



Research

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Dharmakīrti and the Madhyamaka: Perspectives from a Tantric Author (Or: Of Missing Links in the History of Buddhist Thought)

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Abstract: As is well known, Steinkellner (Steinkellner, Ernst. 1990. “Is Dharmakīrti a Mādhyamika?” In: David Seyfort Ruegg and Lambert Schmithausen (eds.), *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*. Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference. Leiden: Brill, 72–90) addresses the topic of a Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti in critical engagement with Shirasaki (Shirasaki, Kenjō [白崎顕成]. 1986. “Dharmakīrti wa chiiganronsha de aru” [Dharmakīrti is a Mādhyamika], *Bukkyō Ronsō* 30: 110–114). In fact, in an earlier paper (1978), the Japanese scholar argues that Jitāri (ca. 10th cent.) presents Dharmakīrti as being ultimately a Mādhyamika. Shirasaki maintains that Jitāri does so in the **Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*, specifically based on references to some *kārikās* from Dharmakīrti’s major work, the *Pramāṇavārttika*. Indeed, in that work, Jitāri copies *verbatim* very long portions from the *Sāramañjarī* by Samantabhadra (mid-9th cent.), a tantric work that serves as a commentary on the *Samantabhadrasādhana* by Jñānapāda (8th–9th cent.), a manual for meditation within the Guhyasamāja system. In this article, I shall provide some glimpses on the evolution of the theme of a Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti from the 8th to the 10th centuries based on the analysis of

In this article, I use the term “Mādhyamika” as it is explicitly applied to Dharmakīrti by some of the authors discussed here, without drawing specific doctrinal distinctions. As will become evident, references to Nāgārjuna’s doctrines are also involved in some cases.

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some works by Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Jñānapāda and Samantabhadra. These authors belong to different traditions; however, there is a “red thread,” a legacy, that they all share in viewing Dharmakīrti’s argumentations as a useful tool for the logical justification of Buddhist doctrines. I shall also show a missing link in the history of the concept of a “Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti”, namely, a tantric author that elaborates on the materials of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, and is subsequently copied by Jitāri. In this regard, I shall present materials that are being edited and translated here for the first time.

Keywords: Dharmakīrti; Madhyamaka; Buddhist philosophy; History of Buddhist ideas; Jitāri; Samantabhadra

1 Introduction

As is well known, Steinkellner (1990) addresses the topic of a Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti in critical engagement with Shirasaki (1986). In an earlier paper, the Japanese scholar (1978: 494) argues that Jitāri (ca. 10th cent.) – who follows the tradition of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla insofar as he “too takes this Yogācāra-Mādhyamika (*sic*) position” – presents Dharmakīrti as being ultimately a Mādhyamika.¹ Shirasaki maintains that Jitāri does so in the **Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*, specifically based on references to some *kārikās* from Dharmakīrti’s major work, the *Pramāṇavārttika*. He further suggests that, in that same work, Jitāri draws upon the works of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in relation to logico-epistemological argumentations and doctrines.

In fact, Jitāri copies *verbatim* very long portions² from Samantabhadra’s (mid-9th cent.) *Sāramañjarī*,³ a Tantric work that serves as a commentary on the *Samantabhadrasādhana* by Jñānapāda (8th–9th cent.), a manual for meditation within the Guhyasamāja system, a well-established Buddhist Tantric tradition.

1 Shirasaki (1978: 493) states: “At the end of the fourth chapter of the *Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*, Jitāri enumerates five Mādhyamika oriented *kārikās* of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. There he considers Dharmakīrti to be a Mādhyamika master and even says that the Mādhyamika doctrine was established by Dharmakīrti.” In fact, Jitāri presents the Madhyamaka as being clarified by Nāgārjuna and accepted by Dharmakīrti: *’phags pa klu sgrub kyī zhal snga nas gsal bar mādzaḍ pa / slob dpon chos kyī grags pa’i zhal snga nas bzhed pa’i dbu ma de kho na ’di blo dang ldan pa rnam kyis khas blang ba dang goms par bya bar ’os pa yin te* | (**Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*, ed. pp. 137, 22–138, 1).

2 For a list of these portions from a specific part of the *Sāramañjarī*, see Saccone & Szántó 2023: appendix B.

3 As a matter of fact, Jitāri’s words are subsequently copied by Mokṣākaragupta (see Saccone & Szántó 2023: appendix B). This is noteworthy, as he too is presented by Shirasaki as upholding that Dharmakīrti is ultimately a Mādhyamika. However, this topic lies beyond the scope of the present article.

This text remained largely unknown to scholars until recently, when a substantial part of it was edited, translated, and studied.⁴ Analysis of the *Sāramañjarī* reveals that Samantabhadra can be viewed as an heir to Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's doctrinal legacy, particularly regarding their so-called Yogācāra-Madhyamaka systematization. Samantabhadra also reuses many of the arguments employed by these two authors in their works, especially the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*.

Jitāri cites a number of verses from Dharmakīrti in order to support his claim that the philosopher accepted a Madhyamaka ultimate standpoint. This paper, however, will limit itself to investigating a few *kārikās* that are also found in Śāntarakṣita's **Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* (and Kamalaśīla's **Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*) as well as the *Sāramañjarī* and relate to the Madhyamaka tradition.

In this article, I shall show the following:

1. A missing link in the history of the concept of a “Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti”, namely, a Tantric author (i.e., Samantabhadra) who elaborates on the materials of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, and whose work is subsequently copied by Jitāri. In this context, I shall also present materials that are here edited⁵ and translated for the first time.
2. How the development of pramāṇic/logico-epistemological materials in later literature becomes part of a distinctive doctrinal agenda *in and through* (also) Tantric works. This is particularly true in the present case, where Dharmakīrtian logic and doctrines are presented as aligning with a Madhyamaka ultimate standpoint.
3. The central role of employing *independent* Dharmakīrtian arguments and doctrines (with their 8th-century systematization by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) in order to justify, at the end of a gradual process, the Madhyamaka from an absolute point of view. This process becomes a key component of doctrinal systems and soteriology for subsequent Buddhist thinkers, also within Tantric works.

2 Jitāri on Dharmakīrti and the Madhyamaka

In the chapter on the Madhyamaka in the **Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*, a doxographical work on Buddhist traditions, Jitāri presents Dharmakīrti as upholding

⁴ See Saccone & Szántó 2023.

⁵ My edition is based on, and owes much to, Péter-Dániel Szántó's unpublished work on the *Sāramañjarī*. However, I have provided my own text and have made different emendations where necessary. My work relies on the photographs of the Pāla manuscript (for reference, see Saccone & Szántó 2023: 19–22) and on the Tibetan translation (P 2732 and D 1869), when available. The manuscript and the Tibetan translation reflect two different recensions of the text. The passages discussed here appear in both recensions. With regard to the Tibetan translation, see Saccone & Szántó 2023: 18n16.

Madhyamaka views. He supports this by quoting a few *kārikās* from the *Pramāṇavārttika*,⁶ including *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 359/360.⁷

Before citing this verse, he argues that it concerns consciousness (**viñāna*). This same verse is also quoted by Mokṣākaragupta when discussing the Madhyamaka view of the unreality of cognitions.⁸ After quoting it, Jitāri states:

*phyi rol dang nang thun mong du sun 'byin pa yin no // dbu ma pa'i lugs kyi bdud rtsi la dgyes pa mi mnga' na ni / de skad du gsungs pa rigs par ma mthong go // (*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya, ed. p. 137, 7–8)*

[This] is a refutation of internal and external entities jointly. What is previously stated like this [in the verse by Dharmakīrti] cannot be comprehended logically/as being logical, unless one delights in the ambrosia that is the Madhyamaka tradition.

The verse in the Pratyakṣa chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* appears in a discussion on the absence of the characteristics of apprehended, apprehender, and apprehension in cognitions.⁹ In this verse, Dharmakīrti clearly states:¹⁰

*bhāvā yena nirūpyante tadrūpaṃ nāsti tattvataḥ |
yasmād ekam anekaṃ vā rūpaṃ teṣāṃ na vidyate || (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 359/360)*

That nature through which entities are ascertained/defined does not exist ultimately, since they do not possess a nature that is either one or many.

The nature he is referring to is that of things appearing as objects or subjects of cognition. The intent is to prove that cognitions are devoid of both apprehended and apprehender – though not of intrinsic nature *per se*.

Jitāri also cites a few other *kārikās* from the same chapter that he associates with a Madhyamaka standpoint: *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 4, 208–210.

⁶ The verses quoted in this paragraph are also translated by Steinkellner (1990: 75, 76, 78). However, I have provided my own English translation.

⁷ This verse is counted as 359 or 360, according to the editions.

⁸ See *Tarkabhāṣā*, ed. p. 70, 6–9. The verse is introduced by the words: *kīrtipādair apy uktam |*

⁹ The verse that introduces the overall topic of this section reads: *avibhāgo 'pi buddhyātmā viparyāsītadarśanaiḥ | grāhyagrāhakaśaṃvittibhedavān iva lakṣyate || (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 353)* “Even though undivided, the nature of cognition is characterized as if it were endowed with [three parts, namely,] apprehended, apprehender, and apprehension, by those [whose minds] have misconceptions (*viparyāsītadarśana*).” This verse is also quoted in the *Sāramāñjarī*, see §7.

¹⁰ Although the verses in the **Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya* are extant only in the Tibetan translation, I will mention them in their original Sanskrit since there are seemingly no relevant differences.

*aśaktaṃ sarvaṃ iti ced bhīḍer ankurādiṣu |
 dṛṣṭā śaktir matā sā cet saṃvṛtyāstu yathā tathā ||
 (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 4)¹¹*

If [an opponent argues:] Everything is devoid of capacity, [we reply:] The capacity of a seed, etc., toward [producing] a sprout, etc., is commonly observed. If [the opponent argues:] That is [only] conceptually construed from a conventional point of view, [it will be answered:] Be it as it may.¹²

*citrābhāṣeṣv artheṣu yady ekatvaṃ na yujyate |
 saiva tāvat kathaṃ buddhir ekā citrābhāṣinī ||
 (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 208)¹³*

If unity is not tenable in objects that appear with varied images, how can precisely that cognition itself that is unitary be [tenable as] possessing varied images?

*idaṃ vastubalāyātaṃ yad vadanti vipāścitaḥ |
 yathā yathārthāś cintyante viśīryante tathā tathā ||
 (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 209)¹⁴*

This is derived from the force of facts, as wise people say: In whatever way things are investigated, they disappear accordingly.¹⁵

*kiṃ syāt sā citrataikasyāṃ na syāt tasyāṃ matāv api |
 yadīdaṃ svayam arthānāṃ rocate tatra ke vāyam ||
 (Pramāṇavārttika Pratyakṣa° 210)¹⁶*

Could this manifoldness be in one [cognition]? It could not even be in this cognition. If this is agreeable to [the reality of] things for oneself, then who are we [to counter] this?

11 Cf. *gal te thams cad nus med na || sa bon sogs ni myug sogs la || nus mthong gal te de kun rdzob || 'dod na ji lta de lta yin ||* (*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya, ed. p. 135, 33–136, 2)

12 Steinkellner (1990: 75), drawing on Tosaki (1979: 61ff) and Zwilling (1981: 308), states that the opponents in the verse are Mādhyamikas. According to him, Ravigupta is the only commentator who clearly interprets the final answer as an assent to Madhyamaka.

13 Cf. *sna tshogs snang can don rnams la || gal te gcig nyid mi rigs na || re zhig gcig pu'i blo de nyid || sna tshogs su ni ji ltar snang ||* (*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya, ed. p. 136, 4–7).

14 Cf. *ji lta ji ltar don bsams la || de lta de ltar rnam dben zhes || mkhas pa rnams ni gang gsung ba || de ni dngos stobs 'ongs pa yin ||* (*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya, ed. p. 136, 9–12)

15 Steinkellner (1990: 77) argues that Prajñākaragupta interprets this half verse as expressing a Madhyamaka point of view. See: *tasmād yathā yathā vastu cintyate tathā tathā viśīryata eveti kim atra kurmaḥ | tasmād āha: vijñānaṃ vijñānarūpataya śūnyam iti sakaladharmasūnyataiva nyāyā ||* (Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra, ed. p. 286, 25–26).

16 Cf. *sna tshogs gcig na ci zhig 'gyur || blo de la ni mi 'gyur ro || gal te don dag 'di 'dod na || de la kho bo ci zhig yin ||* (*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya, ed. p. 136, 13–137, 1).

These verses, in their original context, serve to refute the independent reality of objects that appear in cognition. However, Jitāri chooses to present them as refuting the very reality of cognitions themselves. In that chapter, he does not refer to Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.

3 Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 359/360 in Śāntarakṣita's **Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* and Kamalaśīla's **Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*

Some of the same verses, though in a different order, are quoted by Śāntarakṣita in the **Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*: *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 359/360, 208, 209cd, 215cd, 209ab. Jitāri does not quote 215. The *vṛtti* corresponds to **Madhyamakālaṃkārikā* 61, which introduces the idea that things, when investigated, are not found to have a unitary nature and, accordingly, do not possess a manifold nature either.

Whichever thing that is investigated does not possess a unitary [nature]. What does not exist as unitary does not have a manifold [nature] either.¹⁷

Unlike Jitāri, who perhaps intentionally omits it, Śāntarakṣita also cites *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 215cd:

ato lakṣaṇasūnyatvān niḥsvabhāvāḥ prakāśitāḥ || 215cd ||¹⁸

Therefore, due to emptiness of intrinsic characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*), [entities] are explained as being devoid of intrinsic nature.

Śāntarakṣita presents this verse in connection with the demonstration that everything lacks intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), whether one or many. Just prior to Dharmakīrti's *kārikās*, he also quotes a few verses from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, which are presented as scriptural source for establishing that all things – including cognitions – do not possess *svabhāva*. These verses, in fact, critique the Yogācāra tradition:

¹⁷ *dn̄gos po gang gang rnam dpyad pa // de dang de la gcid nyid med // gang la gcid nyid yod min pa // de la du ma nyid kyang med // (*Madhyamakālaṃkārikā 61). Cf. tasya tasyaikatā nāsti yo yo bhāvaḥ pariṣyate | na santi tenāneke 'pi yenaiko 'pi na vidyate || (Catuḥśataka, 14.19), which is quoted in Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti (ed. p. 174, 2–5). For this quotation, see also Vādanyāyatikā, ed. p. 87, 15–16.*
¹⁸ *Cf. de bas mtshan nyid stong pa'i phyir // rang bzhin med par rab bshad ces // (*Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti, ed. p. 178, 12–13)*

The intrinsic nature of things that are investigated through cognition is not determined. Therefore, they are inexpressible and are taught as being devoid of intrinsic nature. (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 2.175)¹⁹

However, what is investigated through cognition is not dependent, nor conceptually constructed. And there is no perfected nature [for that]. How can it be conceived of through cognition? (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 2.198)²⁰

There is no intrinsic nature, no cognition, no real thing, and no storehouse [consciousness]; these are indeed imagined by childish people who are like corpses and poor logicians. (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 3.48).²¹

However, having surpassed signs, real things, representations (*vijñapti*), and fluctuations of the mind, my [good] sons act as being free of concepts. (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 3.53)²²

These verses are also found in the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* by Ratnākaraśānti (D 144a2–4). In conclusion, after quoting both the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*, Śāntarākṣita states:

Thus, if one examines with the insight born of reasoning and that born of scriptures, the logical reason [stating] that all things are devoid of intrinsic nature, whether one or many, is established – after having analyzed [those things] in one hundred ways.²³

Śāntarākṣita appears to suggest that Dharmakīrti,²⁴ in certain passages, can also be interpreted as agreeing with the view that all things lack *svabhāva*. Furthermore, he seems to regard these verses from the *Pramāṇavārttika* as a demonstration through good logic of that idea. He introduces the *kārikās* with:

19 *blo yis rnam par gzhigs na ni // ngo bo nyid ni gzung du med // de phyir de dag brjod med dang // ngo bo nyid kyang med par bshad //* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* ed. p. 174, 7–11) *buddhyā vivecyamānānāṇi svabhāvo nāvadhāryate | tasmād anabhilāpyās te niḥsvabhāvāś ca deśitāḥ ||* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 2.175).

20 *blo yis rnam par gzhigs na ni // gzhan dbang med cing brtags pa med // grub pa'i dngos po yod med na // blo yis ji ltar rnam par brtags //* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*, ed. p. 174, 12–15) *buddhyā vivecyamānaṃ tu na tantraṃ nāpi kalpitam | niṣpanno nāsti vai bhāvaḥ kathaṃ buddhyā vikalpyate ||* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 2.198).

21 *rang bzhin med cing rnam rig med // dngos po med cing kun gzhi med // ro mtshungs byis pa'i rtog ge pa // ngan pa rnam kyis 'di dag brtags //* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*, ed. p. 176, 1–4) *na svabhāvo na vijñaptir na vastu na ca ālayaḥ | bālair vikalpitā hy ete śvabhūtaiḥ kutārkikaiḥ ||* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 3.48)

22 *mtshan ma dngos po rnam rig dang // yid kyi g.yo ba gang yin las // nga yi sras rnam ran 'das nas // de dag rnam par mi rtog spyod //* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* ed. p. 176, 5–8) *nimittaṃ vastu vijñaptiṃ manovispaṇḍitaṃ ca tat | atikramya tu putrā me nirvikalpās caranti te ||* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 3.53)

23 *de ltar rigs pa dang lung dang ldan pa'i shes rab kyis brtags na / dngos po ma lus pa brgya tshul (C; tshal P D) du gzhigs te gcig dang du ma'i rang bzhin dang bral ba'i gtan tshigs grub po /* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*, ed. p. 178, 17–19).

24 See Kamalaśīla's commentary in note 25.

Therefore, this topic [i.e., the lack of intrinsic nature in all things] is stated here and there by those with a brilliant mind.²⁵

In doing so, Śāntarakṣita may be responding to the verse in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (k. 3.48) that attacks “bad logicians.” That verse, along with the others mentioned above, clearly targets the Vijñānavādins for upholding the reality of something – namely, cognitions as having *svabhāva*. By contrast, we are told, “good” Buddhist philosophers should move beyond this view and recognize the unreality of all things and the absence of any intrinsic nature – finally abandoning all conceptual elaboration.

Śāntarakṣita emphasizes that Dharmakīrti is a good logician and that his arguments and logical tools are thus suitable for use also by Mādhyamikas in pursuit of a Madhyamaka final goal. After all, despite explicitly advocating Vijñānavāda, Dharmakīrti does not contradict the ultimate truth of the Madhyamaka. In some of his writings, he too asserts emptiness as the total absence of intrinsic nature.

At the same time, Śāntarakṣita deliberately omits 215ab, quoting only the portion of the verse that aligns with his own agenda. On the contrary, Kamalaśīla, who explicitly speaks of Yogācāra,²⁶ comments that emptiness here refers to the absence of the aspects of apprehender and apprehended – suggesting that in this context Dharmakīrti is presenting a Yogācāra doctrine.

He then cites *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 215ab:

na grāhyagrāhakākārabāhyam asti ca lakṣaṇam ||215ab||²⁷

And there is no intrinsic characteristic aside from the aspects of perceived and perceiver.

Moreover, Kamalaśīla adds that Dharmakīrti does not intend this from an absolute point of view, because the *Pramāṇavārttika* is composed from the perspective of the Yogācāra. He explains:

“Here and there,” i.e., in the *Pramāṇavārttika* and other [texts]. “It is stated” namely, [Dharmakīrti and other good logicians] do not say it according to true reality because in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, etc., there is the condition of teaching according to the Yogācāra. The idea is that: Even though the Master teaches as such [i.e., those verses] in terms of the imagined nature, since the perfected one (**pariniṣpanna*) is not established [in those treatises], these words of the

25 *de bas na blo gros dkar po rnams kyis don 'di de dang der smos te* / (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* ed. p. 178, 1). Kamalaśīla comments on the words *blo gros dkar po rnams kyis* with *slob dpon chos kyis grags pa la sogs pas* (**Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* ed. p. 179, 2–3) “the Master Dharmakīrti and others.”

26 See *tshad ma rnam par 'grel pa la sogs par ni rnal 'byor spyod pa'i tshul bshad pa'i gnas skabs yin pa'i phyir ro* // (**Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* ed. p. 179, 5–6) “Because in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, etc., there is the condition of teaching according to the Yogācāra.”

27 Cf. *gzung 'dzin rnam par ma gtogs par // mtshan nyid yod pa ma yin no* // (**Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* ed. p. 179, 13–14).

Master can be [admitted] in all cases, because a shared [or conform/agreeable²⁸] logic is employed. Therefore, [Śāntarakṣita] says: “It is stated.”²⁹

In other words, Kamalaśīla acknowledges that Dharmakīrti’s verses reflect a Yogācāra view. However, this view is not an ultimate one; rather it pertains to conventional reality – a reality based on a conceptual level of truth.

It remains unclear whether Kamalaśīla is suggesting that, while teaching according to that level of truth in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, Dharmakīrti might teach differently elsewhere, while adopting the ultimate perspective of the Madhyamaka. Perhaps, Kamalaśīla is merely implying that the Master would accept the absolute lack of *svabhāva* in all things because it conforms to the same logic he employs. Furthermore, the Yogācāra position can be accepted conventionally, as it is logically coherent.

4 Jñānapāda and the Investigation of Emptiness

In the *Samantabhadrasādhana*, Jñānapāda presents a verse related to the three gates to liberation (*vimokṣamukha*),³⁰ i.e., emptiness, signlessness/causelessness,³¹ and absence of aim:

²⁸ According to the variant in P: *mthun myong*, see note 29.

²⁹ *de dang der zhes bya ba ni tshad ma rnam 'grel la sogs par ro // smos te zhes bya ba ni dngos su bshad pa ma yin pa ste/ tshad ma rnam par 'grel pa la sogs par ni rnal 'byor spyod pa'i tshul bshad pa'i gnas skabs yin pa'i phyir ro // slob dpon gyis kun tu brtags pa'i ngo bo nyid kyi dbang du byas te de skad du bshad mod kyi/ yongs su grub pa nyid ma grub pa'i phyir te / rigs pa thun mong [D; mthun myong P] pa'i phyir slob dpon gyi tshig 'di thams cad du rung ba nyid do snyam du bsams pa'o // de nyid kyi phyir smos te zhes bya ba smos so // (*Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā ed. p. 179, 3–10)*

³⁰ The three gateways to liberation (*vimokṣamukha*) are a traditional theme discussed also in the canonical literature (for bibliographical references, see Deleanu 2000: 98n54). They are related to three old forms of meditative absorption (*samādhi*). In this respect, Zacchetti (2015: 174) argues: “These three *samādhis* – of emptiness (*sūnyatā*), signlessness (*animitta* or *ānimitta*) and absence of aim (*apraṇihita*) – were traditionally considered key methods for attaining *nirvāṇa* through progressive abandonment of specific mental states (Conze 1962: 59–69). [...] Their adoption by *Prajñāpāramitā* texts represents a remarkable instance of appropriation and radical reinterpretation which exemplifies very well the fundamental attitude of this tradition. The locus classicus for this operation is chapter 20 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. Here we are told that these practices should indeed be cultivated, but – with a characteristic twist of focus – skillfully handled and employed as methods not for achieving *nirvāṇa* (which is in fact to be carefully avoided), but for practicing in view of awakening. In other words, the set of three *samādhis* should be adopted for its side-effects (advanced forms of detachment), which are considered beneficial for the bodhisattva practice, but definitely not for its originally intended main purpose.” On the three *samādhis*, see Lamotte 1970: 1213–1232.

³¹ The term used here is *nimitta*/**msthan ma*, which can be translated as both “sign” and “cause.” While “sign” is the more common translation in reference to the *vimokṣamukhas*, the context of this

All things are empty because they lack an intrinsic nature, and similarly they are devoid of cause because they lack a[ultimately real] cause, [and] due to the abandonment of consideration they are free of aspiration.³² (*Samantabhadrasādhana* 18).

While introducing the verse, Samantabhadra refers to it as outlining the method for mentally cultivating the [absolute] thought of the awakening of the “setting-out” type:

tatredāniṃ prasthānabodhicittabhāvanāvidhim āha–śūnyam ityādi (Sāramañjarī Pā 6a1–2)

Among these, now [Jñānapāda] states the method for mentally cultivating the [absolute] thought of awakening of the setting-out type [with the words] beginning with: “[All things] are empty.”

Accordingly, Jñānapāda discusses these three aspects of reality to be the object of mental cultivation in order to realize the “setting-out” type of absolute *bodhicitta*:

1. Things are empty because they lack an intrinsic nature.
2. Things are causeless because they lack an ultimately real cause, although it is conventionally acknowledged that they possess one.
3. Things are devoid of aspiration because there is the abandonment of consideration.

Regarding point 2., Samantabhadra specifies that Jñānapāda intends this to express the unreality of causation from an absolute point of view, since the condition of “cause” cannot ultimately withstand analytical investigation. However, from a conventional point of view, causality cannot be denied and remains logically tenable:

tathā hetor³³ vicārasahasya viyogā³⁴ animittam | vyāvahārikas tu hetur na niśidhyata eveti tunā darsayati | (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a2)

Similarly, [all things] are devoid of causes, because they lack a cause that withstands analysis. However, a conventional cause is not denied at all; this [Jñānapāda] shows through [the word] “and (*tu*).”

specific case, along with the commentary, suggests that “cause” is the more appropriate rendering here.

³² *Śūnyam svabhāvavirahād dhetuviiyogāt tathānimittaṃ tu | ūhāpagamād akhilaṃ vastu prañidhānānirmuktam || (Samantabhadrasādhana 18, this verse is quoted in a Sanskrit commentary in the Lhasa birch-bark manuscript, see Kano 2014: 70); stong pa rang bzhin med phyir rgyu 'bras phyir ni rang bzhin mtshan ma med // rjes su dpag pa bsal (gsal P) bas ma lus gzhi yi smon pa nges bral lo // (Samantabhadrasādhana P2719 43b4, D1856 36b6–37a1); ngo bo nyid dang bral phyir stong pa ste // rang bzhin rgyu dang bral bas mtshan ma med // rtog pa rnam dang bral phyir dngos po ni // ma lus smon pa las ni nges par grol // (Samantabhadrasādhana P2718 34b3–4, D1855 29b4)*

³³ *hetor* em.] *heto* Pā

³⁴ *viiyogād* Pā^{Pc}] *viiyogo* Pā^{ac}

5 Samantabhadra and the Investigation of Emptiness

With reference to emptiness, Samantabhadra presents it as being:

- A. the lack of intrinsic natures that can be an apprehended or an apprehender (the Vijñānavāda view),
- B. the lack of intrinsic natures that can be one or many (the Madhyamaka view).

svabhāvasya grāhyagrāhakaikānekādīrūpasya virahāc chūnyam akhilaṃ vastu | (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a2)

All things are empty due to the lack of an intrinsic nature, i.e., a nature that is an apprehended or an apprehender, one or many, etc.³⁵

He states that the three gates to liberation are themselves empty and supports this statement with the twofold demonstration of the emptiness of all things that he and Jñānapāda will outline in detail in a later portion of their texts:

etac ca trividham api vimokṣamukhaṃ sarvapadārthānām³⁶ paramārthataḥ śūnyatvena siddhaṃ grāhyagrāhakaīrahitaṃ³⁷ hi sarvam eva vastuḥātam | yad vaksyaty³⁸ atraiva— rūpādyākṛtīmuktam³⁹ (see 110a) ityādī, ekaṃ na cetyādīnā (see 113a) vaikānekādisvabhāvārahitaṃ⁴⁰ sarvam⁴¹ ity atraiva pratipādayiṣyati | (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a3)

Moreover, these gates of liberation [i.e., emptiness, causelessness, and absence of aim], all of the three, are established as being ultimately empty for all entities; for the whole aggregate of things is devoid of apprehended and apprehender, etc. As [Jñānapāda] will say exactly in this work [with verse 110]: “[An apprehending cognition of sense objects is not observed] as being separated from the images of visual forms and other [sense objects] [nor is anything apprehended observed].” Or else, with [verse 113]: “And [it] is not one [nor, similarly, does it have a manifold nature]” precisely in this [work] [Jñānapāda] will prove that everything is devoid of an intrinsic nature, whether one or many, etc.

35 By “etc.,” Samantabhadra refers also to some other type of intrinsic nature, the absence of which constitutes emptiness. At present, I am unable to determine precisely what he might be referring to; it is possible he means any intrinsic nature whatsoever that is regarded as real.

36 *sarpapadārthānām* em. based on Tib. (*tshig gi don thams cad*) *sarpapadānām* Pā

37 °*grāhakā*° em.] °*grahakā*° Pā

38 *vaksyaty* em.] *vaksaty* Pā

39 *ākṛti*° em.] *ākṛtir* Pā

40 *vaikā*° em.] *vekā*° Pā

41 *sarpam* em. partly based on **sarpam* Tib. (*thams cad*)] *ca sarvam* Pā

With these words, Samantabhadra provides the audience with a general understanding of the scope of a later section of the text – specifically, Jñānapāda’s verses 110–120 and his commentary on them. These correspond to an extensive depiction of a method for realizing emptiness, related to the meditation of wisdom (*prajñābhāvanākrama*).⁴² This method involves a process of deconstructing concepts regarding real entities, however they are construed – from material to immaterial. The path toward realizing emptiness involves two consecutive steps, one after the other, each presupposing a different way of understanding the emptiness of intrinsic nature. Initially, emptiness must be understood as the absence of the aspects of the apprehended and the apprehender, in line with the Vijñānavāda view on ultimate reality (particularly in the Dharmakīrtian tradition). According to this view, ultimate reality consists in cognitions that are self-aware, instantaneous, irreducible, and identical to themselves, with no external, i.e., different, entities that can be either their object or subject. Within the process described by Samantabhadra, this view of mere cognition (*vijñaptimātrata*) must be established, but only as conventionally real. Once this is demonstrated, the next step is to prove emptiness as the lack of any fundamental reality in all things, since they do not have any existing nature, whether one or manifold. This is in accordance with the Madhyamaka view of ultimate reality. This progression of the two types of reality arguably mirrors that formulated by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla.⁴³

Immediately following the previous statement, in the *Sāramañjarī*, Samantabhadra quotes Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 359/360 to provide an authoritative source for the idea that all things are empty of fundamental reality, whether one or manifold. Accordingly, Samantabhadra is clearly showing that Dharmakīrti’s verse should ultimately be interpreted as pointing to – or at least not contradicting – the Madhyamaka view. Moreover, Samantabhadra alludes to the fact that Dharmakīrti himself, throughout his works, advocates both understandings of emptiness, with the Madhyamaka interpretation being superior to that of the Vijñānavādins. He concludes by stating:

tasmān niḥsvabhāvatvāc chūnyam | (*Sāramañjarī*, Pā 6a4)

Therefore, [all things] are “empty” because they lack an intrinsic nature.

⁴² This process is introduced as such by Kamalaśīla in *Bhāvanākrama* I in connection with three famous verses from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, namely 10.256–258, see: *tatrāyam āryalaṅkāvatāre saṅkṣepāt prajñābhāvanākramo nirdiṣṭaḥ* | (*Bhāvanākrama* I, ed. p. 18, 1). On *Bhāvanākrama* I and the quotation of *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 10.256–258 (ed. pp. 298, 15–299, 3) found therein, see specifically Kellner 2020 and the English translation in the appendix. On the verses in the *Sāramañjarī* and Jñānapāda’s *Ātmasāadhanāvātāra*, see Saccone & Szántó 2023: 61–65.

⁴³ See Saccone & Szántó 2023: 61–65.

Now, in *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 359/360, Dharmakīrti is arguably referring to the nonexistence of intrinsic nature in terms of being either an apprehended or an apprehender of cognitions – not to the nonexistence of cognitions *themselves*. In other words, whereas Samantabhadra maintains emptiness B. (the Madhyamaka interpretation), Dharmakīrti upholds emptiness A. – the Vijñānavāda way of intending it.

6 Samantabhadra and the Investigation of Causality

In sum, things are devoid of *svabhāva* because a unitary nature cannot be found when they are investigated ultimately. This argument presupposes the axiom that something ultimately real must be unitary/indivisible – or a combination of unitary things – a shared postulate already articulated, for example, in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*.⁴⁴

In connection with this, as a logical consequence, Samantabhadra introduces the second theme in Jñānapāda's verse: Things are devoid of a cause. They are non-arisen because their causes and conditions – like all things – are not ultimately real and thus cannot produce anything.

Samantabhadra says:

ata eva hetupratyayāyogenādyanutpannavād animittam | (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a4)

Precisely because of that, [all things] are devoid of causes, since they are non-arisen from the very beginning because of the illogicality⁴⁵ of [real] causes and conditions.

At the same time, Samantabhadra also seeks to question the very tenability of the relationship of causality itself, showing its inherent absurdity. In order to do so, he presents the refutations by Nāgārjuna in the *Pratyayaparīkṣā* of the

⁴⁴ See *yatra bhinne na tadbuddhir anyāpohe dhiyā ca tat* | *ghaṭāmbuvat saṃvṛtīsat paramārthasad anyathā* || (*Abhidharmakośa* 6.4, ed. Gokhale). “That thing which, being broken [into parts] and being distinct from other [entities/properties] mentally, is no [longer] cognized is conventionally real, like [respectively] a pot or water. [What is] ultimately real is different [from that].” Cf. also *yatra bhinne na tadbuddhir anyāpohe dhiyā ca tat* | *ghaṭārthavat saṃvṛtīsat paramārthasad anyathā* || (*Abhidharmakośa* 6.4, ed. Pradhan).

⁴⁵ The Sanskrit text clearly reads °*ayogena*. Tib. has *mi ldan pas*/**ayogena* or **viyogena*. The latter would be more consistent with the wording of the verse: °*viyogāt*. One might surmise that the Sanskrit text underlying the Tibetan translation contained indeed the variant *viyogena*.

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā as well as Dharmakīrti in both the *Pramāṇavārttika* and *Sambandhaparīkṣā*. This is a very clever strategy, as it highlights the convergence between the champion of the Madhyamaka tradition (and its key text) and Dharmakīrti regarding the untenability of causality. However, as we will see, the arguments employed by the two thinkers differ.

Samantabhadra quotes the verse from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as follows:

*yad uktam pratyayaparīkṣāyām*⁴⁶ –
 naivāsato naiva sataḥ pratyayo ’rthasya yujyate |
 asataḥ⁴⁷ pratyayaḥ kasya sataś ca pratyayena kim || iti
 (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a4)

As it is said in the Pratyayaparīkṣā [of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*]:

It is not logical that there is a cause for an object that does not exist, nor for an object that exists. Of what is a cause [the cause] of something that does not exist and what is the use of a cause for something that [already] exists? (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 1.6)

The condition of “cause” for something cannot be logically upheld. To be a cause means to function as the producer of something. If the effect does not exist, the cause does not produce anything, since the effect is nonexistent. If the effect already exists, the cause becomes useless – namely it no longer serves the purpose of causing and loses its function.⁴⁸

Following Nāgārjuna’s quotation, Samantabhadra introduces Dharmakīrti:

*ācāryaDharmakīrtināpy uktam*⁴⁹ –
 niṣpatter aparādhinam api kāryaṃ⁵⁰ svahetunā |
 sambadhyate kalpanayā [...] ||
 iti. tathā –
 parāpekṣā hi sambandhaḥ so ’san katham apekṣate⁵¹ |
 saṃś ca sarvanirāsaṃso bhāvaḥ katham apekṣate⁵² ||
 ityādi (Sāramañjarī, Pā 6a4–5)

The master Dharmakīrti also says [in *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 26abc]:

46 °parīkṣāyām em.] °parīkṣāyām Pā

47 asataḥ Pā^{pc}] asa ... ḥ Pā^{ac}

48 For a recent translation and analysis of this verse in Nāgārjuna’s *Madhyamakakārikā*, see Siderits & Katsura 2013: 22–23.

49 uktam] uktaṃ Pā

50 kāryaṃ em.] kārya° Pā

51 apekṣate] apeksyate Pā

52 apekṣate] apeksyate Pā

Due to [its] complete production, the effect, even though [truly] independent, is [however] connected to its cause by conceptual construction [...].

Similarly [in *Sambandhaparīkṣā* 3]:

A relation is indeed dependence from another thing. How [can] a thing that does not exist depend [on anything else]? Moreover, how [can] a thing that exists and is [accordingly] independent of everything depend [on something]?

And so on.

In order to demonstrate the illogicality of the relationship of causality, Samantabhadra quotes these two verses from two different works by Dharmakīrti. However, the philosophical premises underlying the statements of the two verses are dissimilar.

In *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 26, Dharmakīrti focuses on universals and their lack of intrinsic nature.⁵³ The partial quotation used by Samantabhadra refers to the idea that something already produced, such as an existing effect, is ontologically independent of its cause.⁵⁴ This is related to the theme of the ontological independence between cause and effect, which points to the ultimate unreality of the relationship of causality. Yet, immediately after in the same verse, Dharmakīrti adds that the relation of causality, while not ultimately real, must still be conceptually admitted, as causes and effects are logically linked through inference.

In *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 246, Dharmakīrti makes precisely this point to indicate that a cause must logically precede its effect – thus showing that the temporal interdependence of causes and effects is logically tenable. This is also a tenet of the Vijñānavāda tradition.⁵⁵

⁵³ See *anyatve tad asambaddhaṃ siddhāto niḥsvabhāvatā | jātiprasaṅgo 'bhāvasya nāpekṣābhāvatas tayoḥ* || (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 27, Sanskrit text in Franco & Notake 2014: 85–86). “[Hence] if [the universal] is different [from the individual], it is not connected [to it]. Therefore, [the universal’s] lack of own nature is established. A non-existing [thing such as hare’s horn, which also lacks own nature] would not [thereby] be a universal because there is no [relation of] dependence between these two [i.e., non-existing things and individuals].” (Transl. in Franco & Notake 2014: 85–86).

⁵⁴ Franco&Notake (2014: 84n3) note that “Devendrabuddhi explains that *niṣpatti* is the state in which some action has been completed in something and thus that thing no longer depends on anything else. For instance, the sprout no longer depends on the seed after it has been produced.” For the Tibetan text of Devendrabuddhi’s commentary on this, see Franco & Notake 2014: 84n3.

⁵⁵ This is presented as such by subsequent authors of the tradition, such as Kamalaśīla, who quotes this verse while refuting the idea that spatial contiguity and temporal continuity are identical. He does so in the course of demonstrating the unreality of atoms as the irreducible parts of material external objects. See: *tad evaṃ niraṃśatve 'pi sarvabhāvānāṃ nyāyato 'vasthitāṃ kālākṛtaṃ paurvāparyaṃ deśākṛtaṃ tu kathaṃ syād yadi sāvayavatvaṃ na syād iti codyate* | (*Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, ed. p. 169, 21–170,3) “Therefore, in this way, it has been

Because of the incapacity of [a cause] that does not exist before [the arising of the effect], and because [a cause] is devoid of use after [the arising of the effect], every cause pre-exists [its effect]; therefore, the object [of mental perception] does not [arise] along with its own cognition [i.e., mental perception]. (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 246)⁵⁶

In the *Sambandhaparīkṣā*, Dharmakīrti addresses the notion of relation (*sambandha*) as a real entity. In verse 3, he rejects the idea of causality as being such. For a relation to exist, we need two co-existing things. If something does not exist, not existing, it cannot depend on another thing. If something exists, it is acknowledged as independent of everything else. Accordingly, it cannot stand in a relation of dependence with anything else.

Although these two verses are not quoted in Jitāri's **Sugatamata-vibhaṅgabhāṣya* Madhyamaka chapter,⁵⁷ they were likely known to him, as he copies the *Sāramañjarī* *verbatim* in other sections.⁵⁸ Thus, one could argue that Samantabhadra's juxtaposition of Nāgārjuna and Dharmakīrti – both shown as sharing the viewpoint of the illogicality of causality (even though based on different arguments) – reinforced Jitāri's view that Dharmakīrti's doctrines were ultimately in accord with Madhyamaka thought.

7 Dharmakīrti the Vijñānavādin (As Quoted in the *Sāramañjarī*)

In spite of the passages mentioned above, Dharmakīrti is hardly ever presented in the *Sāramañjarī* as a Mādhyamika or associated with Nāgārjuna. Most of the quotations are used to support Vijñānavāda tenets, such as the idea that there are no intrinsic natures that can be subject or object of cognition. In this regard, he quotes that very *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 215, which is also cited in the **Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* and **Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*.

established through reasoning (*nyāya*) that all things, albeit devoid of parts, have temporal continuity. However, how can their spatial [continuity] be possible if [they] have no parts? This is the objection.” (Transl. in Saccone 2018: 251).

56 *asataḥ prāg asāmarthyāt paścād vānupayogataḥ | prāgbhāvaḥ sarvavahetūnāṃ nāto 'rthaḥ svadhiyā saha ||* (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa 246)

57 They are also not quoted in Śāntarakṣita's **Madhyamakālaṃkārakārikā*, and **Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*, nor in Kamalaśīla's **Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*.

58 See Saccone & Szántó 2023: appendix B.

*paramārthato grāhyagrāhakayor virahāt samastavastūnām asvabhāvātā | grāhyagrāhakarūpatvāt⁵⁹ svabhāvasya | tad uktam–
na grāhyagrāhakākārabāhyam⁶⁰ asti⁶¹ ca lakṣaṇam |
tato lakṣaṇasūnyatvān niḥsvabhāvāḥ prakāśitāḥ || iti (Sāramañjarī, Pā 15a5–6)*

Due to the lack of apprehender and apprehended ultimately, there is the absence of intrinsic nature in all things, because an intrinsic nature has [necessarily] the form of apprehended and apprehender.

This is said [by Dharmakīrti]:

And there is no intrinsic characteristic aside from the aspects of apprehended and apprehender. Therefore, due to emptiness of intrinsic characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*), [entities] are explained as being devoid of intrinsic nature. (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 215)

While outlining the process of gradual deconstruction of all concepts related to *svabhāva* (see §5), Samantabhadra presents the first stage of proof, concerning conventional reality. This reality is that of mere cognition (*viññaptimātratā*). It is within this context that most of Dharmakīrti's quotations appear, being introduced as linked to the theme of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) of cognitions, their being unitary, and the “invariable co-perception” (*sahopalambhaniyama*) argument.⁶²

Regarding *svasaṃvedana*, Samantabhadra treats it as a key concept in defining true reality and cites two verses from Dharmakīrti's *oeuvre*, including *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.38 – a *locus classicus* for the statement of self-awareness of cognitions:

Rather, direct perception manifests itself just as having the images of visual forms and other [sense objects], endowed with the nature of self-awareness, devoid of conceptual constructions [and] non-erroneous. However, the forms of [something] apprehended, and so on, are only constructions by the architect that is conceptual construction. This is the intended meaning. As [Dharmakīrti] stated:

There is no other [object (*artha*), different from itself,] that can be experienced by a cognition [and] there is no experiencing of that [cognition] different [from that cognition itself]; since it is devoid of apprehended and apprehender, only that [cognition] manifests by itself. (*Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.38)

59 °grāhakarūpatvāt Pā^{bc}] grāhaka rūpatvāt Pā^{ac}

60 grāhyagrāhakākārabāhyam em. based on *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 215] grāhya-grāhakākāraṃ bhāyam Pā, see D19a *gzung dang 'dzin pa'i rnam pa las gzhan pa'i*

61 *asti* em.] *sti* Pā

62 On this argument, see *infra*.

Similarly:

Even though undivided, the nature of cognition is characterized as if it were endowed with [three parts, namely,] apprehended, apprehender, and apprehension, by those [whose minds] have misconceptions (*viparyāsītadarśana*). (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 353).⁶³

Moreover, Samantabhadra mentions Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* in connection with a proof related to the *sahopalambhānīyama* argument. This argument is intended to prove the non-difference between a cognition and its object, because they are always invariably perceived together.⁶⁴ It is clearly stated in *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.54ab, but is already present with a different formulation in the *Pramāṇavārttika*.⁶⁵ In the Dharmakīrtian tradition, this is one of the most common arguments employed to demonstrate mere cognition (*viññaptimātratā*). Samantabhadra states:

[...] [Feelings] such as pleasure, too, are a non-apprehender of visual forms and other [sense objects]. For [feelings] are indeed non-different [from visual forms and other sense objects], because they are invariably perceived together (*sahopalambhānīyāmāt*); however, a difference [between them] is seen by those [whose minds] have misconceptions, as in the case of the moon, which is non-different [from a second moon that is seen by those who have an ocular defect]. This is the intended meaning.

63 *kiṃ tu rūpādyākāram eva svasaṃvidrūpam avikalpakam abhrāntaṃ pratyakṣaṃ prakāśate. grāhyādirūpaṃ tu vikalpaśilpikalpitam eveti bhāvaḥ. yad uktam – nānyo 'nubhāvyo buddhyāsti tasyā nānubhavo 'paraḥ | grāhyagrāhakavaidhuryāt svayaṃ saiva prakāśate || tathā – avibhāgo 'pi buddhyātmā viparyāsītadarśanaḥ | grāhyagrāhakasaṃvittibhedavān iva lakṣyate || iti. (Sāramañjari, ed. p. 95, 10–18)*

64 On this subject, see the detailed study by Iwata (1991).

65 See *sakṛt saṃvedyamānasya niyamena dhiyā saha | viśayasya tato 'nyatvaṃ kenākāreṇa sidhyati || bhedaś ca bhrāntivijñānair dṛśyetendāv ivādvaye | saṃvittinīyamo nāsti bhinnayor nilāpitayoḥ || nārtho 'saṃvedanaḥ kaścid anarthaṃ vāpi vedanam | dṛṣṭaṃ saṃvedyamānaṃ tat taylor nāsti vivekitā || tasmād arthasya durvāraṃ jñānakālavabhāsinaḥ | jñānād avyāyirekitvam [...]* (*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 387–390abc). “With regard to an object that is brought to awareness, necessarily simultaneously with [its] cognition, by virtue of which image is its being different from that [cognition] established? Moreover, [their] difference can be seen by people having erroneous cognitions, like [the vision of] two moons when there is [only] one. There is no necessity of being aware of two distinct [things, such as] blue and yellow. No object [of cognition] is seen as not being brought to awareness, or else, a cognition, while being brought to awareness, is not seen as being devoid of an object. Hence, there is no difference between those two [(i.e., the object and its cognition)]. Therefore, the non-difference of an object that appears at the moment of [its] cognition from [that] cognition necessarily follows [...]” On these verses, see Vetter 1964: 73–74; Eltschinger 2005: 166 and n. 34; Eltschinger 2010. Iwata (1991: 1, 15–18) also refers to *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 333–335. Kellner (2017: 115) discusses *Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 335 as presenting an argument that is ‘very close to a *sahopalambhānīyama*-inference, if not fully identical with it.’

As [Dharmakīrti] says:

A part as if it were on the outside, another segment/determination⁶⁶ as if it were internal, the appearance of [this] difference with reference to a partless cognition is indeed a distortion. (*Pramānavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 212)⁶⁷

This passage refutes the view that mind and mental states are the apprehenders of their object. This view may be a Vaibhāṣika one and is also found in the quotation from Jñānapāda's *Ātmasāadhanāvātāra* that is cited in the *Sāramañjarī* immediately afterward.⁶⁸ At the same time, the objection that follows could be advanced by either a Vaibhāṣika or a Sautrāntika and claims that sense objects are the producers of cognitions, i.e., they are their cause and, accordingly, precede them. It is not tenable that they could be perceived simultaneously. However, the above-mentioned passage clearly denies the aspect of apprehender even for instantaneous cognitions, in a Buddhist fashion, reaffirming the reality of only unitary cognitions, with no division into the aspects of subject or object.

Regarding the nonexistence of external objects, Samantabhadra presents another quotation by Dharmakīrti, which is meant to explain the occurrence of

66 The word *pariccheda* can also be translated as “determination.” The Sanskrit term carries this ambivalence, and it was likely used with that nuance in mind. In his commentary, Devendrabuddhi supports the interpretation of *pariccheda* as “determination.” See [...] *nanḡ gi yongs gcod nanḡ gi bdag nyid gcig bu* [tu D] *yongs su gcod pa 'dzin pa'i rnam pa nyams su myong ba nges pa yin no /*. (*Pramānavārttikapañjikā* P 226a5, D 193b5–6) “Internal determination,’ i.e., the determination of [something] internal [and] unitary is the ascertainment of the experience of the apprehender-aspect.” In the commentary to this verse, albeit not as a direct gloss to the *mūla* text, Prajñākaragupta uses the root *paricchid* with the meaning of “knowing, apprehending”. See: *tathā mayā paricchinnam iti nāsty asvavedane* ||378|| [...] *mayā viditam etad iti ca na syāt kartur asvasamvedanatvenāvabhāsanāt* | (*Pramānavārttikālamkāra*, ed. p. 288, 7 [...] 10–11). I follow Manorathanandin's commentary in interpreting it with the more neutral sense of “segment”. See: *paricchedo grāhākārahā sukhādir* (em.; *sukhāder* ed.) *antar bahirdeśe paricchedād anyo yaṃ bhāgo grāhyo nilādir bahiḥ sthita ivābhāti sarveṣām* | (*Pramānavārttikavṛtti*, ed. p. 182, 12–13) “Segment,’ i.e., the aspect of the apprehender, such as pleasure and so on, is ‘internal’ [and] ‘different’ from the segment that stays outside, ‘a part,’ i.e., the apprehended, such as blue and so on, appears ‘as if it were on the outside’ for all [ordinary] people.”

67 [...] *tathā sātādy api rūpāder agrāhakam. abhinnam eva hi sahopalambhanīyamāt, bhedas tu viparyāsītadarśanair iksyate, abhinnaśāśinīveti bhāvaḥ. yad uktam – paricchedo 'ntar anyo yaṃ bhāgo bahir iva sthitaḥ | jñānasyābhedino bhedapratibhāso hy upaplavaḥ* || (*Sāramañjarī*, ed. p. 97, 16–20).

68 See *antaḥpratibhāsamānasya sātāder grāhakatvaṃ nilādes tu tadbahirūpatayā pratītalakṣaṇasya grāhyatvam iti cet* | (*Sāramañjarī*, ed. p. 101, 22–102, 1). “One could argue (*ced*) that the condition of apprehender belongs to pleasure, etc., that manifests inside. However, the condition of apprehended belongs to something that has a cognized characteristic qua being a form external to the [apprehender], such as an indigo [thing], etc. [i.e., something conceptually determined as being outside, like a visual form and the other sense objects].” (Transl. in Saccone & Szántó 2023: 203)

ordinary cognitions – characterized by a specific time, space, etc. – even when external objects are not present, as in dreams.

Therefore, just as in dreams and so on, the restrictions of space, [time,] etc., occur without an external object, similarly, when they occur also in the waking state, what [could] defeat them? As [Dharmakīrti] says:

For some [specific] person [there is] truly some [specific] thing [that] awakens an internal latent impression; due to this there is a restriction regarding cognitions. [The restriction] is not dependent on external objects.

(*Pramāṇavārttika* Pratyakṣa° 336)⁶⁹

8 Conclusions

The Employment of Dharmakīrtian Logic in the Rational Path Towards the Realization of an Ultimately True Madhyamaka

In this article, I offer some insights into the evolution of the theme of a Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti from the 8th to the 10th centuries. The authors cited here belong to different traditions; nevertheless, there is a “common thread” – a shared legacy – in viewing Dharmakīrti’s argumentations as useful tools for the logical justification of Buddhist doctrines. The organization and elaboration of such arguments are primarily based on the systematization undertaken by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in the 8th century.

Shirasaki argues that Jitāri presents Dharmakīrti as advocating the ultimate truth of Madhyamaka. Assuming that this was indeed Jitāri’s intention, this view can be seen as a development of ideas already present in the works of his predecessors, beginning with Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, and continuing with later Tantric authors such as Samantabhadra.

If one investigates these earlier authors, who certainly influenced Jitāri, she/he could reasonably conclude that their aim was to show that Dharmakīrti’s thought is in line with the Madhyamaka in certain respects.

Samantabhadra, in particular, while consistently presenting Dharmakīrti as the champion of Vijñānavāda, also explicitly introduces his verses as expressing the same general view as Nāgārjuna’s. His position seems to be that Madhyamaka can be justified through Dharmakīrtian logic – through the independent arguments and

69 *tato yathā svapnādaḥ bahirartham antareṇa deśānyamādayo bhavanti, tathā jāgraddaśāyām api bhavantaḥ kenābhībhūyante? yad uktam – kasyacit kiṃcid evāntarvāsanāyāḥ prabodhakam | tato dhīyām viniyamo na bāhyārthavyapekṣayā || (Sāramāñjarī, ed. p. 100, 4–8).*

logical tools that are advanced by the Dharmakīrtian tradition. Furthermore, there is no contradiction in doing so, because, upon closer examination, Dharmakīrti could also be interpreted as upholding Madhyamaka doctrines.

Rather than advocating a strictly Mādhyamika Dharmakīrti, Samantabhadra and the others seek to demonstrate and justify the utility and non-contradiction of employing Dharmakīrtian logic in the rational path towards an ultimately true Madhyamaka.

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