontinuous view. Sapen and Gorampa seem to be precursors to this position; they differentiate yogic perception with appearances from those without. For Taktsang, it appears only the latter is *true* yogic perception. We saw a similar theory of yogic perception from Sönam Tsemo. Even though Sapen and Gorampa

write from the point of view of Sautrāntika, while Sönam Tsemo's analysis concerns Madhyamka, I argued that Sapen and Gorampa's description proleptically anticipate their Madhyamaka view. This also appears to hold for Śākya Chokden's analysis of Cittamātra, which, unlike Tsongkhapa's analysis of this same school, insists that "seeing" in yogic perception is really "to see nothing." Mikyö Dorje carries the insights of all three Indian schools—Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, and Madhyamaka—to create a highly eclectic tantric synthesis. At this level, he advocates a unique tantric set of the four perceptions, all of which are beyond appearances and only have emptiness as their object.

My analysis here builds off of Sara McClintock's notion of a sliding scale of analysis, denoting how Buddhist thinkers adjust their analysis to differing levels of philosophical sophistication depending on context. I argue that these thinker's arguments in each context are not entirely circumspect and sequestered: each step on the scale must form a continuum, so that descriptions at lower levels feed into and build a foundation for higher levels. Thus, differences in Gelug and Sakya understandings of the highest level in Madhyamaka are reflected in their theorizations of the lower schools, namely Sautrāntika and Cittamātra.

In chapter six, I noted that my qualitative approach to these texts—a descriptive project of letting the texts appear in gestalt in order that their salient themes might come to the fore naturally—demands some hypotheses about *why* these themes are recurrent across a millennium. A structural analysis would only beg the question; some functional analysis is necessary. For this chapter, I borrowed from methodologies in the cognitive science of religion. I argued that each of these themes—remote seeing, omniscience, and spiritual insight—persist due to deep seated intuitions, whose presence in turn is explained by their evolutionary benefit. I argued that theories of remote seeing exploit our natural tendency to

understand perception as projective or extramissive. This intuition can operate in the background of thinking, even when one has reflective beliefs to the contrary. Belief in omniscient, full-access agents appears instrumental in promoting prosocial behavior. The fact that humans are particularly prone to conceive of omniscience as a sense of being watched seems to make construals of yogic perception as an omniscient gaze natural. Lastly, I argued that continued debates about yogic perception's object is a product of the essential irreality of meditative phenomenology. Meditative experience can induce experiences that cause the meditator to question anew their ontological worldview. I drew from hypnosis literature to describe possible mechanisms of how this might occur.

Taking Dignāga's text as a starting point thus blossomed into a vast, intertextual network that covered not just various Indian and Tibetan theories of yogic perception but a sweeping array of differing epistemologies, ontologies, and soteriologies across Indian and Tibetan philosophical schools. In the introduction, I described Indra's Net as a metaphor for my method, where one single node is reflected in every other. Taking Dignāga's definition of yogic perception as a starting node similarly exploded into an analysis that exceeded the boundaries of Buddhism proper and even the topic of yogic perception in isolation. Similar to Aniruddha's insight that by knowing one thing completely one can be connected to the entirety of creation, my much more modest claim is that by following the breadcrumbs of yogic perception's discourse a host of fascinating philosophy comes into relief.

But this would not be possible without the astounding intertextuality of Indian and Tibetan traditions. If these traditions were not so interconnected, it would be impossible to glean such a vast array of information from any singular topic. This is perhaps the most intriguing aspect I have found in studying my sample texts: their unbelievable intertextuality.

This traverses not only a millennia of time but also the largest natural geographical boundary in the world, the Himalayas separating India from Tibet. This feat may be easily lost on us in the midst of the information age, where the entire Buddhist canon can fit and be preserved for years on a thumb drive, or the journey from India to Tibet accomplished in two hours. With limited abilities to copy texts, the fragility of texts produced, the difficulties of transporting texts, and the various hardships required to acquire even the requisite education to study these texts, it is no small feat that authors of that era had a sophisticated understanding of each other's works or that we have records of these texts to this day. Consider, for example, *Journey to the West* (*Xī Yóu Jì*). This famed sixteenth century epic from China recounts the Odyssean adventures of the monk Tang Sanzang during his journey to India. We should not forget the impetus for this journey was the desire to acquire Buddhist texts! While in our time such texts are accessible with the click of a button, it was not lost on any sixteenth century reader that one might undergo such peril and hardship in order to obtain them.

However, I do not mean to be so flat-footed in my interpretation as to think that every instance of intertextuality explored in this dissertation is the result of someone trudging a text over long distances. To be sure, there are some intertextual instances we have explored in which this must have been the case. Jñānasrīmitra and Ratnakīrti were well acquainted with both Vācaspatimiśra's and Sucaritamiśra's polemics against Buddhist theories of yogic perception. Bhāsarvajña's Nyāya critique also demonstrates thorough acquaintance with Dharmakīrti's work. Praśastapāda was well-versed in Śabara's Mīmāmṣaka rejection of yogic perception, just as Akalaṅka had read Dignāga's definition of yogic perception, who in turn drew from the works of Bhartṛhari. This type of intertextuality across schools

demonstrates textual circulation, either in the form of a physical text or a physical person who had memorized it.

But there is another type of intertextuality at play here, operative in instances where there are common ways of thinking despite the absence of a shared text. Such instances are owed to our shared human experience. It is made possible by those intuitions that facilitate the transmission of ideas even without conscious effort. As I demonstrated, the notion of yogic perception as projective vision likely draws from deeply seated intuitions about extramissive perception. Thus, Śrīdhara, Amṛtacandra, and perhaps even Dharmakīrti understand the ability to contact others' souls/minds as a product of the ability for one's own soul/mind to exit the body. This not necessarily the product of direct borrowing but the intuitive appeal of ideas dispersed in the wider cultural milieu, which remain "sticky" for different authors across time. In this vein, we even see intertextual similarities between Indian and European texts, such as Jñānaśrīmitra's and Andreas Laurentius's shared analyses of squinting as a means to increase focus. Thus, intertextuality can occur as a result of shared human intuitions which select for similar explanations across space and time within a wide range of possible explanation space. It is those intuitions that make certain ideas intuitive, readily acceptable, and thus consistently replicated.[569]

The presence of these two types of intertextuality—the direct conscious borrowing from other texts and the subtle similarities that arise from cognitive "stickiness"—are compelling in their own right. But I argue that they also have important ramifications for how we think about history and philosophy. The historical approach favors diachronic analysis. It

[569] I am of course borrowing from Sperber's notion of "attractors" here. Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*, 98–118.

emphasizes narratives of change, transformation, and evolution. The historian is interested in how some object of study—a person, an idea, a nation—changes over time. The philosophical approach is often more synchronic. It favors comparison and differentiation independent of time. The philosopher does not find time a barrier in noting patterns between thinkers or noting their disparities. Put in broad strokes, the historian explores progression while the philosopher is interested in thematization. Direct borrowing describes the diachronic circulation of texts. With its attendant layering of citations, counter arguments, and further rebuttals, this process constitutes a historical narrative, one that traces the spatio-temporal movement of an idea through the medium of various texts. The affinities between texts, however, speak more strongly to the synchronic. By identifying consistent elements across these texts, the philosopher can thematized a general philosophy of yogic perception with varying granularity: there may be differences between philosophical schools but a more general consensus that undergirds that disagreement, grating disputants a common language by which to even have the argument. I contend that shared human intuitions—in addition to direct borrowing, of course—informs that shared basis of philosophical discussion.

I do not mean to caricature either history or philosophy here and, assuredly, to define history as solely consumed with progression and philosophy as solely preoccupied with themes would be an insult to both disciplines' diversity. But as disciplinary tendencies, this captures an inherent tension in the pursuit of intellectual history. How do we balance diachronic and synchronic narratives of an idea? Each approach affords clarity in one aspect but loses it in another. For example, without a diachronic analysis, I would not have been able to illustrate that the long history of Miāmāṃsaka debates against Naiyāyika, Vaiśeṣika, and Buddhist thinkers germinate from *Yogasūtra* 3.25. Here, we saw how the debate

progressed from a concern about seeing distant objects, to seeing heaven, to being able to perceive the distinction between *dharma* and *adharma.* However, without a synchronic analysis, I would not have been able to reveal how much of the Tibetan debates over yogic perception are contiguous with Continuous and Discontinuous views of yogic perception originating in India. Nor would I have been able to show that Mikyö Dorje's insights are a continuation of the meditative progression described in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

Our approach to intellectual history thus must navigate between the Charybdis of the purely historical, in which the narrative of change makes the demonstration of themes difficult, and the Scylla of the purely philosophical, in which the pursuit of themitizaation can lose sight of the historical. I argue Smith's polythetic model described in the introduction affords this type of nuanced navigation in my dissertation. Again, by working with a loose heuristic of yogic perception that relinquishes essentialization, I was able to compare data in a manner that accommodated both change—there is not some immutable core to yogic perception—as well as continuity—there is common ground despite seeming disparity. Again, this polythetic heuristic started first with the word "yogic perception," after which I began to assemble a polythetic list of traits, which engendered more searchable terms, and thereby more traits—an iterative process.

Smith has another important insight about this model's utility, what he called "a methodical manipulation of difference": "[C]omparison is, at base, never identity. Comparison requires the postulation of difference as the grounds of its being interesting (rather than tautological) and a methodical manipulation of difference."[570] We can take it for granted that comparison allows for the discovery of similarity. But Smith cautions against the

[570] Smith, *Imaging Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, 40.

misconstrual of the comparative project as one solely seeking sameness. Rather, the polythetic process provides a sufficient, minimal basis of comparison upon which to explore *both* similarity and difference. The discussion of yogic perception herein reflects this same comparative enterprise. Using a polythetic model, I was able to both reveal consistent themes as well as demonstrate the differences that yogic perception underwent across time and traditions. This process allowed for both a diachronic and synchronic lens, also reflected in this dissertation's organization: while each chapter was grouped by a synchronic theme—remote seeing, omniscience, spiritual insight, Continuous, and Discontinuous—the flow within each chapter followed a chronological timeline, revealing diachronic dimensions within that theme.

The incredible intertextuality of Indian and Tibetan thought—through a mixed-methods diachronic-synchronic lens—is something worthy of continued study. There is of course undeniable benefit in penetrating a singular text or thinker deeply. But intertextual study is another avenue the researcher might pursue. It is only in recent years that this type of work has even become possible. Only with massive digitization efforts can one have access to the number of texts needed to do such work. This digitization also provides newfound searchability, able to compare texts on key phrases as advocated in the polythetic model. On the other hand, this type of comparative project also comes with the risk misinterpretation, not having familiarized oneself with the entire text as a whole. I have tried to mitigate this risk as much as possible with reliance on secondary sources and consulting other translations where possible. But assuredly there is also risk in looking at texts individually, where their situatedness in larger debates is often veiled. For the project herein, this intertextual approach offered a richer analysis of Indian and Tibetan philosophical traditions, I argue, then could

have been afforded by the examination of singular texts in isolation. My hope is that this affords not only a more complete view of yogic perception in Indian and Tibetan traditions but inspires the reader to approach their own scholarship with an intertextual methodology.

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