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# ATHEOLOGY AND BUDDHALOLOGY IN DHARMAKĪRTI'S *PRAMĀṆAVĀRTTIKA*<sup>1</sup>

Roger R. Jackson

This article seeks to clarify the relation between arguments for atheism and descriptions of the *summum bonum* in Indian Buddhism, through the analysis of one influential text. I begin by noting that a number of writers have detected a tension between, on the one hand, Buddhist refutations of the existence of "God" (*īśvara*, *ātman*, *puruṣa*) and, on the other, Buddhist (especially Mahāyāna) claims about the nature of the ultimate (*nirvāṇa*, *buddha*, *dharma*), which often appears to have God-like qualities. I then turn to a *locus classicus* of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy of religion, the *Pramāṇasiddhi* ("Establishment of Authority") chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* ("Commentary on Authority") of Dharmakīrti (7th century CE). After briefly introducing Dharmakīrti and the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, I examine first the chapter's atheological passages, which include a systematic attack on a Hindu (Nyāya) "argument from design" and a number of important claims about the implausibility of any permanent "spiritual" principle. The arguments are complex and varied, but most turn on the crucial Buddhist assumption that a permanent entity is by definition incapable of interaction with the impermanent, hence utterly unsuitable as a cause or effect. I then examine the chapter's buddhalogical passages, which tend to stress that a Buddha is defined above all by his knowledge of what is to be avoided and adopted by those intent on freedom, i.e., his knowledge of the four noble truths. The Buddha thus described is less notable for his transcendental nature than for his wise, compassionate, and skillful engagement with the world and its creatures—hence less obviously Mahāyānist than the Buddha described by those who articulate a "three-body" (*trikāya*) theory. I note by way of conclusion that, though Dharmakīrti's buddhalogy did not prove as influential as his atheology, the juxtaposition of the two reveals an overall metaphysical consistency, in which axiomatic assumptions about permanence, impermanence, and deity are in harmony rather than tension.

## I. Introduction

Buddhism often is described as a non-theistic religion.<sup>2</sup> If we follow Van Harvey in defining theism as "a system of thought in which is postulated the existence of one unified, perfect being that, although distinguished from the cosmos, is the source of it and continues to sustain it in its forms and powers and, in some sense, providentially guides it,"<sup>3</sup> we discover ample evidence from over a thousand years' worth of texts that Indian



Buddhists often denied the existence of such a being. From the gently satirical rejection of the creatorhood of Brahmā attributed to the Buddha in the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the Pāli canon (last centuries BCE), to rational denials of the concept of *īśvara* by such philosophers as Ratnakīrti and Mokṣākaragupta not long before Buddhism's demise in the subcontinent (11th-12th centuries CE), an impressive range of Buddhist thinkers<sup>4</sup> contributed to their tradition's ongoing critique of the theistic metaphysics promoted by numerous Hindu schools, most conspicuously the Nyāya.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, many scholars have suggested that the characterization of Buddhism as non-theistic must be qualified. Some have noted ironically that, for all their "atheism," Buddhist theorists consistently found a place in their cosmos for the great deities of Hindu tradition, including the purported creator, Brahmā, or that ordinary Buddhist practitioners, both "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna," acted towards their supreme exemplar, the Buddha, in ways reminiscent of the devotees of theistic traditions. Neither of these is a terribly compelling argument for Buddhist theism, for even if he is recognized to exist, the Buddhist Brahmā lacks the supremacy assigned to him by Hindus (indeed, he is still enmeshed in the cycle of rebirths, *samsāra*) and devotion to a tradition's supreme exemplar hardly assures that that tradition is theistic (for devotion is possible toward a range of "divinities"). More serious are arguments to the effect that Buddhist texts may in many cases be overtly anti-theistic, but, in fact, contain crypto-theistic assumptions. A number of scholars have pointed to the Buddha's overall reluctance, in the Pāli canon, to state metaphysical propositions, and to his specific failure to deny the existence of the supreme principle of Upaniṣadic Hinduism, *brahman*, as evidence that he accepted a transcendent reality, but simply would not assert it positively.<sup>6</sup> Others have pointed to Mahāyāna formulations in which the supreme *buddha*-principle, *dharmakāya*, is given many of the same attributes as *brahman* and/or *īśvara*—e.g., omniscience, omnibenevolence, immutability, or pervasiveness—to argue that, even if it was originally non-theistic, Buddhism increasingly moved in a theistic direction.<sup>7</sup> Still others have suggested that, even if Buddhist atheism was sustained through the classic Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna philosophical texts, its breakdown is at least evident in the tantric literature that increasingly shaped Buddhist thought from the mid-first millennium CE onward, as, for instance, in the Buddha's claim in the *Hevajra Tantra* (I.viii.41) that "The whole of existence arises in me, / In me arises the threefold world, / By me pervaded is this all, / Of nought else does the world consist."<sup>8</sup>

It is doubtful that any of the notions of the ultimate or of *buddha* just cited would fit precisely with Harvey's narrow definition of theism, cited above. However, those who note such trends in Buddhist thought remind us that we cannot simply accept a tradition's critique of someone else's idea of ultimacy without examining that tradition's *own* ideas of ultimacy at the same time, for such an examination may yield surprising or ironic results. Unfortunately, too much discussion of such matters still is couched in the language of "the tradition," as if there were unanimity, or even consistency, among all the Buddhists who lived and thought and wrote in India through nearly two millennia. Conclusions about a "tradition" must

be hard-won, built through careful induction, a slow accretion of examples drawn from the lives and writings of individual Buddhists, which must be weighed and counter-poised. Cognizant that Buddhists' refutations of theism must be balanced by analysis of their own sense of the *summum bonum*, but reluctant to characterize the tradition and its outlook as a whole, I will devote this essay to exploring the anti-theistic arguments—i.e., the atheology—and the conception of *buddha*—i.e., the buddhalogy<sup>9</sup>—in the work of a single Indian philosopher, Dharmakīrti (c. 600–660 CE), in the hope that such a twofold exploration will tell us something about the ways in which one Buddhist (and maybe more) reconciled the denial of one notion of ultimacy with the assertion of another.

## II. Dharmakīrti, the *Pramāṇavārttika*, and the *Pramāṇasiddhi* Chapter

Dharmakīrti probably lived during the seventh century CE, a time of intensive, nuanced, and forensically advanced discussion and debate among the various schools of Indian philosophy. According to legend, he was born to Brahmin parents in south India, and mastered a number of Hindu systems of thought, most notably the Mīmāṃsā, before turning to Buddhism in his teens. He became a Buddhist layman, traveled north, and took monastic vows. From his master, Īśvarasena, he learned the tradition of logic and epistemology founded a generation before by Īśvarasena's own teacher, Dignāga, widely recognized as the first great systematic Buddhist logician. Working out of a Buddhist ontological, cosmological, and soteriological framework, Dignāga had drawn on technical innovations developed in such non-Buddhist schools as the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā to formulate a sophisticated theory of *pramāṇa*, variously translated as “epistemic authority” or “sources of valid cognition.”<sup>10</sup> Dharmakīrti soon surpassed Īśvarasena in his understanding of Dignāga's thought, and, settling in Orissa, established himself as one of the leading Buddhist thinkers of the day. He engaged Hindu and other opponents in public debate, and composed a number of important verse-treatises on *pramāṇa*, which deal with such topics as the structure of formal inference, the nature of perception, the ontology of momentariness, the defects of solipsism, procedures for philosophical debate, and the rational defensibility of the Buddhist worldview. The sophistication and rigor that Dharmakīrti brought to his arguments assured that his influence would be lasting. Indeed, from his own time until the collapse of Buddhism in India, he probably was the Buddhist thinker most widely reviled by non-Buddhists and—with the possible exception of Nāgārjuna—the writer most widely quoted, paraphrased, and commented upon by Buddhists themselves. And, as early as the thirteenth century, he assumed his place among Tibetan Buddhists as the logician and epistemologist *par excellence*, whose works are memorized and studied intently to this day.<sup>11</sup>

Among the philosophical views assumed or expounded by Dharmakīrti, a few deserve special mention, for they form an important background to his discussion of atheology and buddhalogy. The ontology propounded in his works is, on one level, what we may roughly call “ide-

alist," or "phenomenalist," for Dharmakīrti maintains that all entities ultimately are "percept-only" (*viññaptimātra*); on a conventional level, however, the distinction between subjects and objects is meaningful, though those subjects and objects, i.e., all entities, are understood to be compounded (*saṃskṛta*), radically impermanent (*anitya*, *kṣaṇika*), bereft of enduring substance (*anātma*), and inescapably plural and impersonal, yet still characterized by causal efficiency (*arthakriyātva*), both atomically and in aggregate. In his approach to language and meaning, Dharmakīrti is generally "nominalist," maintaining that there is no intrinsic connection between words and the objects they denote, and that there exist no universals (*sāmānya*), our apprehension of generalities proceeding through a process of exclusion (*apoha*) of non-similarities. Epistemologically, he accepts two, and only two, sources of authority (*pramāṇa*), perception and inference. Of the two, only perception—which is divided into sensory, mental, apperceptive, and yogic varieties—gives us objects directly, as the particulars that they actually are (*svalakṣaṇa*). Inference gives us objects indirectly, but veridically, through a "mark," "sign," or "reason" (*hetu*, *liṅga*) whose presence in a situation allows us to infer from the seen and known to the unseen and unknown, as, in the classic example, we deduce that there is fire on a distant hill from the presence there of smoke, which is known on the basis of repeated observation (i.e., inductively), to be an invariable concomitant of fire. In this sense, the authority of inference ultimately is "assured by virtue of actual entities" (*vastubalapravṛtta*) that are subject to direct perception. With respect to the laws and limits of reason (i.e., formal and informal inference), Dharmakīrti presupposes Indian versions of (*inter alia*) the principles of contradiction and the excluded middle, and employs a five-part syllogism (subject, predicate, reason, accompanied by positive and negative examples) that is very similar, if not identical, to syllogisms used by members of non-Buddhist traditions. He also assumes that, while inference has its limitations, it will be veridical in any case where it can be "assured by virtue of actual entities," and that such assurance is available with respect to both worldly and some transcendental matters. Thus, proper reasoning will give us a reliable basis for the achievement of human purposes (*puruṣārthasiddhi*) both trivial and crucial—which achievement, according to Dharmakīrti, is both the *raison d'être* of our search for truth, and the final guarantee that the knowledge we have gained is true.

Of Dharmakīrti's writings on logic and epistemology,<sup>12</sup> it is the earliest and most comprehensive, the *Pramāṇavārttika* ("Commentary on Authority"), that has been the most widely studied, in India, in Tibet, and in the modern academy.<sup>13</sup> Dharmakīrti purportedly composed the *Pramāṇavārttika* as a commentary on Dignāga's masterwork, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* ("Compendium on Authority"). He does address many of the same topics as his predecessor, but the two works are organized quite differently, reflect different emphases, and sometimes differ on basic points of logic and epistemology.<sup>14</sup> For all effects and purposes, the *Pramāṇavārttika* may be regarded as an independent work—and has been treated thus by most of its commentators, ancient and modern. The text is divided into four chapters: (1) *Svārthānumāna* ("Inference for Oneself"), which discusses inferential procedure and the nature of meaning, (2)

*Pramāṇasiddhi* ("Proof of Authority"), which establishes a general definition of epistemic authority and its applicability to the Buddha, (3) *Pratyakṣa* ("Perception"), which explores the nature and varieties of perception, and argues that external reality is "percept-only" (*vijñaptimātra*), and (4) *Parārthānumāna* ("Inference for Others"), which analyzes the structure and applications of a formal inference, or syllogism.<sup>15</sup>

It is in the second chapter, *Pramāṇasiddhi*, that Dharmakīrti lays out his atheology and buddhology.<sup>16</sup> This chapter is the most explicitly "religious" of all Dharmakīrti's writings, and is a strong candidate for *the locus classicus* for attempts to argue rationally for the truth of the Buddhist world-view. As Daniel Arnold puts it, "Dharmakīrti's work concerns *what it is about reality that makes a Buddha possible*."<sup>17</sup> It is organized around a discussion of five epithets assigned to the Buddha by Dignāga at the beginning of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*: the Authoritative One (*pramāṇabhūta*),<sup>18</sup> Universally Benevolent (*jaḡadhitaishin*; or Compassionate, *dayāvan*), Teacher (*śāstr*), Well-Gone (*sugata*), and Savior (or Protector, *tāyin*). In Dignāga's scheme, explicated in his auto-commentary to the verse, the Authoritative One is taken as the fundamental epithet, while the other four explain his authoritativeness. Thus, the Buddha's quality of being Universally Benevolent indicates that he has perfected the causes of buddhahood with respect to intention, of Teacher that he has perfected the causes with respect to application, of Well-Gone that he has perfected results with respect to his own aims, of Savior that he has perfected results with respect to the aims of others.<sup>19</sup>

The *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter itself begins with a brief definition of epistemic authority, as a fresh, uncontradicted cognition (verses 1-6),<sup>20</sup> then asserts that the Buddha is "like that," i.e., is the Authoritative One (verse 7); it then refutes the authoritativeness and existence of an alternative candidate for such status, the Hindu creator God, *īśvara* (verses 8-28), and shows generally that the Buddha's authoritativeness lies in his knowledge of what is to be avoided and adopted (*heyopadeya*) by those intent on liberation (verses 29-33).

The rest of the chapter (verses 33-285) is devoted to a proof that the Buddha is the Authoritative One, through a demonstration that he is, in fact, worthy of being described as Universally Benevolent, Teacher, Well-Gone, and Savior. Most commentators note that the chapter contains two such demonstrations. The "forward" (*anuloma*) demonstration (verses 1-146a<sup>21</sup>) proves that the Buddha is the Authoritative One because he has developed compassion over countless lives (i.e., is Universally Benevolent), as an entailment of which he has attained liberating wisdom (i.e., is Teacher), has freed himself from all defilement (i.e., is Well-Gone), and has provided others with the keys to their own freedom (i.e., is Savior). Because the long-term development of compassion and other positive traits is the key to this forward demonstration, Dharmakīrti devotes most of it to arguing, against a materialist opponent, that the multiple lives required to accomplish buddhahood do exist, because mind is ultimately different and separable from the body (verses 34-119), and that because of the mind's differences from the body, its qualities may be developed to the *n*th degree (verses 120-131).

The reverse demonstration (verses 146b-285) proves that the Buddha is

the Authoritative One because he teaches salvific truths (is Savior), which assures us, in turn, that he has freed himself from defilement (is Well-Gone), gained liberating wisdom (is Teacher), and has developed infinite compassion (is Universally Benevolent). Because the salvific truth of what he teaches is the key to this reverse demonstration, most of this section is devoted to arguing that the four noble truths are, in fact, true, through showing that alternative expositions of suffering (verses 147-179a) the origin of suffering (verses 179b-190a), the cessation of suffering (verses 190b-205a), and the path to the cessation of suffering (verses 205b-280a)—for instance by the Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, and Jaina schools—are incoherent, and the Buddha's exposition of them demonstrably true. The most extensive arguments here are with regard to the path, i.e., the knowledge required for liberation, which Dharmakīrti shows to be the wisdom that realizes no-self.

Several times during the course of these discussions, Dharmakīrti expounds either an atheology or a buddhalogy. We will examine the atheological passages first, then the buddhalogical.

### III. Dharmakīrti's Atheology

There are several places in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* where Dharmakīrti argues against theistic opponents. In verses 8-28, during a discussion of the definition and examples of epistemic authority (*pramāṇa*), he (a) attacks the idea that *īśvara* fulfills the definition of epistemic authority and (b) refutes a Naiyāyika syllogism intended to prove that *īśvara* is the creator of the world; this may be the most important single anti-theistic passage in all of Buddhist literature. In verses 176b-179a and 183, in the course of his discussion of the truths of suffering and origination, he argues that sufferings are impermanent and multiple, and cannot be caused by a single, permanent agent, e.g., *īśvara* or *ātman*. In verses 202b-203a and 220b-270, during his discussion of the truths of cessation and the path, he argues against the soteriological efficacy of a variety of a variety of Hindu versions of a permanent self, such as *ātman* and *puruṣa*, maintaining that such a self cannot affect impermanent entities, or itself be subject to either bondage or liberation. With philosophical rather than philological concerns at the forefront, we will examine each of these sets of passages in turn, then comment briefly on their reception in Buddhist and non-Buddhist circles.

#### A. The Locus Classicus: PV II: 8-28<sup>22</sup>

Dharmakīrti's most extensive and influential attack on theism comes near the beginning of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, in a section devoted to a general demonstration of the Buddha's status as the Authoritative One (*pramāṇabhūta*). In the first six verses of the chapter, Dharmakīrti establishes the characteristics of epistemic authority, *pramāṇa*, that must be instantiated in a person or entity if they are to be regarded as authoritative. Fundamentally, authority is said to be a cognition (*jñānam*) that is uncon-

tradicted or non-deceptive (*avisamvādi*), because it stands up to pragmatic tests, i.e., is invariable with respect to causal efficiency or purposive action (*arthakriyāsthithiḥ*) (verse 1a). Authority must be cognitive (*dhī*), and not, say, sensory, because cognition is the ultimate source of the purposive action or avoidance that is the nature of our being in the world (verses 3a-5a). Because authority rests ultimately in a cognition, and cognitions may be deceptive or not, the words, sentences, and treatises that verbalize cognitions have limited authority: they assure us only of the speaker or writer's intention to express an object—they do not guarantee the reality of the object, which only can be determined by pragmatic tests (verses 1b-2, 5a). Additionally, authority is specified to involve the elucidation of objects not previously cognized (*ajñātārthaprakāśaḥ*); this means that representational cognitions subsequent to an initial direct cognition of an object as it really is, in its own characteristics (*svalakṣaṇe*), are not, strictly speaking, authoritative, though they may not be entirely deceptive, either (verses 5b-6). In short—and there are other points, and qualifications to these points, that I have ignored here—an authority is a fresh, unsublated cognition.

Having established a number of the crucial characteristics of authority, Dharmakīrti goes on to assert that “the Blessed One is such an authority” (*tadvat pramānaṃ bhagavān*) (verse 7a). He adds that the purpose of specifying—as Dignāga did at the beginning of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*—that the Buddha is the Authoritative One, or, more literally, “became authority” (*pramāṇabhūta*), is to reverse the idea that he has *not* become authoritative, since authority depends on the accomplishment of aims, and the Buddha has accomplished his aims; that accomplishment, in turn, assures the validity of the cognitions that are behind the words he speaks and the actions he performs (verses 7a-b). A Buddha is, finally, Buddha-cognitions, so it does not contradict the definition of authority to state that the Buddha is, indeed, authority. This reading of the verse focuses on the authority part of the phrase “became authority”; there is an alternative interpretation, suggested by the commentator Manorathānandin, that focuses on the “became,” which is said to be specified to counter the idea that an entity that is non-becoming, i.e., permanent, ever could be authoritative or accomplish aims, while an entity that “becomes,” i.e., is impermanent, is capable of accomplishing aims—for aims are related to the actual characteristics of entities, which invariably are impermanent.<sup>23</sup>

Incidentally, it is worth noting at the outset of the main discussion that, for Indian Buddhists, an entity that is “permanent” (*nitya*, or “eternal,” *śāśvata*) is by definition an unconditioned simple, hence incapable of being affected by, or affecting, impermanent entities. Were a permanent entity to interact with the impermanent, it would acquire thereby a degree of temporal specificity and spatial limitation that would, say the Buddhists, entail internal complexity or variability, neither of them acceptable in an unconditioned simple. Buddhists find such complexity or variability unacceptable because (in an application of a version of the law of the excluded middle) they further assume that permanence and impermanence are exhaustive, mutually exclusive contradictories: each entity is one or the other, while no entity can be both. This radically dichotomous view of the relation between the permanent and the impermanent was not, in general,



shared by the Buddhists' Indian opponents. Jainas, for instance, argued that most entities are qualified by both permanence and impermanence, depending on one's point of view, while Hindu thinkers of many stripes insisted that the permanent principle at the heart of things (*ātman*, *brahman*, *puruṣa*, etc.) was at one and the same time an unconditioned simple and capable of affecting or effecting impermanent entities. The Buddhists, for their part, would reply that theirs is the only view that takes seriously the *real* meaning of the terms "permanent" and "impermanent"—and to take them seriously, they insist, is to see that they are utterly different, totally incompatible terms, and that any attempt to predicate both of the same entity is only the result and cause of linguistic and philosophical confusion. Whether or not Buddhists can finally support this set of claims, it is important to keep them in mind in the discussion that follows.

### 1. *Īśvara's Unsuitability as an Authority*

Regardless of whether Dharmakīrti's assertion in verse 7 that the Buddha has "become authority" looks back to his definition of authority or forward to his rejection of non-authoritative entities, that rejection unquestionably begins in the following verse. There, he argues that there is no such thing as a permanent authority (*nityaṃ pramāṇaṃ naivāsti*), i.e., *īśvara*,<sup>24</sup> for an authority always is a cognition of some entity (*vastu*), and knowable entities (*jñeya*) invariably are impermanent (*anitya*). This being so, all cognitions, too, must be impermanent, for cognitions invariably conform to their objects.<sup>25</sup> Impermanent cognitions would be successive in nature (*kramajanmanah*), and it is quite impossible that succession of any sort could be posited of a permanent being, for succession implies alteration or difference, and that which is permanent never changes. If one were to argue that a permanent authority retains its permanence, but cognizes impermanent entities through auxiliary conditions, then these auxiliary conditions would be the true cognizing subjects, so authority could not be predicated of the permanent entity. One cannot retreat to the assertion that *īśvara* is impermanent, for *īśvara* also is said to be eternally liberated; never having been subjected to the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*, he cannot be helped or hindered in any way—and such a being could not reasonably be asserted to be "affected" as cognizing agents are (for liberation is freedom from causes and conditions), let alone to care about what happens to beings who *are* bound in *saṃsāra*, since sympathy can arise only in a being with an experience of being helped or hindered.

### 2. *Refutation of a Theistic Syllogism*

Dharmakīrti then trains his sights on a tripartite argument for *īśvara*'s existence, most likely proffered by a representative of the Hindu Nyāya school.<sup>26</sup> Dharmakīrti merely presents the three logical reasons given by his opponent to show that things must be created by *īśvara*: "because they are intermittently active, they have particular shapes, and they effect purposes" (verse 10a).<sup>27</sup> The Tibetan commentator rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen fleshes this out into a more formal syllogism:

“Worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments are preceded by the mind of a maker, because (a) they are intermittently active, like a hatchet [that must be brought from rest into motion], (b) they have particular designs, like a pot [that depends for its arrangement on a potter], and (c) they effect purposes, like a battle-axe [that is constructed with certain ends in mind].”<sup>28</sup>

Dharmakīrti rejects this argument (verse 10b) on the grounds that it contains at least three logical flaws. First, in the version presented above, the thesis is redundant (*iṣṭasiddhiḥ*). It was a requirement of Indian argumentation that one demonstrate something not demonstrated before, and the assertion that worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments are preceded by the mind of a maker already is proven for the Buddhist, since the Buddhist accepts that the world and its beings are effected with karmic intentions (*cetanā*) as their maker. If the Naiyāyika were to specify that the maker referred to is *īśvara*, then a second flaw would ensue: the examples supporting the argument are unproven (*asiddhiḥ . . . dṛṣṭānte*), for such things as hatchets, pots, and battle-axes are impermanent, and only are known directly to be affected or effected by impermanent beings, leaving the relation between them and a permanent entity such as *īśvara* uncertain. Furthermore, the argument is dubious (*samśayo 'thavā*), because while it may leave open the possibility (however remote) that *īśvara* is the creator, it does not preclude other possible makers—e.g., impermanent karmic intentions—that may, upon further analysis, turn out to be asserted more plausibly to lie behind the origination of things.

In the eighteen verses that follow, Dharmakīrti argues in detail against each of the three reasons adduced by the theist for *īśvara*'s status as creator, attacking in turn what we might call the argument from design (verses 11-20[b]<sup>29</sup>), the argument from intermittence (verse 21), and the argument from effectuality (verses 22-28).<sup>30</sup>

#### a. Refutation of the Design Argument

Dharmakīrti's most detailed and specific attack is directed at the analogical design argument to the effect that, just as we infer from the particular shape of a pot that it must have had a conscious designer, so may we conclude from the particular arrangement of worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments that they, too, must have had a conscious designer. He points out first (verse 11) that the inference from a particular shape to a specific designer is reasonable *only* in instances where positive and negative concomitance (*anvayavyatireka*) has been established between the two, through induction. Yet, unlike in the case of a pot, we have no clear evidence for the origins of worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments: we do not know from observation that the arrangement of things invariably has been preceded by a conscious designer fitting the description of *īśvara*, nor do we know that such an arrangement could not come about in the absence of such a designer. Furthermore, there is some question whether a pot is a suitable analogy for worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments, for the for-

mer is a single, simple effect, while the latter is multiple and complex; might it not, therefore, as the Buddhist maintains, be the result of a multiplicity of complex causes? The theistic example is asked to bear too much weight: one simply cannot assume that all effects are brought about in the way that the shape of a pot is—especially when that which the pot exemplifies, i.e., worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments, is so very different from it.

If, in the face of this critique, the theist abandons the pot analogy, and argues that it is simply because they exhibit design that worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments may be inferred to be created by *īśvara*, Dharmakīrti replies (verse 12) that it is logically inadmissible to infer from a general term, such as “designed,” to a particular designer or mode of design, for observation assures us only that design may be effected in a variety of ways. Indeed, if it is reasonable to infer from a general characteristic of an effect, such as “designed,” to a specific cause, such as *īśvara*, then it also would be reasonable to infer such absurdities as the presence of fire where there is greyness, simply because greyness is a characteristic of smoke. If the theist then retreats to the more specific pot analogy, but insists that a pot *is* roughly comparable in its design to worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments, Dharmakīrti replies (verse 13) that even in cases where two effects are apparently comparable in design, the actual causes may turn out, on closer examination, to be quite different. In India, for instance, ant-mounds are shaped somewhat like pots, yet we know from observation that the latter is generally the result of a single, conscious maker, while the former is the result of many makers, who may not be working according to any single conscious plan. At best, therefore, the design argument may establish the possibility of a conscious maker, but certainly not that that maker is *īśvara*.

#### *b. Refutation of the Intermittence Argument*

After an important logical digression on the probative value of words, which, in line with his tendency toward nominalism, he regards as minimal (verses 14-20[b]), Dharmakīrti turns to the theistic argument from intermittence, the claim that just as a hatchet requires a wielder to set it into motion after a period of disuse, so the arising of worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments, when they have not existed before, requires an extrinsic cause, which must be *īśvara*. Dharmakīrti does not bother here (verse 21) to question the appropriateness of the analogy, as he has in the case of the pot, perhaps trusting that his reader will see that the same problems ensue. Rather, he assails the logic of asserting that *īśvara* is the creator of specific entities, asking: “How, if an entity is a cause, can it also be a non-cause? How, when it is a cause, can it be asserted as a non-cause? It cannot.”<sup>31</sup> The point is that if entities are said to alter from a state of non-existence to a state of existence, then they have changed their nature; by the same token, their cause must also have changed nature, from being their non-cause to being their cause. This sort of alteration, however, is impossible for *īśvara*, who is predicated as a permanent entity, hence incapable of any change whatsoever. An entity that itself is intermittent or impermanent might

plausibly be seen as a cause for intermittent or impermanent entities, but a permanent entity cannot function thus, so *īśvara* cannot be postulated as that which brings into existence entities that were previously non-existent, any more than (as in verses 8-9) he could be postulated as a permanent cognizer of impermanent entities—in either case, the requirement that he be permanent leaves him metaphysically dysfunctional.

### c. Refutation of the Effectuality Argument

Finally (verses 22-28), Dharmakīrti attacks the theistic argument from effectuality. This is the claim that, just as a battle-axe is understood to “work” because it has been designed with certain purposes in mind by an axe-maker who is not evident at the time the battle-axe is put to use, yet that maker rightly is considered as the battle-axe’s true cause; in the same way, worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments must be designed for certain purposes by a cause unseen at the time when they function according to their purposes, which cause must be *īśvara*. In his critique, Dharmakīrti focuses on showing the absurdity of claiming that *īśvara* ever could be invoked as an unseen, permanent causal agent, i.e., a necessary condition, *behind* the causes that already suffice in this or that worldly situation.

He argues first (verse 22) that if *īśvara* is invoked as an unseen efficient cause for things or events whose causes are observable, then we might as well argue that an irrelevant post is the “unseen” cause for the healing of Caitra’s wound—even though we know perfectly well that it is healed by application of medicine or (*via* “sympathetic magic”) the weapon that caused it. From Dharmakīrti’s perspective, where adequate conventional causal explanations are available—and, as a Buddhist, he believes that adequate conventional explanations are available in *all* causal situations—there is no need to invoke any extra cause, whether worldly or transcendental: in the curing of Caitra’s wound, a post and *īśvara* are equally absurd as explanatory principles. A transcendental entity such as *īśvara*, notes Dharmakīrti (verse 23), is especially inappropriate to invoke as a ubiquitous, unseen cause because, being permanent, he cannot alter his nature from one moment to the next. Just as (above, verse 21), if *īśvara* ever is a non-cause, he must remain forever a non-cause, so, if he is said to be a ubiquitous, but unseen causal factor in all situations, i.e., always a cause, then, as a permanent entity, he never can be absent—yet a cause is generally understood, by Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, to be a factor *in the absence of which* a particular result does not occur. Thus, *īśvara* cannot meaningfully be described as a cause. Indeed, concludes Dharmakīrti (verse 24), to invoke an additional unseen cause in situations where adequate explanations are available, is to open the door to the possibility that there is no end at all to the causes of a particular effect, in which case causality becomes totalistic, hence, finally, inexplicable.<sup>32</sup>

Dharmakīrti concludes this section (verses 25-28) by exemplifying his point. When we see (verse 25) that a harvest has been good, we know that the causes and conditions of that result, such as seeds, soil, sun, and moisture, have, at a certain point, changed from being non-causes to being causes—but this is not a problem, since they all are impermanent entities,

which sometimes are present and sometimes are absent. By the same token (verse 26), when a sense-cognition arises through contact between a sense-faculty and a sense-organ, we know that—Naiyāyika views notwithstanding<sup>33</sup>—those causes must have altered, for at one moment—when separated—they were incapable of producing a cognition, and in the next—when in contact—they did so. Again, a change from non-cause to cause means that alteration has occurred, hence that the factors involved are impermanent. Indeed, says Dharmakīrti (verses 27-28), we may conclude generally that in any case where a factor or factors are at one moment incapable of producing a result, and in the next moment able to produce it, they have changed their nature (*svabhāva*), from causally impotent to causally potent, hence have undergone alteration. In fact, declares Dharmakīrti with finality, causality (*hetutā*) only can be predicated of those factors that are powerless individually, but become causally efficacious in combination with other factors—i.e., only factors capable of alteration or variation; causality cannot be predicated of *īśvara* and other permanent entities, because they are invariant (*neśvarāder abhedataḥ*).

*B. Īśvara and Suffering: PV II: 176b-179a, 183*

Dharmakīrti next attacks the concept of *īśvara* during his discussion of the truths of suffering and origination, which form part of the extended proof of the four noble truths that occupies most of the last half of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter (verses 146b-280b). The logical purpose of this proof is to demonstrate that the Buddha rightly is designated as “the Savior” because the fundamental truths he teaches are conducive to liberation. In his analysis of the truth of suffering (verses 147-179a), Dharmakīrti is preoccupied mainly with refuting a number of materialist claims to the effect that suffering (or the defilements that cause it) arise from, e.g., imbalances in the body’s humors (*doṣa*) (verses 148-158a) or transformations of the physical elements (*bhūta*) that constitute it (verses 158b-176a). In concluding his discussion (verses 176b-179a), he first (verses 176b-177a) summarizes the classic Buddhist view of suffering as (a) transient (*adhruva*, or impermanent, *anitya*), because it arises occasionally, (b) suffering (*duḥkha*), because it is based on previous defilements, (c) without self (*nātma*, or *anātma*), and (d) unfounded on (*adhiṣṭhita*, or empty of, *śūnya*) any self.

Dharmakīrti then (verses 177b-178a) replies to a possible objection that suffering is *not* without a permanent basis, because it may be controlled by an entity such as *īśvara* (or *ātman*). A permanent entity, Dharmakīrti reminds us, cannot serve as the cause or controller of anything that is impermanent, multiple, and various. If suffering is acknowledged to be thus—and observation seems to vouchsafe the fact—then *īśvara* cannot effect it, for he is invariant, and that which he is supposed to cause is ever-changing and occasional. At the very best (and even this is unlikely, given the difficulties involved in explaining how the permanent and impermanent can interact), a permanent creator could generate the effects (including sufferings) of a single moment, but not the effects of a second moment, for to do so would require a change in nature, from being a non-cause of the second-moment effects to being their cause, and from being a cause of

the first-moment effects to being their non-cause. In this scenario (which sounds vaguely deistic) *īśvara*'s control over suffering is seriously weakened, for he effects only a single instant of it, and no subsequent moment. Alternatively, a permanent entity that is asserted to control *all* effects, including all sufferings, would have to generate those effects in one primordial moment, since it could not alter in a second moment; this, however, would mean that all effects, including all sufferings, would have existed eternally—which manifestly they do not. In fact, Dharmakīrti reiterates (verses 178b-179a), a cause must be understood as a factor that makes a difference, i.e., that in the absence of which of an effect does not occur, and in the presence of which the effect will arise; *īśvara*, *ātman*, or any other permanent entity, must, if present once, always be present, but that which is always present cannot be a cause.

In the discussion of the truth of origination that immediately ensues (verses 179b-190a), Dharmakīrti first establishes (verses 179b-182)—*contra* the materialists—that sufferings must have extrinsic causes, because they are occasional, and entities that sometimes occur and sometimes do not must be affected by factors that determine their occurrence; only permanent or non-existent entities, whose occurrence or non-occurrence is invariable, can be said to be non-causative. By the same token, Dharmakīrti reminds us (verse 183), suffering cannot originate from *īśvara* or any other single, permanent entity, precisely because (a) such entities have been shown to be impossible and, (b) even if they did exist, as permanent they would be incapable of affecting impermanent entities, and as single, they would be incapable of effecting multiple and various results.<sup>34</sup>

In short, Dharmakīrti's analysis of suffering and its origination leads him to conclude that no permanent entity can control the sufferings of sentient beings; they must, rather, be under the control of appropriately multiple and impermanent factors, such as the defilements and karma.

### C. *Self and Liberation: PV II: 202b-203a, 220b-270*

Dharmakīrti also attacks the concept of *īśvara* indirectly during his brief demonstration of the truth of cessation, and his much longer proof of the truth of the path. During his discussion of the truth of cessation, he argues that neither suffering nor liberation reasonably is predicated of a permanent entity:

Bondage is the very cause for the occurrence of suffering; how could it pertain to a permanent entity?

Liberation is the absence of the cause for the occurrence of suffering; how could it pertain to a permanent entity?<sup>35</sup>

The presumption here (as earlier, when the term *bhūta* was under discussion) is that to use the terms "bondage" and "liberation" is to presuppose that some alteration occurs in a being such that he or she moves from a state of bondage to one of freedom—but such an alteration only is possible for an impermanent entity. Thus, one cannot speak, as so many Hindus and Jainas do, of a self, or person, or soul that is the experiencer of both

suffering and liberation—if there is more than one experience possible, then the experiencer must be impermanent, which none of these entities is asserted to be.

The proof of the truth of path (verses 205b-280a) involves both demonstrating the legitimacy of the Buddhist claim that a direct realization of no-self (*anātman*) is the cause of liberation and criticizing a variety of non-Buddhist approaches to liberation, including those of the Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vedānta (perhaps), and Jaina schools. The critique of the Jainas focuses on their view of austerities, rather than their belief in an immortal *jīva*, but many of Dharmakīrti's criticisms of Hindu schools in these sections (verses 220b-270) may be read as an extension of the atheistic arguments he has proffered before, to the effect that a permanent entity cannot effect, affect, or in any way relate to impermanent phenomena—or, for that matter, since *all* phenomena are impermanent, be shown to exist at all.

He confronts the Ātmavādin contention (common in various ways to Vedānta, Vaiśeṣika, and Sāṃkhya) that we will attain liberation by detaching ourselves from imperfect, impermanent phenomena that are “related to the self” (*ātmiya, prakṛti*) and identifying only with the pure self itself (*ātman, puruṣa*) that is the experiencer of bondage and liberation, by noting that, if, like a Vaiśeṣika, one believes that the self is the ground of phenomena related to it, then, psychologically, detachment from those phenomena will be impossible, and metaphysically, the relation between the pure, permanent self and impure, transient phenomena will be difficult to explain (verses 226b-247a); on the other hand, if, like a Sāṃkhya, one insists that the self is completely separate from phenomena, yet is still their “experiencer,” then one will be seeking an entity that no search, no matter how exhaustive, ever will reveal, precisely because of its utter disconnection from any conceivable notion of how knowledge or its objects exist (verses 247b-252a). He criticizes the Naiyāyika theory that liberation may be effected by a rite of purification sanctioned by scripture (or perhaps by *īśvara*), by noting that such rites cannot be shown to “work” in the mental realm as they work in the physical realm, not least because the alleged empowering agent, whether scripture or *īśvara*, is a permanent entity, hence incapable of effecting or affecting anything at all (252b-267a). In short, whether one asserts a permanent entity as the inseparable ground of things, as utterly separate from them, or separate yet interactive, such a self cannot change, and therefore cannot be regarded as an “experiencer,” or as itself moving from bondage to liberation, or as effecting others' liberation through scripture or ritual. Indeed, it cannot be shown to exist at all, so belief in, attachment to, or reliance upon it serves not to free one, but to mire one further in suffering.

These arguments are less explicitly directed at theism (such as that of the Nyāya) than at the eternalism (*śaśvatavāda*) of the various Ātmavādin schools, so we have not examined them in detail, but to the degree that even overtly non-theistic Ātmavādin schools had to account for the relation between a “unified, perfect being” and the multiple, imperfect cosmos, Dharmakīrti's critiques of absolutist views have implications for more conventionally theistic positions, as well. Indeed, at the conclusion of his refutation of Hindu soteriologies (verses 267b-269a), he clinches his argument

with a summary observation that is as applicable to the concept of *īśvara* as to that of *ātman*:

It is contradictory that a permanent entity produce things in succession, for it is [by definition] independent [of auxiliary factors]; Such a self would have to be implicated in [both] action and non-action [which is impossible for a permanent entity]; [If it is asserted that this self is both creator and experiencer, then] cause and effect will be identical, while if it is separate from them, Then creator- and experiencer-ness will be undermined, and their connection unproven.<sup>36</sup>

#### D. A Summary of Dharmakīrti's Atheology

In short, then, Dharmakīrti argues at various places in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* that a permanent entity, whether designated as *īśvara*, *ātman*, *puruṣa*, or in some other way, cannot be regarded as (a) an epistemic authority, (b) an efficient cause, or (c) an experiencer of both bondage and liberation, for the very permanence of such an entity makes a mockery of knowledge, causation, and experience. These only are explicable if all elements of their operation are *impermanent*, and the view that all phenomena are radically *impermanent* is, of course, at the heart of Buddhist ontology, expressed in the doctrines of momentariness and no-self. Thus, for Dharmakīrti, all events, all subjects and objects, are constantly undergoing alteration: the world is thoroughly plural, such that each event is, finally, utterly *different* from each other event—although conventionally, of course, we may speak of “connections,” or “continuums,” or “relations” among those events. Authority, causation, and experience, therefore, are explained as *processes*, into which, by definition, no permanent entity could possibly enter.

#### E. The Reception of Dharmakīrti's Atheology

As indicated near the outset, Dharmakīrti's refutation of theism in the *Pramāṇavārttika* became one of the pivotal discussions of the “God” idea in the Indian intellectual tradition. If not immediately, then eventually, it prompted howls of protest from Hindu philosophers, especially Naiyāyikas such as Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Vyomaśiva, and Vācaspatimiśra, and it served as the direct or indirect basis for nearly every Buddhist attack on theism that followed it. Thus, quite apart from commentators on the *Pramāṇavārttika*, e.g., Devendrabuddhi, Prajñākaragupta, Śākyabodhi, Ravigupta, and Yamari, such influential philosophers as Śāntideva, Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Jñānaśrimitra, Ratnakīrti, and Mokṣākaragupta all were to one degree or another indebted to Dharmakīrti, though of course they included wrinkles of their own, partly in response to varying tacks taken by their opponents.<sup>37</sup> Thus, while Dharmakīrti was far from entirely original in his arguments—indebted as he was to the authors of the *nikāyas* and the likes of Vasubandhu and Bhāvaviveka—and while his successors may have extended and deepened his arguments in various



ways, he nevertheless remains *the* central atheologian in the Indian Buddhist philosophical tradition, a figure no Buddhist or Hindu—and perhaps no Christian, either—could afford to ignore.

#### IV. Dharmakīrti's *Buddhalogy*

Because it may be read as a commentary on Dignāga's claim, at the beginning of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, that the Buddha is the Authoritative One, Universally Benevolent, Teacher, Well-Gone, and Savior, the entire *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* is in a certain sense an exposition of Dharmakīrti's buddhalogy. However, as befits his generally rationalistic approach to Buddhist philosophy, Dharmakīrti is more concerned to prove that these epithets reasonably may be asserted of the Buddha than to analyze the epithets and their implications in detail. Thus, we will not find in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter any attempt at the sort of "systematic buddhalogy" contained in such Mahāyāna "doctrinal digests" as the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, or *Mahāyānasamgraha*.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the five-epithet scheme that structures the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, as well as certain remarks found elsewhere in the *Pramāṇavārttika* or its auto-commentary, do provide us with at least some sense of how Dharmakīrti conceived the Buddha and why he did so; they may, therefore, help us to determine whether his buddhalogy is consistent with, or in contradiction to, his atheology.

##### A. *The Buddha as the Authoritative One: PV II: 1-33, 282b-285a*

The claim that the Buddha is the Authoritative One (*pramāṇabhūta*) is the most important single assertion of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, whose title, after all, may be glossed as "Proof (*siddhi*) that Buddha is an Authority (*pramāṇa*)."<sup>39</sup> Within the broadly syllogistic structure of the chapter, "Buddha is the Authoritative One" becomes the logical thesis to be proved through two alternative chains of reasoning. Thus, in the "forward demonstration," he is known to be the Authoritative One because he is Universally Benevolent (an attribute to be proven in detail); benevolence requires him to seek an antidote to suffering (the realization of no-self, which is the true Teacher), and through application of that to himself to achieve his own freedom (become Well-Gone), then—because of his benevolence, and through his knowledge and skill—to spread the antidote to others, becoming thereby their Savior. And, in the reverse demonstration, he is known to be the Authoritative One because he is a Savior (teaching the salvific four noble truths, which must be proven in detail); his saviorhood assures us that he has become free himself (is Well-Gone), and that that condition must have resulted from his application of the antidote to suffering (the Teacher), the search for which, in turn, was motivated by his being Universally Benevolent.

These are all reasons purporting to prove that the Buddha truly is the Authoritative One and, as noted, they occupy much of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter. The question of in what the Buddha's authority actually consists is

treated rather more briefly, at the beginning and very end of the chapter. Thus, verses 1-33 may be regarded as an attempt to delimit the chapter's thesis, i.e., "the Buddha is the Authoritative One," by defining what authority is (verses 1-6), asserting that the Buddha fulfills the definition (verse 7), and showing generally why *īśvara* cannot be regarded as authoritative (verses 8-28), and the Buddha can (verses 29-33). We already have seen that Dharmakīrti generally defines authority as a fresh, unsublated cognition, and rejects Naiyāyika claims that *īśvara* can be an example of such authority, for his permanence precludes his cognition of impermanent entities; indeed, it precludes his being an agent of any kind. At the conclusion of his refutation of *īśvara*, then, Dharmakīrti turns to a positive example of a being who instantiates authority, the Buddha. He starts (verse 29) by quoting an unnamed opponent (probably a Mīmāṃsaka), who maintains that to be the Authoritative One requires extra-sensory perception (*paroḥśārthajñānam*), but that no such perception can be shown to exist, so no one can achieve it. In response to this skeptical stance,<sup>39</sup> he points out (verse 30) that what beings with spiritual concerns are seeking is simply a person who is sufficiently knowledgeable (*jñānavān*) that we may put his teaching into practice. We are, says Dharmakīrti (verse 31), only interested in whether such a person's teaching is practicable in light of our needs, not in whether he possesses such utterly useless knowledge as the number of insects in the world. In fact, he asserts (verse 32):

One who knows what is to be adopted and what avoided, and the  
means of doing so  
Is the authority we seek—not someone who knows everything.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, notes Dharmakīrti (verse 33), seeing far is hardly a reasonable criterion for authoritativeness, for if it were, then we should look to vultures as our guides; no, what we should seek is someone who sees the facts or principles needed (*tattvam iṣṭam*) in a given situation.

Near the very end of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter (verses 282b-285a), when he has completed his forward and reverse demonstrations that the Buddha is the Authoritative One, Dharmakīrti adds to his characterization of that epithet by noting explicitly that the Buddha taught not just by appeal to perception, but by using inferences, as well. Thus, a claim in the scriptures to the effect that "whatever comes into existence is subject to cessation" might not be framed in the form of a "syllogism" such as employed by Dignāga or Dharmakīrti, but nevertheless is analyzable in formal terms. Here, perhaps in order to justify his own heavy reliance on inference, Dharmakīrti only states clearly that the Buddha utilized inferences in his teaching; implicit in the claim, however, would seem to be the likelihood that the Buddha himself *entertained* inferences—and, because inferences are instances of conceptual construction, that the Buddha did possess a conceptual mind.<sup>41</sup>

In short, then, the Buddha's designation as the Authoritative One means that he has fresh, unsublated cognitions—both perceptual and inferential—of what is to be avoided and what adopted, most especially with regard to the attainment of spiritual freedom. Implicit, but by no means clearly stated, in this claim would seem to be the conclusion that a Buddha's cognitions—

and it is by his cognitions that he is most essentially defined—are (a) impermanent, momentary, and successive, (b) *perhaps* limited in extent, and (c) inclusive of both non-conceptual perceptions and constructed inferences. It seems, in other words, that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Dharmakīrti may *not* have regarded the Buddha as fundamentally eternal,<sup>42</sup> omniscient, or non-conceptual, but, rather, simply, as the sort of being who has veridical cognitions regarding what is to be avoided or adopted by those intent on freedom—whether this reflects Dharmakīrti’s full view or simply his *minimal* description is not, however, clear.

*B. The Buddha as Universally Benevolent: PV II: 34-131, 193-199a, 282a*

In Dharmakīrti’s “forward demonstration” that the Buddha is the Authoritative One, the fact that he is Universally Benevolent (*jagadhitaṣṭin*) serves as the chief logical reason: “[t]he proof,” he says (verse 34a) “is compassion” (*sādhanam karuṇā*). Dharmakīrti recognizes that the Buddha could not have achieved spiritual authoritativeness for suffering sentient beings without a powerful motive, and that motive must have been the desire to achieve not only his own liberation, but to affect the liberation of others, as well. However, the degree of benevolence or compassion attributed to the Buddha cannot be achieved in the scope of a single lifetime; it only, Dharmakīrti suggests (verse 34a), can arise from accustomation, or repeated practice (*abhyāsāt sā*) over the course of many lives. The existence of multiple lives, i.e., the reality of rebirth, is not, however, self-evident, so Dharmakīrti undertakes an extended discussion of the relation between mind and body (verses 34a-119), in the course of which he criticizes a number of possible materialist attempts to prove that mind is either identical to or an epiphenomenon of the body, arguing instead that mind and body are interactive processes, capable of affecting one another, but that they are substantially different enough that neither can serve as the “material cause” (*upadānahetu*) of the other; indeed, if one of the two has primacy, it is mind, not body. Thus, moments of mind must be preceded by other moments of mind, even at the beginning of life, so past lives are proven; and moments of mind will be succeeded by moments of mind *as long as craving and ignorance persist*, so future lives are proven for all but the enlightened.

Having proven to his own satisfaction (and that of generations of Buddhists) that rebirth is real, Dharmakīrti has shown that there does exist a sufficient temporal span in which compassion might be developed to an extraordinary degree. His materialist opponent replies, however (verse 120a-b), that even if multiple lives are a reality, mental qualities such as compassion only can be developed to a limited degree, just as human jumping ability, despite repeated practice, only can progress so far, and just as water, no matter how long it is boiled, never will ignite, but will, rather boil away. Dharmakīrti replies (verses 120-131) that it is only in instances where one has to “start from scratch” each time (as in the case of jumping) or the basis is unstable (as in water boiling away) that such limitations occur. Positive mental qualities such as compassion are not subject to the same limitations, for those qualities intensify incrementally over

time, without the need to “start from scratch,” in part because they have a stable basis, which is a clear, correct, concentrated awareness that, once “naturalized,” cannot be uprooted or destabilized. In short, given sufficient time and training, any being is capable of developing compassion to the  $n$ th degree, so it is reasonable to assert that the Buddha is Universally Benevolent. That universal benevolence, in turn, serves both as a motive for his spiritual quest, and, when he has attained liberation, as the basis for his teaching others the salvific truths and practices he has discovered (see, e.g., verses 282b-283a).

Throughout this whole discussion, Dharmakīrti is concerned primarily to establish the conditions for the possibility of the Buddha’s universal benevolence, namely, the independence of mind from particular bodies and the incremental development of positive mental qualities. He does not go into detail on the precise extent of the Buddha’s compassion, or the various ways in which it might be manifest. As with his account of what it means for the Buddha to be the Authoritative One, he rests content with a relatively “minimal” characterization, though it also is clear here, as it was not in his description of what it means to be the Authoritative One, that Dharmakīrti does have a very strong belief in the infinite expandability of a Buddha’s positive mental qualities, which might well include knowledge as surely as it does compassion, hence leaving the door open to an implicit admission of the Buddha’s omniscience.

Later in the chapter, during his discussion of the truth of cessation (verses 193-199a), Dharmakīrti entertains a number of possible objections to his claims about the compassion possessed by the Buddha and other liberated beings. He notes that although a liberated being has, by virtue of a realization of no-self, eliminated the cause necessitating any future rebirth, such a being need not immediately transcend the body upon attaining liberation, for he or she may remain due the force of previous karma or because of compassion. Compassion, Dharmakīrti hastens to add, presupposes the destruction of its opposite, hatred, and the cultivation of dispositions (*saṃskārāḥ*) to compassion. At base, it requires a realization of no-self, without which the destruction of desire, hatred, and other forms of self-grasping, are impossible. But, a skeptic may ask, (a) does not compassion involve *desires*, hence *passion*, on the part of the liberated Being? and (b) how can the realization of no-self lead to compassion, when the realization involves the negation of the very beings toward whom one might be compassionate? Dharmakīrti replies that (a) neither passion nor desire in the ordinary sense is possible where the root of those, self-grasping, has been destroyed, and (b) compassion can arise simply through an apprehension of a “suffering continuum” (*duḥkhasaṃtāna*), the impermanent aggregates of a being whose substantial existence is only a convention.<sup>43</sup> In some liberated beings, Dharmakīrti concludes, compassion is slight, so their maintenance of the body (once their projected physical karma has been exhausted) will be brief; in others, such as Buddhas, compassion is infinite, so no attempt will be made to leave the present body or avoid taking another.

C. *The Buddha as Teacher: PV II: 132-139a, 282a*

Given that the Buddha (or, more properly, future Buddha) was compassionate, i.e., desired to assist all beings in gaining liberation, it follows, says Dharmakīrti (verse 132), that he would have applied himself to methods for removing his own suffering, since liberation and its cause are hidden phenomena (*parokṣa*), hence difficult to explain if one has not understood and mastered them oneself. Thus (verses 133-136a), one who seeks liberation must understand the nature of suffering, its origin, and the potential for stopping that suffering through the application of appropriate countermeasures. As yet lacking direct experience, one applies reason and scripture (*yuktyāgama*), each of which is a form of inference, to these issues. One ascertains first that suffering is impermanent, in the sense that it is a momentary phenomenon. This being so, its causes must also be impermanent. What are they? And what opposes them? Following tradition, Dharmakīrti asserts (verses 135b-136a):

The cause is desire (*sneha*) effected by grasping at self and what pertains to self (*āt mātmīyagrahakṛta*),

Which is the field of formations (*saṃskāragocara*) [of further suffering]; the opposite of that, seeing no-self (*nairātmyadarśana*) is [its] destroyer.

With that understanding, Dharmakīrti notes (verses 136b-137), one develops a range of methods over a vast period of time, i.e., myriads of lives, and gains perfect clarity about the virtues and flaws (*gunadoṣāḥ*) of all entities and actions relative to suffering and liberation, thereby destroying the subtle propensities (*vāsanā*) to perpetuate the cause of suffering. This elimination even of the subtle propensities to the cause of suffering distinguishes the Great Sage (*mahāmuni*) from such practitioners as the Solitary Buddha (*pratyekabuddha*) and, presumably, the Disciple (*śrāvaka*); he also is distinguished by his willingness to exert himself for the sake of others (verse 138a).

In short, concludes Dharmakīrti (verse 138b), it is just this development of countless methods (*upāyābhyāsa*) that is the “teaching” (*śāsanam*) taught by the Buddha in his capacity as Teacher, since the methods are developed precisely for the purpose (*artha*) of their being taught; alternatively, those methods—most especially the crucial realization of no-self—are the Teacher because they are the object (*artha*) of his cognition on the path to liberation, and will be taught to others as the necessary objects of their cognition on their paths to liberation. Or, as he will put it later (verse 282a), “teaching is application to knowledge for the sake of others.” Concluding his discussion of the Buddha as Universally Benevolent and Teacher—i.e., as infinitely compassionate and experienced in countless methods—Dharmakīrti adds (verse 139a) that these two epithets are discussed first because they precede, hence are in some sense causes of, the attainment (*niṣpatti*) that one seeks, namely, one’s own enlightenment (being Well-Gone) and that of others (being Savior).

Dharmakīrti’s concept of what it means to call the Buddha “the Teacher”

appears somewhat unconventional until we understand that the countless methods that he developed over multiple lives are themselves *his* teacher, very much as we speak of “experience being the teacher,” and, when transmitted to and practiced by others, will serve in the same way as *their* teachers. Of these methods, it is quite clear that the crucial one is the single technique that can extirpate the self-grasping that is ultimate cause of suffering: realization of no-self. In an extended sense, then, our true teacher is this realization. Dharmakīrti stresses the development of this realization, and other methods, over the course of many lives because, just as *universal* compassion cannot be developed instantly, so the methods that lead one to freedom require long cultivation. Whether this means that the existence of past and future lives is a *sine qua non* for the development of liberating methods as it is for universal compassion, Dharmakīrti does not say, but it would seem from context that this probably was his view.

*D. The Buddha as Well-Gone: PV II: 139b-145a, 280b-281b*

Having demonstrated and to some degree described the causes a Buddha-to-be must perfect in order to become a Buddha, Dharmakīrti turns next to an account of the results of the perfection of those causes, the Buddha’s status as Well-Gone and Savior. He defines well-goneness (*sugatva*), the Buddha’s perfection of his own aims, simply as “abandonment of the cause [of suffering]” (*hetoḥ prahāṇam*) (verse 139b), but then (following Dignāga) goes on to specify (verses 139b-142b) that that abandonment has three characteristics. (1) It is good, or praiseworthy (*śaṣṭa*), because, founded on a view of or application to the fact of no-self, it leaves no basis for further suffering. (2) It is irreversible (*apunar āgama*), because it entails abolition of the seed of future rebirths, which is belief in self; the opposite of that, the realization of no-self, is effective, and cannot be reversed, because it is true—and truth, once firmly established, never can be supplanted by error. And, (3) it is remainderless (*aśeṣa*), because in it, due to long and thorough development of the realization of no-self, not just defilements (*kleśa*) have been extinguished, but also such subtle, lingering problems as illnesses of body, speech, or mind, or ineptitude in explaining the path.

Dharmakīrti then (verses 142b-145a) considers a possible Mīmāṃsaka objection, namely, that the speech of any person (as opposed to the testimony of the eternal Veda), will be flawed simply by virtue of his or her being a person, and that the Buddha, as person, cannot therefore be flawless. Dharmakīrti replies that, logically speaking, this is at best a doubtful assertion, for it is neither self-evident nor inductively concluded that all persons who are speakers possess flaws. To the further Mīmāṃsaka (or perhaps materialist) contention that flaws cannot be eliminated because they are either (a) permanent, (b) impermanent but indestructible by any method, or (c) destructible only by methods that remain unknown, Dharmakīrti replies that (a) their impermanence is demonstrated by their causal nature, (b) their destructibility is assured by the existence of an antidote, the realization of no-self, and (c) knowledge of that method is guaranteed by the fact that the Buddha has correctly identified the antidote: realization of no-self is true and basic, hence soteriologically effective.

Towards the end of the chapter (verses 280b-281b), Dharmakīrti returns to the Buddha's status as Well-Gone, this time focusing on its gnostic implications, a move that is justified by the fact that the past passive participle *gata* in *sugata* may mean either "gone" or "known." Mirroring his earlier discussion, he assigns the Buddha's knowledge (*jñāna*) three characteristics. (1) It is knowledge of reality, or the truth (*tattva*), specifically, the "good" or "praiseworthy" truth of the non-existence of a substantial self. This aspect of his knowledge distinguishes the Buddha from all non-Buddhists. (2) It is knowledge that is firm (*sthira*), for realization of no-self assures that one never need take rebirth again. This aspect of his knowledge distinguishes the Buddha from Buddhists who still are in training, i.e., are not yet liberated. And, (3) it is knowledge that is complete or remainderless (*aśeṣa*), for it involves knowledge of all possible methods of attaining freedom oneself or assisting others to attain it. This aspect of his knowledge distinguishes the Buddha from Buddhists who are beyond training, i.e., liberated Disciples and Solitary Buddhas, but lack a full repertoire of methods that they have practiced and might impart to others.

Thus, from Dharmakīrti's perspective, the Buddha's achievement of his own aims means fundamentally that he has stopped suffering, and need no longer be reborn, for he has realized, and developed to the *n*th degree, the truth that is essential in matters of birth, rebirth, and liberation, namely, the absence of an enduring self anywhere in the cosmos. As "abandonment," his "Well-Goneness" is good, irreversible, and remainderless, as "knowledge," it is true, firm, and, again, remainderless—all because he has seen the nature and cause of suffering, the possibility of its cessation, and the path to that cessation. This, claim, however, remains a general one. If the Buddha can be shown to have been mistaken in his analysis of suffering and its cessation, then we cannot call him Well-Gone, nor—no matter how great his compassion or experience—can we regard him as a Savior for suffering sentient beings, for he only would serve to delude them, as he has deluded himself. Thus, Dharmakīrti turns next to an extended proof of the four noble truths, whose demonstration will assure us the Buddha is rightly regarded as the Savior.

*E. The Buddha as Savior: PV II: 145b-146a, 280b-283a*

The discussion of the Buddha as Savior covers nearly half of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter. The vast majority of this discussion, however, is taken up by an extended proof of the four noble truths, whose truth is, as just noted, a *sine qua non* for the Buddha's status as Savior. Because most of this proof has little to do with the actual characteristics that the Buddha possesses by virtue of being Savior, we will pass over it summarily, focusing only on those few passages that are relevant to Dharmakīrti's view of what it means for the Buddha to act as a Savior.

The first of these occurs just before the beginning of the proof of the four noble truths (verses 145b-146a). Salvation (*tāyāḥ*), Dharmakīrti tells us, entails proclaiming to others 'the path that one has seen for oneself (*svadṛṣṭamārgoktir*). If it be argued that, despite having seen the path to liberation, the Buddha might either (a) proclaim it falsely or (b) not pro-

claim it at all, the reply is that (a) misleading others presupposes a selfish aim, which the Buddha cannot entertain, and, furthermore, (b) because of his compassion (*dayā*), the Buddha's every effort is for the sake of others. Accordingly, concludes Dharmakīrti, the Buddha is an authority, and, as rGyal tshab rje adds:

[The Buddha] is an authoritative person for those intent on freedom, because through showing the path to liberation to [them], he becomes their Savior, and he has complete ability to save [them]. If he *cannot* save them, then he does not fulfill the definition of a Savior, and if he *does* not save them, he does not accomplish what is needed by those seeking salvation. In this teacher, ability and necessity meet.<sup>44</sup>

Alternatively, Dharmakīrti notes (verse 146b), salvation means revelation of the four noble truths—whose truth, over the course of the next 137 verses, he attempts to prove. The proofs of the truths of suffering and origination involve (a) refuting claims that suffering arises causelessly, from a permanent cause, such as *īśvara*, or from physical sources, such as the humors or elements, and (b) showing that suffering does have causes, that those causes are primarily mental (especially craving and ignorance), and that its occurrence is occasional, so that it is impermanent, hence subject to elimination. The proofs of the truths of cessation and path involve (a) refuting claims that liberation is either impossible or achieved through such inappropriate means as contemplation of a permanent self, performing divinely-empowered rituals, or engaging in extreme austerities, and (b) showing that of all possible methods, the realization of no-self alone can provide a reliable basis for liberation, and that, once attained, liberation cannot be supplanted by error, nor does it require immediate transcendence of the body. There are more twists and turns in this section than possibly can be summarized. For the moment, suffice it to say that *if* Dharmakīrti succeeds in showing that (a) no-self is true, (b) self-grasping is the only plausible explanation for suffering, (c) a truth, once grasped, cannot be uprooted, then he has at least laid the foundations for showing that the Buddha is a Savior. How successful he is—or even could be—is difficult to say, for an assessment will depend not just on the coherence of Dharmakīrti's arguments, but on an analysis of the assumptions he brings to the arguments, not all of which are easily detectable.<sup>45</sup>

In any case, at the conclusion of his proof of the four noble truths (verses 280b-283a), Dharmakīrti is confident of his success. He reiterates that the Buddha is a Savior, and draws out the implications of this fact. Because he is Savior, he must possess good, firm, and complete knowledge, i.e., be Well-Gone. If he is Well-Gone, then he must have mastered the liberating teaching of no-self, hence be the Teacher. If he has mastered this thoroughly and taught it to others, he must have been motivated by immense compassion, hence be Universally Benevolent. Finally, because in him salvific knowledge, great compassion, broad experience, and pedagogical expertise all are developed to the utmost degree, the Buddha may with confidence be asserted to be authority itself (*pramāṇatā*), in other words, the Authoritative One (*pramāṇabhūta*).



### F. A Summary of Dharmakīrti's Buddhology

To summarize, Dharmakīrti's conception of the Buddha is built upon five epithets assigned him by Dignāga: the Authoritative One, Universally Benevolent, Teacher, Well-Gone, and Savior. The Authoritative One is the basic epithet—it informs us that the Buddha is the truth-teller *par excellence*, who cognizes correctly what must be done and shunned by beings in search of spiritual freedom. The fact that he is Universally Benevolent—which depends upon the reality of a multiplicity of lives in which to develop compassion and other positive mental traits to the *n*th degree—guarantees that he has a powerful motive to cultivate liberating methods and wisdom to the utmost. His status as Teacher—synonymous with the liberating methods he has mastered, and, most especially, the *sine qua non* for liberation, the wisdom realizing no-self—tells us that he is able to apply himself in the proper way so as to free both himself and others. His characterization as Well-Gone assures us that he has abandoned suffering and its causes—and knows reality—as thoroughly as possible. And, his quality of being the Savior entails that he has the knowledge, compassion, and power to assist others on the spiritual path. In short, the Buddha of Dharmakīrti is free from taints, limitlessly compassionate, and a most skillful teacher of crucial truths.

These are the positive traits of Dharmakīrti's Buddha. Just as important to note, however, are traits that the Buddha of the *Pramāṇavārttika* lacks. He quite clearly is *not* like any permanent entity (creative or not) posited in any non-Buddhist school, whether the *īśvara* of Nyāya, the *ātman* of Vedānta and Vaiśeṣika, the *puruṣa* of Sāṃkhya, or the *jīva* of the Jainas, for he is neither permanent nor a creator. He is an impermanent, embodied, speaking, thinking, feeling being, who just happens, over the course of many lifetimes of practice, to have discovered what must be done if beings are to attain liberation. He has nothing to do with the creation, maintenance, or destruction of the cosmos, which are due above all to the multiple operations of the karmic intentions and acts of countless sentient beings. Nor, on the other hand, is he much like the Buddha posited by Dharmakīrti's Mahāyāna contemporaries, for he never is said to possess three "bodies," or *kāyas*. In particular, he never is overtly assigned the qualities of the most fundamental of those bodies, the *dharmakāya*: complete omniscience, immutability, non-conceptuality, and pervasion of the entire cosmos. Indeed, if there is a previous version of the enlightened one that Dharmakīrti's Buddha most closely resembles, it may be the Buddha of the Pāli canon, who clearly is an extraordinary being, far beyond his contemporaries in knowledge, compassion, and ability, but still recognizably human, and not yet "cosmicized," or "maximally great" in the ways approached by Mahāyāna versions of the Buddha.

### G. The Reception of Dharmakīrti's Buddhology

The fact that Dharmakīrti apparently was a Mahāyānist,<sup>46</sup> yet described the Buddha in ways perhaps more appropriate to the early tradition, has raised the question of his "true" intention in expounding his buddhology in the *Pramāṇavārttika* as he did. It is, of course, possible that he described the Buddha exactly as he intended, and there matters rest. This is more or less

the interpretation of his first commentator, his disciple, Devendrabuddhi. Beginning, however, with Prajñākaragupta (eighth century?), nearly all subsequent commentators assumed that Dharmakīrti was deliberately presenting a “lowest common denominator” version of the Buddha because the *Pramāṇavārttika* was written as much for a non-Buddhist as for a Buddhist audience, and the former might be confused (or perhaps emboldened) by the presentation of exceedingly complex or controversial versions of Buddhist doctrines—including the doctrine of the Buddha. Thus, the “Hīnayānist” buddhalogy of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter veiled a Mahāyāna standpoint, which, with proper interpretive acumen, could be exposed.

To take just one example, most later commentators assume that, indications to the contrary notwithstanding, Dharmakīrti did *not* criticize the concept of the Buddha’s omniscience; quite to the contrary, he often is seen as upholding it.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the mockery of omniscience as unnecessary for those intent on freedom (verses 30-33) may be taken simply as an indication that omniscience is not an *essential* characteristic of a spiritual teacher, since all that is required for liberation is insight into the truth of no-self. Furthermore, a number of passages that do not explicitly promote the Buddha’s omniscience are interpreted as arguing for it implicitly: thus, the proof of the limitless expandability of the Buddha’s compassion (verses 120-131) may be read as an implicit demonstration that his knowledge (like any positive trait) too must be capable of infinite expansion; his knowledge of the four noble truths, i.e., what is to be avoided and what adopted by those intent on freedom (verses 146b-280a), may be taken to imply that he must know all phenomena, since all phenomena are contained in one of the four; and, finally, the designation of his knowledge as “complete,” or “remainderless” (verse 282b), may be interpreted as an assertion that there is nothing that he does not know, i.e., that he is omniscient. Indeed, ironically, most Tibetan teachers today will, when challenged to prove omniscience, refer the questioner to the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, while Mahāyāna philosophers of later generations would refer to Dharmakīrti’s general characterization of the Buddha with approval, and were quite enthusiastic about his rational arguments in support of that characterization, his discussion in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter did not become a *locus classicus* for buddhalogy in the way that it did for atheology. His complete neglect of the *trikāya* doctrine, and his minimalist description of a Buddha that—compared to dominant Mahāyāna models—was relatively human and relatively acosmic, helped to assure that, though his reputation as a logician would endure, his vision of the Buddha would either be ignored or reinterpreted—and in neither case would it set the main agenda for Mahāyāna buddhalogical discussions, which would depend almost entirely on the *trikāya* theory and be driven by the assumption that the Buddha must be maximally great.

#### V. Conclusion

The *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika* is a particularly interesting locus for examining the atheology of Indian Buddhism, because (a) it lays out anti-theistic arguments in a systematic

and detailed manner and (b) it also presents a detailed vision of the Buddhist ideal being, the Buddha. A comparison between these two aspects of the chapter reveals no real ironies or contradictions: Dharmakīrti rejects the authority, causal efficiency, and experiential capabilities, indeed, the very existence, of a variety of forms of the divine—especially *īśvara*—because of their proponents' claim that they are permanent entities. At the same time, the Buddha he envisions is a being of extraordinary wisdom, compassion, and skill, able to transcend *saṃsāra* and assist others to do the same, but he is *not* explicitly assigned most of the attributes common to Mahāyāna conceptions of the Buddha, especially the *dharmakāya*: omniscience, non-conceptuality, immutability, pervasiveness, and so forth. In that sense, much like the authors of the Pāli *nikāyas*, and perhaps unlike some Mahāyāna metaphysicians, Dharmakīrti presents a buddhalogy that is consonant, rather than in some tension, with his atheology.

Other problems, of course, remain. From the perspective of an intellectual historian, Dharmakīrti's buddhalogy—though it should not be overlooked in any survey of Indian conceptions of the Buddha—does seem somewhat anomalous in his era, and cannot be taken as representative, especially of later Indian buddhalogies, which tend toward maximization. From the perspective of an Indian theist, Dharmakīrti's refutations of theism will be seen to rest on (a) inadequate representations of theism, (b) incoherent arguments, and (c) presuppositions—e.g., about radical and universal impermanence—that are themselves as problematic as those undergirding theism. From the perspective of modern non-Indian theists such as Christians, it remains to be determined (a) whether any of the beings posited by Hindus and rejected by Dharmakīrti are similar enough to the monotheistic "God" to make arguments about them of more than academic interest, (b) if the arguments are of theological import, whether they offer challenges not already posed by Western critics of theism, and, if so, (c) whether an adequate response can or should be framed.<sup>49</sup> Finally, for the modern Buddhist, as perhaps for Dharmakīrti's contemporaries and successors, questions may remain as to whether his buddhalogy—even if it is consistent with his atheology, as well as with general conceptions of the Buddha that date to the very beginnings of the tradition—may not present the Buddhist "supreme being" as too much of a rationalist, too human, too modest in his attainments, at least when compared with the cosmic prospects and fathomless mysteries opened by *trikāya* theory in general and the conception of *dharmakāya* in particular.

Nevertheless, few Buddhists have presented as internally coherent and skillfully defended an exposition of their entire world-view, or as sharp an attack on the alternatives, as Dharmakīrti did in the *Pramāṇavārttika* in general and the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter in particular. No one, whether Indian or Westerner, who is seriously interested in the great questions of philosophy and theology can neglect what he had to say there. If he's right, after all, the Buddhist world-view has been vindicated, and our destiny is dependent on thoroughly comprehending the four noble truths, and, most especially, the fact that there is no enduring substance anywhere in the cosmos. If we com-

prehend this, we may begin to eliminate suffering; if we do not, our suffering will continue, not only in this life, but in lives to come. And, the vicissitudes of *samsāra* being as they are, we'd all best become Buddhists now, while the becoming's good.

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## NOTES

1. An oral version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Orlando in November, 1998. I would like to thank David McMahon, Purusottama Bilimoria, and Sara McClintock for their learned and thought-provoking comments on that version, and to Paul Griffiths and William Wainwright for suggestions for improving the written version.

2. The term—or its rough synonym, “atheistic”—is invoked repeatedly in both expository and apologetic literature. For an expository work centering on such a conception of Buddhism, see Helmut von Glasenapp, *Buddhism—A Non-Theistic Religion*, ed. Heinz Bechert, tr. Irmgard Schoegl (New York: G. Braziller, 1966). For an apologetic work concerned with the refutation of theism, see Gunapala Dharmasiri, *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God* (Colombo: Lake House, 1974).

3. Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) p. 235.

4. These include, in addition to those listed, Aśvaghōṣa, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Asaṅga, Bhāvaviveka, Dharmakīrti, Śāntideva, Śāntaraṅgita, Kamalaśīla, Jñānaśrīmitra, and the authors of a number of the Buddhist tantras. For an anthology of some of these sources, see Nyanaponika Thera, ed., *Buddhism and the God Idea* (The Wheel Publication, no. 47; Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981). For summaries of some of the major Buddhist arguments, see, e.g., George Chemparathy, “Two Early Buddhist Refutations of Īśvara as the Creator of the Universe” (*Wiener Zeitschrift für des Kunst Süd- und Ost-asien*, vol. 12–13, 1968–69, pp. 85–100); Roger Jackson, “Dharmakīrti’s refutation of theism” (*Philosophy East and West*, vol. 36, 1986, pp. 315–348); and Richard Hayes, “Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition” (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 16, 1988, pp. 5–28). For a tantric perspective on the issue, see Ronald M. Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka” (*The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, 1991, pp. 197–235).

5. In addition to the Nyāya (traditionally paired with Vaiśeṣika), manifestly theistic schools include later Sāṃkhya (traditionally paired with Yoga) and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. The Buddhists’ main interlocutors in theistic debate were the Naiyāyikas—for the two rose to philosophical prominence at around the same time, the early first millennium CE; Sāṃkhya’s heyday preceded this era, while Viśiṣṭādvaita arose so late that its proponents found few Buddhists available any longer to debate. At the same time, Buddhist critics of theism were reacting not just to formal philosophical arguments, but also to the popular devotional theism, whether Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva, that informed the lives of so many Hindus for so long. For a useful overview of Hindu formulations of the divine, see José Pereira, *Hindu Theology: A Reader* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976). For overviews of Nyāya, see, e.g., S. N. Dasgupta,

*A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I (reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975); Karl H. Potter, ed., *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gangeśa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). For Sāṃkhya, see Dasgupta, *op. cit.*; and Gerald Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). For Viśiṣṭādvaita, see John Carman, *The Theology of Rāmaṇuja* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). For an overview of Indian atheism, which includes references to Buddhist, Jaina, Mīmāṃsaka, and Lokāyata sources, see Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Atheism* (Calcutta: Manisha, 1969).

6. For assertions of this view, see, e.g., Kamaleshwar Bhattacharya, *L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme Ancien* (Publications de l'École Française d'Extreme-Orient, no. 90; Paris: École Française d'Extreme-Orient, 1973); and Raimundo Pannikar, *The Silence of God, the Answer of the Buddha*, tr. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

7. The most articulate recent spokesman for this position has been Paul J. Griffiths, e.g., in his *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). There, and in his seminal article, "Buddha and God: A Contrastive Study in Ideas about Maximal Greatness" (*Journal of Religion*, vol. 69, 1989, pp. 502–529), Griffiths seems to argue not only that Buddhists *did* adopt an increasingly God-like conception of Buddha, but that they *had to*, since religious theorizing about the ultimate is driven by the need to maximize that which is regarded as highest, truest, or most real. Without going into the strengths and weaknesses of this provocative idea, I would note that it is eerily reminiscent of the ontological argument for God's existence, but applied to the realm of intellectual history.

8. D. L. Snellgrove, ed. & tr., *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) vol. I, p. 77. For further perspectives on tantric "theism," see Eva K. Dargyey, "The Concept of a 'Creator God' in Tantric Buddhism" (*The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1985, pp. 31–47); and E. K. Neumaier-Dargyey, *The Sovereign All-Creating Mind, the Motherly Buddha: A Translation of the Kun byed rgyal pa'i mdo* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

9. Buddhology, by which I mean a theory about Buddha, is to be distinguished from Buddhism, which has become a common term for the academic study of Buddhism.

10. On Dignāga, see especially M. Hattori, *Dignāga, On Perception: Being the Pratyakṣapariccheda of Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya* (Harvard Oriental Series, XLVII; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); and Richard P. Hayes, *Dignāga on the Interpretation of Signs* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1988).

11. On Dharmakīrti in general, see, e.g., F. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic* (2 vols.; reprint, New York: Dover, 1962); Nagin J. Shah, *Akalaṅka's Criticism of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy* (L.D. series, no. 11; Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1967); Ernst Steinkellner, ed., *Studies in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition. Proceedings of the Second International Dharmakīrti Conference, Vienna, June 11–16, 1989* (Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, nr. 8; Wien: Akademie der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991); R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakīrti and rGyal tshab rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-Self and Liberation* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1993), pp. 109–145; and Georges Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). Much of the pioneering scholarly work on Dharmakīrti is in German, in the works of, e.g., Erich Frauwallner, Tilmann Vetter, and Ernst Steinkellner, though much of value has been published as well in English and Japanese. Besides those

already noted, scholars who have contributed significantly to Dharmakīrti studies include Tom J. F. Tillemans, Christian Lindtner, Ēli Franco, Claus Oetke, Brendan Gillon, Richard P. Hayes, Takashi Iwata, Shōryū Katsura, Katsumi Mimaki, Mangala Chinchore, David P. Jackson, and Leonard van der Kuijp. Their works are too numerous to list here; the most thorough recent bibliographies of works by and about Dharmakīrti are found in Ernst Steinkellner and M. T. Much, *Texte der erkenntnistheoretischen Schule des Buddhismus* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995), pp. 23–44; Dreyfus, pp. 581–597; and Eli Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth* (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, heft 38; Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1997), pp. 342–360. For an approach to understanding Indian Buddhist philosophy through the complementary lenses of Dharmakīrti and Nāgārjuna, see R. Jackson, “Matching Concepts: Deconstructive and Foundationalist Tendencies in Buddhist Thought” (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. LVII, 1989, pp. 561–589).

12. These are generally counted as seven. Three of the texts deal with a full range of issues in logic and epistemology: the *Pramāṇavārttika* (“Commentary on Authority”), *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (“Ascertainment of Authority”), and *Nyāyabindu* (“Drop of Reasoning”). The other four deal with more particular matters: the *Hetubindu* (“Drop of Logical Reason”) analyzes the nature of syllogisms, the *Vādanyāya* (“Science of Debate”) deals with methods of disputation, the *Sambandhaparīkṣā* (“Examination of Relations”) scrutinizes relationality, and the *Santānāntarasiddhi* (“Proof of Other Continua”) is a refutation of solipsism. Of these seven, only the *Pramāṇavārttika*, *Nyāyabindu*, and *Vādanyāya* have been preserved *in toto* in Sanskrit. For the others, Tibetan translations and Sanskrit fragments are available. See Ernst Steinkellner, *Verse-Index of Dharmakīrti’s Works* (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, heft 1; Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1977).

13. The most widely utilized modern edition of the *Pramāṇavārttika* is that of Y. Miyasaka: *Pramāṇavārttika-Kārikā* (*Sanskrit and Tibetan*) (*Acta Indologica*, 2, 1971-72), which is taken by most scholars to supersede the earlier editions, either partial or complete, prepared by Rahul Sāṅkrtyāyana (1938), Raniero Gnoli (1960), and Dwarikadas Shastri (1968). No complete translation into a Western language has yet been published. The *Svārthānumāna* chapter has been partially translated in Satkari Mookerjee and Hojun Nagasaki, tr., *The Pramāṇavārttikam of Dharmakīrti [Svārthānumāna Chapter, verses 1-51]* (Patna: Nava Nālandā Mahāvihāra, 1968), and Leonard Zwilling, *Dharmakīrti on Apoha: The Ontology, Epistemology and Semantics of Negation in the Svārthānumānapariccheda of the Pramāṇavārttika* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976). On the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, which probably has received the most sustained attention, see below, note 15. No translations of major portions of the *Pratyakṣa* or *Parārthānumāna* chapters have so far been published, though they have been mined by a number of scholars, including many of those listed above in note 11.

14. On differences between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, see, recently, Hayes, *Dignāga on the Interpretation of Signs*; Tom J. F. Tillemans, “Dharmakīrti on *prasiḍḍha* and *yogyatā*” (*Studia Indologiczne* [Warsaw], 4, 1997, pp. 177–194; and Sh. Katsura, “Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on *apoha*” (in Steinkellner, *Studies*, pp. 129–146).

15. There has been disagreement among modern scholars (and, to a lesser degree, ancient Indian commentators) about the proper ordering of the chapters of the *Pramāṇavārttika*; here, I have followed the convention favored by

Dharmakīrti's earliest Indian commentators, as well as by all of Tibetan tradition. The alternative ordering, suggested by the later Indian commentator Manorathānandin, and followed by most modern editors of the Sanskrit text of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, is: (1) *Pramāṇasiddhi*, (2) *Pratyakṣa*, (3) *Svārthānumāna*, and (4) *Parārthānumāna*. For a discussion, see, e.g., R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, p. 167, n. 1.

16. No complete Western-language translation of the Sanskrit *śloka*s of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter has yet been published. Masatoshi Nagatomi translated the entire text as his Ph.D. dissertation for Harvard University (1957: *A Study of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika: An English Translation and Annotation of the Pramāṇavārttika, Book I*), but, regrettably, never has revised it for publication. R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, includes a complete translation of the Tibetan translation, as seen through the commentary of the fifteenth century scholar, rGyal tshab rje—but in most cases, the translations are at a considerable remove from a straightforward reading of the original Sanskrit. Partial translations directly from the Sanskrit include those found in T. Vetter, *Der Buddha und Seine Lehre in Dharmakīrtis Pramāṇavārttika* (verses 146c-187; Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, heft 12; Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1984); Vittorio van Bijlert, *Epistemology and Spiritual Authority* (verses 1-7; Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, heft 20; Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1989); and Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth* (verses 34-72). Articles on the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter are too numerous to list; for fairly complete references, see the bibliographies in R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*; and Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*.

17. Daniel Arnold, "Can Hartshorne Escape Dharmakīrti? Some Reflections with Implications for the Comparative Philosophy of Religion" (*American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1998, p. 31, (Emphasis in the original.)

18. The exact meaning of *pramāṇabhūta* has been much debated. It may mean "one who is authority" or "one who has become authority." I opt for the adjectival form "authoritative one," though I recognize that *pramāṇa* is, technically, a noun. For a good discussion of the issue, see Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*, pp. 16-17, note 3.

19. On this verse, and its influence on the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, see, e.g., the seminal articles by Masatoshi Nagatomi ("The Framework of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, Book I," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 79, 1959, pp. 253-256); and Ernst Steinkellner ("The Spiritual Place of the Epistemological Tradition in Buddhism," *Nanto Bukkyo*, vol. 49, 1982, pp. 1-18). See also R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, p. 127, note 4; 169, note 8; and "The Buddha as *Pramāṇabhūta*: Epithets and Arguments in the Buddhist 'Logical' Tradition" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 16, 1988, pp. 335-365). The most complete discussion of the topic is found in Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*, pp. 15-43; see also his list of articles on the topic, *op. cit.*, p. 15, note 2.

20. Though many Indian and virtually all Tibetan and modern scholars take these verses as providing a seminal Buddhist definition of *pramāṇa*, Eli Franco argues (*Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth*, pp. 45-66) that Dharmakīrti was *not* concerned primarily to give a precise definition of the term (indeed, few Indian philosophers of his time did so), but to provide a sort of working definition that would be acceptable to all possible opponents. Given that in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter Dharmakīrti does seem at pains to present many terms and problems in their "lowest common denominator"

form, there is a certain logic to Franco's argument; at the same time, it is not hard to see how later Buddhist writers found the seeds of a specifically Buddhist definition in Dharmakīrti's verses.

21. There has been considerable disagreement among commentators and scholars over which verses are covered by which demonstration; for a discussion, see R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, p. 128, note 2.

22. On these arguments, see especially R. Jackson, "Dharmakīrti's refutation of theism," pp. 323–335; *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, pp. 193–214. My translations in both the article and the book are rooted in the Tibetan version of Dharmakīrti's text, and are only generally reliable as a guide to the Sanskrit original, for which see Nagatomi, *A Study*, pp. 17–38.

23. Nagatomi (*A Study*, p. 16) calls this reading "fanciful." It is, however, the interpretation followed by numerous Tibetan commentators (e.g., rGyal tshab rje; see R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, pp. 193–194), who, like Manorathānandin, undoubtedly chose their interpretation on the basis of the verse's focus on the term *bhūta*, and their own tendency to associate the term *bhūta* with a process of becoming or change. On the other hand, it may simply be that Dharmakīrti intended the assertion of *bhūta* to mean that the Buddha is authoritative, rather than not.

24. Dharmakīrti does not specify until the very end of this section that the entity under discussion is the creator-God of the Naiyāyikas, i.e., *īśvara*, but the coherence of the argument, the unmistakable identity of the syllogism to be refuted in the following verses, and the glosses of commentators, all add up to a persuasive argument that *īśvara* is intended throughout.

25. Note the importation here of two fundamental axioms, i.e., the impermanence of all entities and the necessary ontological conformity between subject and object. Each of these might be subject to critique by a theist, though Dharmakīrti is not without resources in defending these axioms, which are demonstrated elsewhere in his writings and in the writings of other Buddhist philosophers, e.g. Vasubandhu before him and śāntarakṣita after him.

26. For a rather technical, but interesting, discussion of the possible sources for the syllogism Dharmakīrti seeks to refute, see Kyō Kanō, "On the Background of PV II 12ab — The Origin of Dharmakīrti's Idea of *Arthakriyā*" (in Steinkellner, *Studies*, pp. 121–128).

27. *pravṛttisaṃsthānaviśeṣārthakriyādiṣu*.

28. *'jig rten gyi gnas lus long spyod rnam chos can / byed pa po'i blo sngon du song ste / sdod cing sdod cing las la 'jug pa'i phyir / ste'u bzhin dbyibs kyi khyad par dang ldan pa'i phyir / bun songs bzhin /don byed nus pa'i phyir / dgra sta bzhin / zhes*. See rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen, *rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed: Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa'i rnam bshad phyin ci ma log par gsal bar byed pa* (2 vols.; Samath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings [Tibetan Monastery], 1974), vol. I, p. 241; trans. R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, p. 199. The bracketed explanations are my own interpolation. The argument appears to contain elements of at least two types of argument for God's existence familiar in the West: design arguments (especially in reason b) and teleological arguments (especially in reason c and, to a lesser extent, a).

29. Verse 20b is found only in the Tibetan translation, and not in any known edition of the Sanskrit original.

30. The only argument that Dharmakīrti confronts explicitly is the argument from design (verses 11–20, especially 11–13). I have chosen here to view verses 21 and 22–28 as rejecting, respectively, the arguments from intermittence and effectuality, because I think that they are addressed there at least implicitly; commentarial tradition, on the other hand, tends to regard verses 21–28 as



concerned primarily with demonstrating, from a variety of angles, that a permanent entity cannot be shown to be causally efficacious.

31. *yathā tat karaṇaṃ vastu tathaiva tadakaraṇaṃ / yadā tat karaṇaṃ kena mataṃ neṣṭamakaraṇaṃ.*

32. It is probably fair to point out that the Buddhist notion of karma, which Dharmakīrti asserts to be the multiple, conscious “creator” behind worldly abodes, bodies, and enjoyments, is itself (a) difficult to prove and (b) virtually ubiquitous, and so not entirely immune to the difficulties posed by the concept of *īśvara*.

33. The Nyāya view—at least as interpreted by Dharmakīrti—was that neither sense-faculty nor object alters from the moment when they do not cause cognition to the moment when they do; otherwise, it could not reasonably be asserted that those particular faculties perceived those particular objects. This is a consequence that the Buddhist, committed to a view of radical momentariness, is willing to accept, though explaining causality in light of such a view is nearly as difficult as (some would say more difficult than) accounting for it theistically.

34. *nityānāṃ pratiṣedhena neśvarādeś ca sambhavaḥ / asāmarthyād . . . //*

35. *duḥkhotpādasya hetutvaṃ bandho nityasya tat kutaḥ / aduḥkhotpādahetutvaṃ mokṣo nityasya tat kutaḥ //.*

36. *nityasya nirapekṣatvāt kramotpattir virudhyate // kriyāyām akriyāyāñ ca kriyā ca sadṛśātmanaḥ / aikyañ ca hetuphalayo vyatireke tatas tayoḥ // kartṛbhoktrtvahāñiḥ syāt sāmartyaṃ ca na sidhyati //.*

37. For a brief discussion of post-Dharmakīrti developments in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, see R. Jackson, “Dharmakīrti’s refutation of theism,” pp. 335–338. The most extensive anti-theist argument available in English translation is found in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita, and the *pañjikā* (commentary) upon it of Kamalaśīla: see Ganganatha Jha, tr., *The Tattvasaṃgraha of Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalaśīla* (2 vols.; Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1937-1939). Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla not only reiterate and extend Dharmakīrti’s arguments against *īśvara*, but go into considerably greater detail than he does in attacking such concepts as *puruṣa* and *ātman*, too.

38. On the buddhology of these and other Mahāyāna digests, see, most notably, Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Buddhist Philosopher’s Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), and John J. Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

39. Though it should be noted that Mīmāṃsakas reject such attainments as extra-sensory perception and omniscience in part to clear the way for the assertion that the Veda alone is an ultimate source of authority, a view that Dharmakīrti rejects at numerous places in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, most commonly on the grounds that scriptures—like words—never can be independent authorities, but, rather, derive such authority as they have from the reliability of those who composed them (and all scriptures, contrary to Mīmāṃsaka claims about the Veda, must have authors).

40. *heyopādeyatattvasya hānyupāyasya vedakaḥ / yaḥ pramāṇam asāv iṣṭo na tu sarvasya vedakaḥ //.*

41. For an astute analysis of Dharmakīrti’s (and Candrakīrti’s) stance on the nature of the Buddha’s cognitions, see John D. Dunne, “Thoughtless Buddha, Passionate Buddha” (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. LXIV, 1996, pp. 525–556). Working primarily from Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārt-*

*tikasvopañjavṛtti*, the author's own commentary to the *Svāsthānumāṇa* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* (and working secondarily from the *Santānāntarasiddhi*), Dunne notes that, despite the philosopher's "rather dim view of conceptuality" as involving us intrinsically in cognitive error, because it gives us generic images (or representations) rather than unique particulars (p. 531), he nowhere denies that the Buddha possesses concepts, remaining, it seems, non-committal on the topic (p. 533). Certainly, a *pramāṇabhūta* cannot be implicated in error, or he would cease to be reliable, yet concepts have an instrumental value, and the Buddha obviously taught by means of them. Perhaps, suggests Dunne (p. 534), the Buddha remains authoritative despite using concepts because concepts may be apprehended as momentary mental events, which are therefore particulars, hence in some sense "real."

I would offer an alternative suggestion, namely, that the "error" involved in conceptuality must be seen only in relation to direct perception. We must recall that, for Dharmakīrti, there are two sources of authority, perception and inference. The latter is "conceptual," hence relatively misleading in comparison with the "bedrock" of epistemology, direct perception, but it still is veridical—as long as it is objectively impelled (*vastubalapravṛtta*), i.e., traceable to an authoritative perception, whether sensory or mental. Thus, the Buddha may entertain (and promulgate) inferences without truly being involved in error (see, e.g. PV II: 283b-285a)—though the exact nature of his cognition in the course of inferences still would have to be determined. Here, Dunne's suggestion—that the Buddha would through mental perception cognize concepts merely as particular mental events, without confusing them with the unique particulars apprehended by sense perception—seems quite promising, though it would be more persuasive if backed by a more thorough textual analysis than he has provided in the article.

42. Though Dharmakīrti's Buddha may not be eternal in the sense of being utterly atemporal, he is "everlasting," in that Buddha-cognition will generate Buddha-cognition *ad infinitum*.

43. On this issue, see also Dunne, *op. cit.*, pp. 535–540. Dunne draws attention to a fascinating passage in the *Pramāṇavārttikasvopañjavṛtti*, where Dharmakīrti engages an opponent in debate on the question whether a Buddha's status as a speaker entails desire (*rāga*) on his part. He insists that speech does not in itself presuppose desire, but when the opponent presses him and demands to know whether the compassion out of which a Buddha might speak is conceivable without desire, Dharmakīrti agrees that, in some sense, "compassion is desire." This is, as Dunne notes (p. 538) "a stunning conclusion"—but he is careful to note that Dharmakīrti does not concede that the Buddha has desire in the ordinary, deluded sense, only that he is a being who is characterized by perceptions, motives, and affect, that he is, as Dunne puts it (p. 540), a "somewhat human" Buddha.

44. *de chos can / grol ba don gnyer la bltos na tshad ma'i skyes bu yin te / grol ba don gnyer la thar lam bstan pa'i sgo nas de'i skyabs mdzad cing de skyob pa'i nus pa mthar phyin pa yin pa'i phyir / skyob mi nus na skyabs kyi mtshan nyid ma tshang la / skyabs mi byed na skyabs bcol ba'i dgos pa mi 'grub pas ston pa de la dgos nus gnyis ka nges par tshogs pa yin no /*. In rGyal tshab rje, rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed, p. 302; tr. R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, p. 338.

45. For further discussion of this point, see R. Jackson, "The Buddha as *Pramāṇabhūta*," pp. 357–359; *Is Enlightenment Possible?* pp. 137–145, and annotations to the translation of the proof of the four noble truths (pp. 339–476).

46. At the very least, we may be certain that (a) Dharmakīrti included in his ontology "idealist" views that are most closely associated with a Mahāyāna

philosophical school, the Yogācāra or Cittamātra, (b) indicated in a number of places that the Buddha was superior to Disciples and Solitary Buddhas, and (c) has been commented upon exclusively by Mahāyānists. None of these guarantees that he was a Mahāyānist, for (a) the assignment of “idealist” views only to Mahāyāna schools is a late scholastic development, which may conceal a multitude of uncertainties, (b) references to the Buddha’s superiority to Disciples and Solitary Buddhas are common in Hīnayāna literature, too, and (c) the allegiances of an author’s commentators do *not* necessarily reveal his own allegiances.

47. For further discussion of this issue, see R. Jackson, “Dharmakīrti’s Attitude Toward Omniscience,” in M. A. Dhaky and Sagarmal Jain, eds., *Pt. Dalsukh Bhai Malvaniya Felicitation Volume* (Varanasi: P. V. Research Institute, 1991), vol. I, pp. 230–246.

48. In fairness to Dharmakīrti’s commentators, his later works do reflect a marginally more explicit affirmation of the Buddha’s omniscience. Thus, near the end of the *Santānāntarasiddhi*, he remarks that the Blessed One’s omniscience is inconceivable and inexpressible—but presumably not impossible (bsTan ‘gyur, *che*, 359a, in A. W. Barber, ed., *The Tibetan Triptaka, Taipei Edition* [Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1991], vol. 46, p. 589, fol. 717; see also Dunne, “Passionate Buddha, Thoughtless Buddha,” pp. 533–534). And, in his exposition of verse 55 of the *Pramānaviniścaya*, he implies that the destructibility and causal efficiency of entities such as the final mental moment of an *arhat* are vouchsafed by the Buddha’s cognition of them, which may be an indication of his omniscience (see E. Steinkellner, *Dharmakīrti’s Pramānaviniścayaḥ, Zweites Kapitel: Svārthānumānam*, Teil I: Tibetischer Text und Sanskrittexte [Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasiens, Heft 12; Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1973], pp. 76, 78; translated at E. Steinkellner, *Dharmakīrti’s Pramānaviniścayaḥ, Zweites Kapitel: Svārthānumānam*, Teil II: Übersetzung und Anmerkungen [Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasiens, Heft 15; Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979], pp. 88–93). Neither of these passages strikes me as a completely unambiguous assertion of the Buddha’s omniscience, but, as on several occasions in the *Pramānavārttika*, they may be taken as implying it. I would like to thank Sara McClintock for drawing my attention to these two passages.

49. For a most interesting discussion of this problem, keyed not to classical Christian conceptions of God, but rather to process theology, see Arnold, “Can Hartshorne Escape Dharmakīrti?” Arnold argues that cross-cultural theological certainty is neither desirable nor possible, since theology cannot, in the end, be reduced to propositions; rather, it is a high-order expression of a complex intellectual and affective process that is inevitably as “rife with tensions” as life itself (p. 32). This view is an understandable one, given (a) many philosophers’ doubts, at the turn of the millennium, that certainty is possible or rationality unlimited and (b) Arnold’s particular grounding in process metaphysics—yet it is a view with which I believe Dharmakīrti would disagree, for his philosophy as a whole, and certainly the *Pramānasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramānavārttika*, is predicated on a profound confidence that the world *is* in a certain way, and can rationally be proven to be so. For further reflections on Dharmakīrti’s philosophical stance, see R. Jackson, “Matching Concepts”; John Powers, “Empiricism and Pragmatism in the Thought of Dharmakīrti and William James” (*American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1994, pp. 59–85); and G. Dreyfus, “Is Dharmakīrti a Pragmatist?” (*Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1995, pp. 671–691).