

Book: Establishing Validity

By: Dharmakirti & Seventh Karmapa Chodrak Gyatso

Ocean of Literature on Logic.
Translated by: David Karma Choephel

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Excerpt: Translator’s Introduction

KARMAKAVĀDISIṄHAGURUBHYĀM NAMAḤ

For many, one of the more curious and fascinating aspects of Buddhism is its teachings on rebirth. The idea resonates strongly with some, but for others—especially those who come to Buddhism with a Western background or education—it can be hard to accept. The idea that sentient beings migrate from one lifetime to the next in an infinite cycle runs counter to centuries of Western religion and philosophy; the idea one might have been an animal or something other than human in a past life seems more a joke than a possibility. Rebirth also seems difficult to prove through our own experience. By and large, we do not remember our past lives, we have no way of knowing what if anything will happen after death, and nothing materially links one life to the next. Though there has been some academic and scientific research into rebirth, many people are unconvinced, doubtful, skeptical, or even outright dismissive of rebirth. This is not just an issue for Westerners either. The ancient Indian texts and Tibetan teachings also record numerous stories of people who were skeptical of rebirth or denied it even within cultural contexts where rebirth was generally accepted. But rebirth is central to Buddhist philosophy. As recorded in the sutras and vinaya, the Buddha himself spoke of past and future lives frequently. He taught that the cycle of samsara plays itself out over the course of many lifetimes and that the ultimate goal of buddhahood takes innumerable lifetimes and un-

countable aeons to achieve. Without rebirth, neither of those would be possible. Therefore, whether rebirth is true or not is an important issue that Buddhist masters have had to address over the centuries.

Within the Tibetan tradition, the most highly regarded proof of rebirth is Dharmakīrti’s long treatment of it in the chapter “Establishing Validity” from his *Commentary on Validity*, which is presented in this book along with the Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso’s commentary on it from *The Ocean of Literature on Logic*. Dharmakīrti discusses rebirth in two long passages that together encompass well over a third of the chapter. Yet for Dharmakīrti, the discussion of rebirth is just a supporting argument in the proof of his main thesis of this chapter: that the Buddha Bhagavan is valid—a reliable authority whom spiritual practitioners can trust to guide them to enlightenment. Intertwined with this is the issue of conventional validity or epistemology: how do we evaluate whether we have trustworthy knowledge or not? As subsidiary arguments in his proof of the Buddha’s validity, Dharmakīrti also discusses many other issues, including whether a divine creator exists, the meaning of omniscience, the causes that lead to buddhahood and their results, and the natures of the four noble truths in addition to the logic of past and future lives. Dharmakīrti frames these questions in the context of refutations of ancient non-Buddhist schools, but the issues that he discusses and the way that he deals with them are still relevant to thinkers and spiritual practitioners of today.

Dharmakīrti’s words on their own are concise—especially in the *Commentary* as it is written in verse—and do not present his arguments in full detail. This is likely intentional, as many Buddhist philosophical works were intended to be taught from master to disciple, with the master explaining to their disciples orally what was implied or omitted. Later, Dharmakīrti himself wrote an autocommentary on the chapter “Inference for One-self,” and his disciples then wrote commentaries on the other chapters. Thus there began a tradition of written commentaries on Dharmakīrti’s works. Over the centuries, many scholars in India and later in Tibet wrote treatises explaining, defending, and reinterpreting Dharmakīrti’s works, and interest in his work continues to be strong among contemporary scholars.

Of all the different commentaries that have been preserved or written in Tibet, the Seventh Karmapa’s *Ocean of Literature on Logic* stands out on many levels, among them

the scope of material it covers, Chödrak Gyatso’s reliance the words of Dharmakīrti and his earliest Indian commentators, and his description of how Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s thought fits within the Yogācāra tradition of the Great Middle Way. Though philosophical in tone, *The Ocean* is not solely scholastic in its intent. For Chödrak Gyatso, as for many Karma Kagyu masters, the ultimate intent of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s work is to remove the obscurations that prevent us from seeing the union of luminosity and emptiness that is the true nature. In this respect, it is not different from mahamudra meditation.¹ Chödrak Gyatso’s *Ocean*, taken together with the other great treatises written by the Karmapas and other Karma Kagyu masters in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, provides the philosophical underpinnings for the meditational practices of the Karma Kagyu school.

The Historical Background: Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s Thought in India and Tibet

After the emperor Ashoka adopted it in the third century BCE, Buddhism became the dominant spiritual tradition in India and remained so for several centuries, but it was never the only one. Buddhism coexisted with orthodox Hindu schools, the Sāṃkhya school, Jainism, and other traditions.² With the founding of the Nyāya school by the sage Gotama around the second century CE, there developed a set of common terminologies and logical techniques that allowed a period of inter-sectarian debate. Though each sect maintained its own particular views and explanations and characterized terms in its own way, there were enough commonalities to allow for debate on many issues, often grounded in epistemology. As a part of this debate, Buddhist positions came under the scrutiny of different schools—including the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Jain, Cārvāka, and Mīmāṃsaka—making it necessary in the middle of the first millennium for Buddhist thinkers to defend Buddhism

¹ In discussing Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s works, Chödrak Gyatso’s student Karma Trinleypa said, “That Middle Way is the Great Middle Way, / It is no different than mahamudra.” (*dbu ma de ni dbu ma chen po ste/ /phyag rgya che dang de la khyad par med*). From “Dris lan snang gsal sgron me zhe bya ba ra ti dgon pa’i gzims khang ba’i dris lan bzhugs so//” in *Chos rje karma phrin las pa’i mgur dang/ thun mong ba’i dris lan bzhugs so//* (Varanasi: Vajra Vidya Library, 2011), p. 164.

² This section is largely based on George Dreyfus’ overview of the development of epistemological traditions in India and Tibet found in “Introduction II: Dharmakīrti’s Tradition in India and Tibet,” *Recognizing Reality* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1997), pp. 15–41.

against the non-Buddhists’ critique. The defense was led first by Dignāga and later by Dharmakīrti. Thus began the study of what would become one of the great topics of Buddhist inquiry—validity or *pramāṇa*.³

Traditionally said to be a student of Vasubandhu,⁴ Dignāga was a prolific fifth or sixth century master of the Yogācāra tradition. He wrote texts in several different genres, including praises of the Buddha, explanations of Prajñāparāmita sutras, a commentary on a kriya tantra, and a highly regarded commentary on the *Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct*. He is most well known for his texts on logic, of which he is said to have written quite a few. Chödrak Gyatso says in *The Ocean* that he wrote 108, though only six are preserved in Tibetan.⁵ Later in his life, Dignāga saw that his arguments about epistemology and logic were scattered piecemeal in several different treatises and then wrote the *Compendium of Validity* as well as an autocommentary to restate his positions in a single, coherent text. Dignāga’s thought soon became influential among both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

But Dignāga also became a target of criticism from the proponents of several non-Buddhist schools including the Mīmāṃsaka, Vaiśeṣika, and Nyāya. Thus it fell to Dharmakīrti, the seventh century⁶ master who was his intellectual heir and most influential interpreter, to defend Dignāga’s presentation by writing the so-called “seven treatises”—*The Commentary on Validity, The Ascertainment of Validity, The Drop of Reasoning, Es-*

³ Throughout this book, the Sanskrit *pramāṇa* and Tibetan *tshad ma* are translated alternately as valid, validly, valid cognition, or validity, depending upon the context and syntax. This term has been translated in a great variety of ways by different translators, but the most frequently encountered translation (at least in translations of works from the Tibetan tradition) is *valid cognition*. While this accurately reflects Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers’ most frequent usage of the term on a narrow epistemological level, it does not encompass all of the different usages of the term in Dharmakīrti’s work, let alone the range of senses in the broader Buddhist and non-Buddhist literature. Since the terms *valid* and *validity* do not limit the meaning in the same way, they are preferred here except in contexts where the term *valid cognition* seems clearer and less awkward.

⁴ Tāranātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, trans. (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), p. 182.

⁵ For a list of all of Dignāga’s works preserved in Tibetan, see Appendix 2. It should also be noted that in Tibetan, numbers such as 100 or 108 sometimes do not mean that number specifically but instead indicate a large number of several dozens.

⁶ Dharmakīrti’s dates are difficult to ascertain, but most sources agree that he was active in the seventh century. Tāranātha mentions that he was a contemporary of the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo (617 to 697 CE) and also mentions that he was a disciple of Dignāga’s student Īśvarasena (Tāranatha, p. 229).

Establishing Other Continua, The Drop of Proofs, Examination of Relations, and The Logic of Debate. Like Dignāga before him, Dharmakīrti used vocabulary and logical techniques that were common to non-Buddhist thinkers, and in this respect they can be considered participants in the general Indian philosophical tradition. Yet both used these tools and terminologies primarily to explain teachings that had been given by the Buddha and other Buddhist masters in the sutras, vinaya, and abhidharma, such as the selflessness of the individual, the nature of craving, ego-clinging, past and future lives, and so on.⁷ Dharmakīrti’s work in particular became especially influential. The extent to which subsequent Buddhist masters adopted his terminology and style of logic—even in discussing topics other than validity—demonstrates his authority within the Buddhist tradition, and the frequency with which he was quoted and rebutted by non-Buddhists (to be defended later by Buddhist commentators) over the next several centuries shows his impact on Indian philosophy in general.

In subsequent generations, several prominent Buddhist masters wrote commentaries on Dharmakīrti’s works, explaining in greater detail what had been cryptically concise in Dharmakīrti’s own works. They also refuted the rebuttals of subsequent non-Buddhist critics and reinterpreted his ideas in light of their own understanding or aims. Foremost among them for our purposes here (as they are Chödrak Gyatso’s primary sources in this chapter) are Devendrabuddhi (dates unknown), a direct disciple of Dharmakīrti who wrote a textual commentary that gives a word-by-word gloss on three chapters from the *Commentary*; Prajñākaragupta (740–800), who wrote *The Ornament of the Commentary on Validity*, a two-volume explanation of the *Commentary*; and Śākyabuddhi (dates unknown), a student of Devendrabuddhi who wrote a sub-commentary on Devendrabuddhi’s work.

Despite Dharmakīrti’s prominence in India, it was not until the late eleventh century that Tibetans began to take serious interest in Dharmakīrti’s work and the topic of validity. Ngok Lotsawa Loden Sherap (1059–1109) translated several texts on validity, includ-

⁷ Even Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s more original contributions may be viewed as ways to justify Buddhist positions in new language and terms. For example, Dignāga’s presentation of the exclusion or *apoha* as the object of thought and Dharmakīrti’s subsequent elaboration of it are quite original in many respects, but one also can see them as a way to explain one aspect of the selflessness of phenomena—how coarse relative phenomena such as water jugs can appear consistently to thought even though they are ultimately empty of any nature.

ing Dharmakīrti’s *Ascertainment*, and later Chapa Chökyi Senge (1101–1169) taught it widely and also introduced the style of debate that has now become integral to Tibetan education. But these masters also reinterpreted Dharmakīrti’s thought, which has a strong anti-realist bent, to bring it more in line with commonsense conceptions of reality.

The main issue of interpretation revolves around the status of universals—conceptual constructs that are applied to specific things, such as a universal “cowness” that inhabits all individual cows or a “blanket” that is inherent in the threads that are woven together to create it. Several non-Buddhist schools take a strongly realist position and say that such universals have true existence, but Dignāga and Dharmakīrti deny that universals could exist ultimately, even though they are useful on a conventional level of everyday interaction and are thus said to exist relatively or conventionally. In this respect, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti take an anti-realist position on the ultimate level. Yet such a view runs counter to ordinary, commonsense intuition. We see cows as truly being cows and blankets as truly existing; we do not see either a cow or a blanket as being a mere conceptual construct that is projected based on its constituent parts. Thus many later thinkers including Ngok Lotsawa, Chapa Chökyi Senge, and their descendants in the Geluk tradition allow that some commonsense objects and universals may have ultimate existence, thus incorporating a moderate realism into their explanations of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s thought. The specifics of their ideas (which also vary from thinker to thinker) are too complex to give justice in an essay such as this, but their interpretation quickly became dominant in Tibet.⁸

At the end of the twelfth century, the Kashmiri Mahāpaṇḍita Śākya Śrī Bhadra (1127–1225), an author of several works on validity, fled the destruction of Nalanda Monastic University in India by Muslim invaders and came to Tibet, where he would spend ten years teaching and propagating the Dharma. Among his students was the Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182–1251), who would later become recognized as one of the greatest scholars Tibet ever produced, especially in the field of validity. The Sakya Paṇḍita had previously studied validity, but when he heard Śākya Śrī Bhadra’s explanation of Dhar-

⁸ Dreyfus’ *Recognizing Reality* treats this issue of Tibetan reinterpretations of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti clearly and in great depth, so readers who would like a more in-depth discussion of this are encouraged to look there. The terms “anti-realist” and “moderate realism” are taken from Dreyfus’ presentation.

makīrti’s texts, he realized that Tibetan presentations of validity with their moderate realism differed significantly from Dharmakīrti’s original, anti-realist teachings. He then retranslated *The Commentary on Validity* with Śākya Śrī Bhadra and also wrote his brilliant treatise *The Treasury of Logic*, which gives a systematic presentation of the collected topics from an anti-realist perspective. Though his translation of *The Commentary* soon became standard, the Sakya Paṇḍita’s critique of Chapa Chökyi Senge’s realist view was not immediately accepted, and it was not until the turn of the fifteenth century that the ideas in his *Treasury* gained much acceptance. At that time, Yaktön Sangye Pal (1348–1414) wrote a commentary promoting the Sakya Paṇḍita’s interpretation, and later Sakya commentators such as Gorampa (1429–1489) and Śākya Chokden (1428–1507) wrote several commentaries following Yaktön Sangye Pal’s lead. Thus the Sakya Paṇḍita’s anti-realist interpretation and his *Treasury of Logic* became the basis for interpreting Dharmakīrti’s thought in the Sakya school. This view spread into the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions as well, where the Sakya Paṇḍita’s *Treasury* has become a standard part of the monastic curriculum. This is also the intellectual tradition to which Chödrak Gyatso’s *Ocean of Literature on Logic* belongs.

Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso and *The Ocean of Literature on Logic*

Among the Karmapas, Chödrak Gyatso was not the first to have a connection with Dharmakīrti and his work. The First Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa (1110–1193) was a student of Chapa Chökyi Senge, though his biographies do not mention whether he studied validity with him.⁹ The Second Karmapa Karma Pakshi (1203–1283) wrote a treatise on validity entitled *Infinite Oceans of Validity*, but other than some passages cited by Chödrak Gyatso, this work seems to have been lost and little can be said of its content. The Fourth Karmapa Rolpay Dorje (1340–1383) was also regarded as an expert in validity; the great

⁹ According to his biographies, in a previous lifetime, the First Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa was a bhikshu named Dharmakīrti, but it is not likely that this was the same Dharmakīrti as the one who wrote the seven treatises. Galo’s biography of Dusum Khyenpa and Tāranātha’s biography of Dharmakīrti in his *History of Buddhism in India* give different birthplaces and abbots for the bhikshu who was a previous incarnation of Dusum Khyenpa and for the author of the seven treatises. See Galo, “The Golden Isle: The Precious Lives of the Lord of Dharma in Eighteen Chapters” in *The First Karmapa: The Life and Teachings of Dusum Khyenpa*, Michele Martin and David Karma Choephel, trans. (Woodstock: KTD Publications, 2012), p. 7. See also Tāranātha, pp. 228–29.

Kagyü scholar Karma Trinleypa (ca. 1456–1539) says that Rolpay Dorje was the most learned of all the first seven Karmapas in both validity and the middle way.¹⁰ However, it is the Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso (1454–1506) who became the most widely renowned for mastery of validity, primarily due to *The Ocean*, which is not only the standard Karma Kagyü text on validity but also Chödrak Gyatso’s best known and most often studied work.

Though his biographies are not specific about when or with whom he studied validity, it is clear from *The Ocean* that the Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso was well-acquainted in the Geshe Chapa’s reinterpretations of Dharmakīrti’s thought as well as with the Sakya Paṇḍita’s work and the Indian commentarial tradition. Chödrak Gyatso also had a close connection with Śākya Chokden, the master from the Sakya lineage who had already written about validity by the time they met in 1484. The two had a relationship of equals and spent considerable time discussing various topics, including validity and most especially the Great Middle Way of the Yogācāra tradition—the Shentong view that is the philosophical basis for the practice of mahamudra, the main meditation practice of the Karma Kagyü.

Chödrak Gyatso composed *The Ocean* while staying at Tsaritra—a renowned sacred site in eastern Tibet where many Kagyü masters stayed in retreat—late in 1494 or early in 1495 when he was around forty years of age.¹¹ Though *The Ocean* is a carefully constructed work, it was not written in an ordinary fashion. Instead, Chödrak Gyatso dictated the entire text while sitting in meditation without referring to any texts at all. As his scribe Dakrampa Khedrup Chögyal Tenpa described:

¹⁰ Karma Trinleypa, *Dri lan rnam par thar pa’i don bsduṣ in Chos rje karma phrin las pa’i mgur dang/thun mong ba’i dris lan bzhugs so//* (Varanasi: Vajra Vidya Library, 2011), p. 183.

¹¹ At the end of the *Ocean*, it is written that “It is renowned that this was written by the Karmapa Ranjung Kunkhyen, the Dharma King Chödrak Gyatso at glorious Tsaritra.” (*‘di ni dpal tsa’ ri trar karma pa rang byung kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po chos grags rgya mtshos sbyar bar mdzad do zhes grags pa las*, RZG ii. 343a.) Though no date is given for its composition, it is known from the biographies of Chödrak Gyatso and from the autobiography of Shamar Chökyi Drakpa that the winter of 1494–95 was the only period Chödrak Gyatso went to Tsaritra as an adult. (Thanks to Karma Lekthong of the Duekhyen Library in Sidhbari, Dharamsala for supplying this information.)

If there had been anyone other than me to request this of this Lamp of the Three Worlds,¹² it would have been quickly completed, but there was no one, so I asked him to also write this *Ocean of Literature on Logic*. I also was his scribe.

The omniscient lord is completely unlike anyone else. There weren't even any texts on validity near him. He did not look at any books. The whole time his hands were in equipoise, his eyes in a gaze, and his mind in samadhi. Never leaving that state, his wish was to perform his activity in an inexhaustible Dharma rain of teachings and advice, while I sat next to his table holding a blackish pen. When there was a pause and I would ask him to speak, he would merely ask where we were and then dictate in an uninterrupted stream with his eyes in a meditational gaze.

Some of his explanations did not at all match those of present day epistemologists, and these could not penetrate the web of my own partial and supposed intelligence. But when I asked about them, he stopped dictating and said nothing at all. For several days he composed nothing. Then he said to me that I must have confidence in the lama's words and so forth. After that, I did not ask such questions and wrote exactly what he said. He gave such brilliant refutations and such that no ordinary scholarly intellectual would find any opportunity to rebut him if they analyzed even the finest point in a single facet of one of his arguments.

When I asked him to clarify a passage on the calculations of the globe,¹³ he gave with certainty all the reasons why it was not

¹² An epithet for Chödrak Gyatso.

¹³ It is not clear that this necessarily refers to a passage in *The Ocean*, as there is no mention of calculations of the globe (*go la'i rtsis*) in the modern editions of the text. It may refer to a passage in one of the sections of the text that has been lost, or it may have been a question in regard to a different text.

so. He then stretched his right hand out a bit into space, said, “I have had such discussions,” and smiled slightly. Other than me, no one in his entourage fully saw him stretch out his arm.¹⁴

The extraordinariness of this feat becomes even more evident upon examining Chödrak Gyatso’s *Ocean*, which he himself describes as “unprecedented” in his introductory verses. While there are many commentaries on Dignāga’s *Compendium* and each of Dharmakīrti’s individual works, there had previously been no other work that comments on so many of them in a single work—*The Ocean* includes commentaries on Dignāga’s *Compendium* and Dharmakīrti’s three major works, *The Commentary*, *Ascertainment*, and *Drop of Reasoning*.¹⁵ In his commentary, Chödrak Gyatso introduces the verses from Dignāga’s *Compendium* along with glosses and commentary, and then follows them with the explanations from each of Dharmakīrti’s different works and his own commentary on Dharmakīrti’s words. He also explains the different interpretations given by the major Indian commentators (in this chapter most frequently Devendrabuddhi, Prajñākaragupta, and Śākyabuddhi), but he rarely mentions Tibetan interpretations except to refute those he considers erroneous. His explanations are clear and succinct—the *Ocean*’s length comes more from the amount of material it covers than from any long-windedness on its author’s part. It is a complex, multi-tiered work, built atop the foundation of Dignāga’s *Compendium* and layered with the various strata of Dharmakīrti’s three main works filtered through the Indian commentators and Chödrak Gyatso’s own interpretation. Even

¹⁴ Pawo Tsuglak Trengwa, *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* (Beijing: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986), Vol. II, p. 1107–8. The scribe Dakrampa Khedrup Chögyal Tenpa was one of Pawo Tsuklag Trengwa’s masters and told him this story directly. (*’jig rten gsum sgron ’di la zhu ba po nga rang ’dra ba zhig yod na myur du ’grub pa yod ste de med pas lan/ rigs gzhung rgya mtsho ’di la rtsom par yang ngas gsol ba btab/ rtsom yig pa yang rang gis byas/ rje thams cad mkhyen pa de gzhan dang rang mi ’dra/ tshad ma’i gzhung tsam yang sku ’khris na mi bzhus/ phyag dpe ni mi gzigs/ dus rtag tu phyag mnyam gzhag spyen lta stangs thugs ting nge ’dzin las mi ’da’ ba de’i ngang nas/ bka’ chos gdams ngag chos kyi char pas mdzad skyong zad mi shes pa dgos [dgongs] pa’i gsol lcog gi ’khris su bdag gis snyug gu nag tung nge bzung nas bsdad/ gseng nam byung du thugs rtsom zhus pa na gang na yod gsungs pa tsam las thogs pa med par spyen lta stangs kyi ngang nas sha ra ra ljags dpod mdzad/ go la’i rtsis kyi skabs su cung zad go tshod zhus pa na/ de lta min pa’i rgyu mtshan mtha’ dag nges pa dang bcas te bka’ stsal nas phyag g.yas pa nam mkha’ la cung zad brkyangs nas nged bgro gleng de ltar byed pa yin gsungs nas zhal ’dzum tsam mdzad byung/ drung gi phyag brkyang ba rdzogs par mthong ba sku ’khor ba la yang nga las med pa yin*)

¹⁵ The pledge to compose at the opening of *The Ocean* indicates that Chödrak Gyatso may have initially intended to include commentaries on all seven of Dharmakīrti’s works on validity, but the finished work does not include commentaries on the four minor treatises.

had it been written in a more conventional manner, it would be an impressive intellectual achievement.

Throughout *The Ocean*, Chödrak Gyatso prefaces his explanations of many of the topics addressed by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti with general discussions that give an overview either of the topic about to be discussed or present background information on related issues. Drawing heavily from the works of Dharmakīrti and other masters of the Yogācāra tradition—notably Asaṅga—these general discussions are where Chödrak Gyatso gives his most distinctive synthesis of the various issues. The chapter “Establishing Validity” features ten such general discussions, addressing the characteristics of validity, the purpose of epistemological treatises, the views of non-Buddhist schools, the nature of omniscience, great compassion, the nature of abandonment and realization, selflessness and the three natures, and each of the four noble truths.¹⁶ In both the general discussions and Chödrak Gyatso’s gloss of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s texts, we can see what would become the hallmarks of the commentaries written by the great Kagyu masters of succeeding generations such as Karma Trinleypa, the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje, and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa: a heavy reliance on the texts of the Indian tradition and an unwillingness to brook what are viewed as distortions introduced by other masters.

After writing the work, Chödrak Gyatso taught it and gave the oral transmission several times to various masters of his day, including Pawo Tsuglak Trengwa and Śākya Chokden. Chödrak Gyatso gave Śākya Chokden a copy of the text and asked him to proofread it, and the two masters spent some time in discussions focused on the profound issues it raises.¹⁷ According to Chödrak Gyatso’s biography, when Śākya Chokden later wrote his own works on logic and validity, he followed the Karmapa’s explanations so closely that it is said that the two masters shared the same mind stream.¹⁸

Though *The Ocean of Literature on Logic* was immediately recognized as an important work, for the first few decades after its composition there were only a few looseleaf,

¹⁶ There are eleven general discussions listed in the outline of the chapter, but one—the discussion of the truth of cessation—merely refers back to a previous topic and is thus not counted separately here.

¹⁷ *bKa’ brgyud gser phreng rnam thar zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba* (Varanasi: Vajra Vidya Library, 2004), Vol. II, p. 182 & p. 250.

¹⁸ *bKa’ brgyud gser phreng*, p. 250. See also Dreyfus, p. 29.

handwritten copies of its two volumes. By the time of the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje (1507–1554), the pages from these copies had been scattered and many from the last two chapters were lost. As Mikyö Dorje said, “Disciples of lesser intelligence and great laziness were unable to grasp these treatises with a discerning intellect, and the proper compilation of the second volume was compromised.”¹⁹ At the suggestion of Karma Trinley-pa, a student of the Seventh Karmapa and teacher of the Eighth, Mikyö Dorje collected the remaining pages, which he compiled and edited, and then printed in a woodblock edition that was used to teach in the Karma Dratsang Leksheyling monastic college. Unfortunately, many pages from the original were missing and this edition was thus incomplete. Though it included Chödrak Gyatso’s entire explanation of Dharmakīrti’s *Commentary*, the commentaries on the *Ascertainment* and *Drop of Reasoning* were incomplete, missing pages especially in the last chapter. However, the first chapter “Establishing Validity” translated here has been preserved in its entirety.

Later Situ Chökyi Jungne (1700–1774) used Mikyö Dorje’s incomplete edition as the basis for another woodblock edition, which was then used in the preparation of a third woodblock print prepared at Palpung Monastery in Dergye, eastern Tibet, in 1934 at the request of Situ Pema Wangchok Gyalpo (1886–1952). This last edition is the basis for all the modern editions available, including the editions used for this translation.

Despite the unfortunate early history of the physical text, *The Ocean* has had an enduring influence. It has been taught and its reading transmission passed down through the generations to the present day.²⁰ In this era, it is the main text used for the study of validity in the monastic colleges of the Karma Kamtsang. It has also influenced masters from other traditions, most particularly Śākya Chokden and the nineteenth century Nyingma master Ju Mipham, who is said to have considered *The Ocean* to be the greatest of all the early commentaries on Dharmakīrti’s work and used it as the primary source for his own

¹⁹ From the colophon by Mikyö Dorje, RZG, Vol. II 343b. *gdul bya le lo che zhing shes rab chung ba dag gas bstan bcos de dag la rnam par dpyod pa'i blo gros kyis bzung bar ma nus nas glegs bam gyi phyi mo'ang legs par bsdu ba'i gzhi nyams par gyur pa na/*

²⁰ I studied this chapter at the Vajra Vidya Institute, Sarnath, Varanasi, India, in 2003 and later received the reading transmission of the entire *Ocean* from Khenpo Sherap Phuntsok of the Vajra Vidya Institute. Khenpo Sherap received it from Khenpo Lobsang Tenzin, who received it from Khenpo Sönam Yönten, who received it from Satsa Drupkhen. Satsa Drupkhen received the transmission from Situ Pema Wangchuk Gyalpo, one of the main lineage masters of the Karma Kamtsang.

commentary.²¹ Scholars from all of the traditions recognize *The Ocean* as an important work and debate it to this day, so it can be considered part of a living scholarly tradition.

An Overview of the Chapter “Establishing Validity”

This book presents the first chapter of Chödrak Gyatso’s *Ocean of the Literature on Logic*, which is his commentary on the first chapter of Dharmakīrti’s *Compendium of Validity*.²² That is in turn an extensive explanation of the verse of homage from Dignāga’s *Compendium of Validity*, which reads:

I bow to him who became valid,
The one who wishes to help beings,
The teacher, sugata, and protector.

On the surface level, Dignāga’s verse praises the Buddha for the qualities he has—his authority, compassion for beings, teachings, qualities of abandonment and realization, and the protection from suffering he offers all sentient beings. But in his autocommentary, Dignāga explains that these verses give the reasons why the Buddha Bhagavan has become valid—that is, why he is a reliable authority. It is, Dignāga explains, because the Buddha had the two perfect causes and the two perfect results. The perfect causes are the perfect intent (the wish to benefit all beings) and the perfect training (here called the teacher). Due to these two causes, he achieved the perfect results: the perfect benefit for himself (the sugata) and the perfect benefit for others (the protector). That is to say, because many lifetimes ago the Buddha cultivated the compassionate wish to awaken to buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings, he trained in developing the intelligence that realizes selflessness (the teacher or perfect training). As a result, he achieved the perfect abandonment of all defilements (the sugata) and thus gained the ability to

²¹ RZG, Vol 2, 348a.

²² There are differing opinions on the order of the chapters of the *Commentary*: this chapter is placed first in some editions, but many commentators and editions place the chapter on inference for oneself first instead. Near the opening of *The Ocean*, Chödrak Gyatso explains in detail the rationales for each of the different orderings of the chapters and says that both are valid. However, he himself places “Establishing Validity” first, and this translation follows his lead. Thus the order of the chapters assumed throughout this translation is 1. Establishing Validity, 2. Perception, 3. Inference for Oneself, and 4. Inference for Others.

teach the four noble truths unerringly to sentient beings (the protector). Because of all this, he is valid or authoritative.

At first glance, Dignāga’s praise might seem peculiar in its choice of epithets (wishing to help beings, the teacher, sugata, and protector) to prove the Buddha’s authority, but it is not without precedent in Buddhist literature. A passage in the *Minor Topics of the Vinaya* relates how the Buddha made a similar argument in a conversation with his cousin Nanda:

“What do you think, Nanda? Does the Tathagata speak words that are misleading?”

“No, Venerable.”

“Excellent, Nanda, excellent. It is improper for the Tathagata to say words that are misleading and there is no opportunity for it. Nanda, the Tathagata speaks the correct. He speaks the truth. He speaks the Dharma. He speaks suchness. He speaks unerringly. For a long time, the Tathagata has wished to benefit the world. He has wished it happiness. He has wished it accomplishment and happiness. He has known the path, accomplished the path, taught the path, described the path, and completely guided the path. The Tathagata is the arhat, completely perfect buddha, the one with awareness and conduct, the sugata, the one who knows the world, the charioteer who tames beings, the unsurpassable, the teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha Bhagavan.”²³

²³ *Vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu* ('Dul ba phran tshogs kyi gzhi), D6, DK 'Dul ba tha, 162a–b. *dga' bo de ji snyam du sems/ de bzhin gshegs pa gzhan du 'gyur ba'i tshig gang yin pa de gsung ngam/ btsun pa ma lags so/ / dga' bo legs so legs so/ de bzhin gshegs pa gzhan du 'gyur ba'i tshig gang yin pa de gsung ba ni gnas ma yin zhing go skabs med de/ dga' bo de bzhin gshegs pa ni yang dag pa gsung ba/ bden pa gsung ba/ chos gsung ba/ de kho na nyid gsung ba/ phyin ci ma log par gsung ba'o/ de bzhin gshegs pa ni yun ring po nas 'jig rten la phan pa bzhed pa/ bde ba bzhed pa/ grub pa dang bde ba bzhed pa/ lam mkhyen pa/ lam grub pa/ lam ston pa/ lam brjod pa/ lam yongs su 'dren pa'o/ de bzhin gshegs pa ni dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rig pa dang zhabs su ldan pa/ bde bar gshegs pa/ 'jig rten mkhyen pa/ skyes bu 'dul ba'i kha lo sgyur ba/ bla na med pa/ lha dang mi rnams kyi ston pa/ sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das so//*

Here the Bhagavan describes himself as being truthful and reliable—not saying words that are misleading and speaking the correct, the truth, the dharma, and suchness unerringly—for the same reasons presented in the same logical order as Dignāga gives them in his verse of homage. “For a long time, the Tathagata has wished to benefit the world...” corresponds to Dignāga’s “wish to help beings.” The next sentence, “He has known the path...” matches Dignāga’s explanation of the meaning of the epithet teacher. “The Tathagata is the arhat...” matches Dignāga’s sugata, and the last five epithets beginning with “the charioteer who tames beings...” correspond to Dignāga’s protector. Though this passage is not mentioned in any commentary I have seen and it would be mere conjecture to assume that this passage were Dignāga’s direct source, it can be said that his homage—both its words and logic—has a precedent in Buddhist scriptures and thought.

Dignāga’s argument for the authority of the Buddha is so short—a verse of twenty-four syllables in Sanskrit and a short paragraph of commentary giving little more than the broad outlines of the logic—that it seems to invite more questions than it resolves. What does it mean to say the Buddha has “become valid”? What is so special about the bodhisattva’s compassion compared to ordinary compassion? Why is the training on the path called the “teacher”? What is the meaning of calling the Buddha a “sugata” and “protector”? How do we know that each step leads to the next and that we can therefore trust the Buddha as an authority? Thus when Dharmakīrti wrote his *Commentary*, he devoted an entire chapter to exploring these questions and responding to any objections that might arise.

Dharmakīrti’s explanation takes each of the four qualities of the Buddha presented as evidence of his validity—the wish to benefit others, the teacher, sugata, and protector—and explains them first in the order in which they appear (both in terms of Dignāga’s verse and in terms of the progression on the path to buddhahood) and then in the reverse order. Presenting them in order demonstrates how each arises as a result of the previous one. That is to say, compassion—cultivating the wish to help beings until it becomes unbearably strong—leads the bodhisattva to train in the path, which is called by the name *teacher*. Through the training in the path, the bodhisattva is able to eliminate all the obscurations and thus achieve the state of sugata. Because the sugata has the perfect realiza-

tion, he is able to become the protector and teach the four noble truths without error. Since being able to unerringly guide beings who seek liberation to their desired end is the meaning of validity and the means of doing so is teaching the four noble truths without error, it is therefore possible that he could have become valid.

But this alone does not prove the validity of the Buddha, because the existence of cause cannot prove that a particular result will necessarily occur, just as the presence of a seed does not prove the existence of a flower. Likewise, cultivating compassion motivates the bodhisattva to train in the path, but does not guarantee that he has done so. Thus presenting the reasons in order simply demonstrates that the Buddha’s validity is possible, but not that he has definitely become valid. As Devendrabuddhi says, “In this way, one can infer from the previous causes—the wish to benefit beings and so forth—that all the later ones are possible, so it proves that validity is not utterly impossible.”²⁴ But proving the possibility is not enough for Dharmakīrti; he wants to establish the Buddha’s validity beyond doubt. For this reason, he also presents the reasons in reverse order, with each result proving the prior existence of its cause. Thus the fact that the Buddha teaches the four truths unerringly—that he is the protector—proves that he has the qualities of abandonment and realization (the *sugata*), which are the cause of being able to do so. This in turn proves its cause, that the bodhisattva trained in the path (the teacher), which then proves that he must have cultivated great compassion, the wish to help beings. Thus these four reasons that are both causes and results prove Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s proposition that the Buddha Bhagavan is valid.

Though the outlines of the logic are simple enough, Dharmakīrti is extremely thorough in his presentation of it, addressing many ancillary issues and responding to objections from non-Buddhist opponents. This is one of the aspects of Dharmakīrti’s work that can make it hard for new students: understanding Dharmakīrti’s logic is difficult without first grasping his opponents’ positions and objections. Chödrak Gyatso’s commentary provides basic overviews of the non-Buddhist philosophies (usually accompanied by brief synopses of the logic refuting their positions), which should provide enough information

²⁴ DB 61b: *de de ltar na lugs las 'byung ba 'gro ba la phan par mdzad par bzhed pa nyid la sogs pa rgyu snga ma snga mas phyi ma phyi ma tham cad la srid pa'i rjes su dpag pas/ tshad ma shin tu mi srid pa med pa rab tu bsgrubs nas/*

for the general reader to understand Dharmakīrti’s arguments. A few points have also been supplemented with notes.²⁵ These discussions also provide some of the most interesting parts of this book—the refutation of a creator god, explanation of the meaning of omniscience, discussion of rebirth, and so forth all occur in response to objections from non-Buddhists. Though many of these points are directed at specific ancient philosophies, they often have analogues in Western thought or even reflect doubts that contemporary readers harbor. Thus, even though Dharmakīrti and his opponents may seem remote, the questions they discuss and Dharmakīrti’s arguments remain relevant even today.

Though Dharmakīrti’s text is philosophical in its tone, it is not necessarily a purely intellectual exercise, especially if studying it is accompanied by introspection and contemplation of its meaning. We can examine much of what he writes in our own experience. For example, when Dharmakīrti describes the protector as teaching the four noble truths, he describes each of the four noble truths in ways we can evaluate for ourselves. In describing suffering, Dharmakīrti writes that “It is impermanent as it’s observed / Occasionally,”²⁶ and we can look for ourselves to see whether or not this is the case. We can likewise evaluate his subsequent arguments that suffering has a cause and that the cause is craving based on our own experience. Doing so, we can evaluate for ourselves whether or not the Buddha Bhagavan truly is a protector, and then consider the rest of Dharmakīrti’s arguments. If we approach this text with a purely external focus, there is the danger that many of his arguments might sound circular. But by relating them to what we can examine for ourselves, Dharmakīrti’s arguments cease to seem self-referential and instead become grounded in our own experience.

²⁵ Thorough descriptions of the non-Buddhist positions would require more verbiage than is appropriate for this sort of a translation. Those readers who want more thorough treatments of the non-Buddhist positions are encouraged to look at the excellent recent literature on Indian philosophy in general and Dharmakīrti in particular. Radhakrishnan’s *Indian Philosophy* and Hopkins’ *Maps of the Profound* both give good overviews of the various non-Buddhist schools, and Dreyfus’ *Recognizing Reality* and Dunne’s *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy* also both give excellent descriptions of the positions of Dharmakīrti’s opponents.

²⁶ Verse 178ab.

The Phases of Analysis

Since much of his work centers around refutations of his opponents, Dharmakīrti often frames his arguments in ways that they can understand and takes their assumptions as a basis for his reasoning. Thus he generally presents his arguments not from the perspective of his own ultimate view but from the perspective of a level that his opponents and readers can accept. This allows him to make his specific point without needing to defend more profound positions that would distract from his argument. But it also means that he argues on many different levels within this chapter. He often argues on a level of conventional or relative truth, and occasionally he even provisionally seems to accept a non-Buddhist position for the sake of a specific line of reasoning. When it suits his purpose, however, he will shift to a subtler level of analysis. This willingness to shift positions has given a great deal of fodder to the scholars and commentators in subsequent centuries who have tried to determine what Dharmakīrti's own views are and what school they fit into.

Traditionally, Tibetan scholars have said that Dharmakīrti presents the relative truth according to the Sutra school and the ultimate truth according to either the Mind Only or Middle Way. Though useful in many ways, this is a bit of a simplification,²⁷ and Chödrak Gyatso does not use this framework. Though Chödrak Gyatso does not discuss it in this chapter, in the second chapter of *The Ocean*, he explains how Dharmakīrti presents his arguments on varying levels to match the capabilities of students who are in different phases of development. He distinguishes three such phases: the preanalytic phase, the phase of partial analysis, and the phase of thorough analysis.

1. The preanalytic phase is the level of ordinary people who have not yet begun to question the true nature of experience as well as of those people who have begun to question things but follow other, non-Buddhist philosophies. For such people, conventional appearances are real as they appear. In addressing them, Dharmakīrti often argues on the level of the conventional (or relative) truth. This is the level in which he mentions water jugs, potters, and sentient beings who are reborn.

²⁷ John D. Dunne has some insightful comments on this issue in his *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), p. 59 n13.

2. The phase of partial analysis is the provisional stage of those who have begun to analyze the nature of reality but not yet arrived at the level of the ultimate truth. For such people, Dharmakīrti often argues on the level of external realism. Although on this level he denies the ultimate existence of jugs, sentient beings, and other coarse, conventional phenomena, he does provisionally accept the existence of the atoms and instants of cognition that are their building blocks.²⁸ At points, Dharmakīrti also argues on an idealist level where all external phenomena are presented as merely manifestations of mind. This phase should thus not be viewed as a single, cohesive view, but rather a progression over which more profound insights come closer and closer to the ultimate truth, though they have not yet arrived there.
3. The phase of thorough analysis is the realization of the Great Middle Way. At this point, the analysis is complete and the view is of the true nature, the ultimate truth.

Phases	Level of Analysis
Pre-analytic	Conventional
Partial analysis	External realism
	Idealism
Thorough analysis	Great Middle Way

Figure 1: Phases and levels of analysis in Dharmakīrti’s work.

In this chapter, Dharmakīrti mostly argues on the levels of the conventional truth and external realism—the preanalytic phase and phase of partial analysis—moving back and forth between them as suits his rhetorical needs. The phase of thorough analysis—the view of the Great Middle Way—is touched on in a few places in this chapter but is otherwise not explicitly mentioned here. Often Dharmakīrti will make an argument on a deeper level of analysis but provide an analogy on the conventional level where it will be

²⁸ As Dreyfus and Dunne both note, even this level of external realism is not monolithic; one can distinguish two main levels of analysis within it, which Dreyfus calls the “alternate interpretation” and “standard interpretation” and Dunne calls “Abhidharma Typology” and “External Realism.” The distinctions between these two levels are rather technical and not critical for our purposes here. See Dreyfus, pp. 83–105, and Dunne, pp. 55–79.

more easily understood (though this should not be misconstrued as implying that he thinks that conventional analogies are somehow real on the higher levels). Furthermore, Dharmakīrti does not seem overly concerned with making a thoroughly consistent, iron-clad presentation on many of the levels that appear, particularly in the phase of partial analysis, and a seemingly definitive statement made on one level of analysis may be undercut on a slightly higher level a few verses later.²⁹ Because of this, it often seems difficult to ascertain exactly what Dharmakīrti’s own positions are.

What is Dharmakīrti’s reason for refusing to be pinned down to any single level of analysis or to any single, definitive position? Likely it is because the primary purpose of his text—as described by Chödrak Gyatso—is not so much to present Buddhist ideas as to refute opponents’ incorrect positions and thus clear away any misconceptions in his readers’ minds. Therefore he needs to present his arguments on levels that his opponents and readers can accept. Just looking at Dharmakīrti’s text confirms that his primary objective is refutation: the stanzas that present a Buddhist position are far outnumbered by the many that refute non-Buddhist ideas.³⁰ (This should not be taken to mean that Dharmakīrti does not present Buddhist ideas. In fact, he does give clear, succinct presentations of many topics, notably the natures of the four noble truths.) As Chödrak Gyatso says:

²⁹ One clear example of this is in the beginning of the second chapter of *The Commentary*, where he states: “In this, the ultimately functional / Ultimately exists,” (ii.3ab, *arthakriyāsamartha yat tadatra paramārthasat, don dam don byed nus pa gang/ /de ’dir don dam yod pa yin/*) In this passage, Dharmakīrti describes ultimate truth as meaning being able to function, which he and his commentators explain to mean causal efficacy—ultimately existent things are able to produce results. Yet just twenty-two verses later, Dharmakīrti shifts to a more profound level and states that the relationship between cause and result is not ultimate. “The relationship is made by thought,” he says (ii.25c, *sambadhyate kalpanayā, rtogs pa yis ni ’brel par byed/*), meaning that it is purely relative. And if the relationship between cause and result is conventional, then causal efficacy itself can only be conventional and the earlier statement that the ultimate is causally efficient must be seen as a provisional statement made in a particular context for the sake of a particular argument, not as Dharmakīrti’s own ultimate view. Indeed, Dharmakīrti has signaled this shift in levels of analysis in his earlier statement itself by qualifying it, saying only that it is ultimate “In this” (*atra*)—here in this context. Thus the statements frequently encountered in the secondary literature that Dharmakīrti considers only the causally efficient to exist ultimately should be taken with a grain of salt, for a close examination shows that Dharmakīrti only makes such a statement on a lower, provisional level of analysis.

³⁰ This is in contrast to other Buddhist treatises whose primary aim is to present a Buddhist view, such as Vasubandhu’s *Verses on the Treasury of Abhidharma* or Maitreya’s *Ornament of Clear Realization*, for example, where comparatively few verses are refutations.

In this way, after the wrong views of eternalism and nihilism and the erroneous paths have been disproven through logic, one will enter the right view and unmistaken path. This is the special purpose of treatises that teach the characteristics.³¹

Were Dharmakīrti to argue on the level of his ultimate view, his opponents would not be able to accept his refutations because they would diverge too far from conventional experience. Thus he must argue on lower levels of analysis that are profound enough to refute his opponents’ wrong views yet still close enough to ordinary perceptions that the opponents can accept them. In this way, Dharmakīrti can gradually lead them to more subtle and profound understandings. His intent is therefore not to construct a thorough, consistent epistemology or ontology on each level of analysis but instead to create a plausible enough presentation on the lower levels to convince his audience and guide them to a higher level. Indeed, if it were possible to create a consistent presentation on the lower levels there would be no need for a higher level because the lower level would explain everything satisfactorily. It is precisely because there are necessarily gaps and inconsistencies in the lower levels that more profound analysis becomes necessary. As a verse found in a few sutras and cited in several treatises says,

And if the faculties were valid
Who would do anything with the noble path?³²

That is, if our ordinary perceptions were truly valid, there would be no need to engage in listening, contemplation, and meditation to achieve more profound levels of understanding.

The conventional and the levels on the phase of partial analysis are based to varying degrees on the dualistic, ignorant delusion of clinging to the apprehending mind and the apprehended phenomena as separate and somehow real. This is the sphere in which ordinary beings operate, and it is impossible for all but the most exceptional of individuals to

³¹ “Treatises that teach the characteristics” is another term for texts on validity.

³² *dbang po 'di dag gal te tshad yin na/ 'phags pa'i lam gyis su la ci zhig bya//*

suddenly cast off ignorance and gain a deeper realization of the nature of reality. Therefore, beings need to be guided gradually from a deluded conventional understanding through the gradually more refined but still provisional stages—the stages traditionally called the Sutra school and Mind Only—to reach a definitive realization of the true nature.

Dharmakīrti’s View of the Ultimate

But what Dharmakīrti considers to be the true nature is a question that has led to great debate over the centuries. He is generally identified as part of the Yogācāra tradition, and many scholars explain that this means his ultimate view is that of the Mind Only school. But Chödrak Gyatso has little patience for such talk—he describes such a view here as “merely the laziness of confusing Idealism for the Yogācāra Middle Way.” For him, as for most masters of the Karma Kagyu, Yogācāra is not the particular set of tenets of the Mind Only (Idealist) school, as many Tibetans would have it, but a lineage of teachers that began with Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu and later included both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as well as many other Indian masters. Though these masters did of course teach from a Mind Only perspective in some treatises or passages, it would be a mistake to say the Mind Only is their ultimate view. If merely occasionally teaching the Mind Only perspective made one a proponent of the Mind Only, then as many Kagyu texts including this one argue, the Shakyamuni Buddha would also be a Mind Only teacher because he also taught Mind Only tenets in many sutras. Instead, Chödrak Gyatso and other Kagyu masters view Yogācāra masters such as Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti as teaching a Middle Way philosophy—later called the Shentong or “other empty” view—that is not fundamentally different in its view of the ultimate nature from the Middle Way taught by Nagārjuna and his followers, which is often called the Rangtong or “self-empty” view. Chödrak Gyatso describes the distinction between the two traditions of Asaṅga and Nagārjuna as primarily one of emphasis. Asaṅga and his followers emphasize luminosity—the “wisdom that realizes the self-aware, self-knowing mind”—whereas Nagārjuna and his followers emphasize its lack of a nature, the aspect of emptiness. But that clear luminosity and the emptiness are not separate in any way, so there is no differ-

ence in the actual nature of what these two traditions teach; there is only a difference in the emphasis and the words used to explain it. As Chödrak Gyatso says:

In teaching the ultimate suchness, there is no distinction at all between the two great traditions, because the clear essence of mind has been emptiness from the very beginning, and that emptiness has abided as the character of clarity from the very beginning.

Chödrak Gyatso calls this tradition the Great Middle Way of the Yogācāra and places Dignāga and Dharmakīrti firmly within it, stating that the “final intent of their texts including *The Compendium of Validity* and the seven treatises fits within and falls within the textual tradition of the Yogācāra.” He addresses the reasons for saying their ultimate view is the Middle Way in greater detail in the second chapter “Perception,” but he does take up the question in this chapter, notably in his general discussions.

The clearest expression of the Great Middle Way view in the root verses of this chapter is Dharmakīrti’s famous couplet that encapsulates the essence of its view:

The nature of the mind is luminous;
The stains are adventitious.³³

These two lines have become renowned as a description of the ultimate nature and are often cited in treatises describing buddha nature and mahamudra. But they are not the only evidence of a Middle Way view in this chapter. Chödrak Gyatso’s close disciple Karma Trinleypa writes that Chödrak Gyatso cites Dharmakīrti’s description of the truth of the path as characteristic of a Middle Way view because it presents the truth of the path as being the same as the truth of cessation:

Furthermore, in the chapter “Establishing Validity,”
The truth of the path that directly realizes the nature
Is said to be the same as the truth of cessation.

³³ Verse 210ab.

Therefore, this is a text of the Middle Way tradition,
he [Chödrak Gyatso] maintained.³⁴

What Karma Trinleypa is referring to is Dharmakīrti’s description in verse 216 of how the wisdom of the path—here called the view of emptiness—is exclusive of delusion and the faults:

Because the view of emptiness is exclusive
Of that, it’s proven to be exclusive of
The faults that have that as their nature.

Because it is exclusive of delusion, when the wisdom of the path arises, delusion simultaneously ceases. This cessation of delusion—emptiness—is not separate from the wisdom of the path that views emptiness, and thus the truths of the path and cessation are unified. The wisdom of the path that realizes emptiness is itself emptiness (cessation), but that cessation is also wisdom by its nature. This position is characteristic of the Middle Way—the lower schools deny that wisdom is empty and assert that it exists in the ultimate truth.

The point of all of this is not so much whether Dharmakīrti’s own personal view was actually Middle Way or not; we as ordinary people separated from him by the distance of fourteen centuries have no way to definitively know. What is important is that when viewed as part of the tradition of the Great Middle Way, Dharmakīrti’s texts can help us understand the philosophical basis for meditational practices such as mahamudra, as Kagyu masters from the time of Chödrak Gyatso and Karma Trinleypa onward have often said. Regarded in this way, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s works then cease being merely intellectual but instead become part of the path by which we can, to paraphrase Dharmakīrti’s verse of homage, clear away the net of thought and gain the vast and profound bodies of a buddha ourselves.

³⁴ Karma Trinleypa, p. 170. *gzhan yang tshad ma grub pa’i le’u las/ /gnus lugs mngon sum rtogs pa’i lam bden ni/ /’gog pa’i bden pa nyid dang gcig par gsungs/ /de phyir dbu ma’i gzhung lugs yin zhes bzhed*

The Meaning of Validity

Over the course of this chapter, Dharmakīrti addresses various issues of interest—whether there is a creator god, the nature of omniscience, how compassion can develop exponentially, the nature of the four noble truths, and so forth—and Chödrak Gyatso adds a few topics in his general discussions as well. For the most part, the text presents these clearly and they do not need further explanation here. However, a couple—the meaning of validity and the topic of rebirth—that could benefit from some additional explanation will be discussed in the next few pages.

Even in the opening verses, it is clear that Dharmakīrti uses the term *validity* on different levels. Often he uses it in an epistemological sense as to how to determine whether a cognition is valid or not, but he also uses it to refer to the authoritativeness of the Buddha Bhagavan. As Chödrak Gyatso highlights (following a distinction found in Dharmakīrti’s *Ascertainment* as well as in Prajñākaragupta’s *Ornament* and other commentaries), from the very outset there is the tension between the usage referring to the ultimate validity of a Buddha and the usage referring to the conventional validity that is the means to achieve that ultimate validity. Because Dharmakīrti uses the term *validity* in this manner with different but related meanings, there has been a great deal of discussion in the commentarial literature as well as in contemporary academic sources about what he actually intends by the word.

In trying to understand what the word *pramāṇa* means (or its Tibetan translation *tshad ma* in the context of the Tibetan canon), it is helpful to look at how the word is used in the wider context of Buddhist literature, particularly in the vinaya where technical terms are often used in a historical narrative context that illuminates not just their technical meaning but their general usage and diction. The word *tshad ma* appears three times in historical passages in *The Topics of the Vinaya*,³⁵ where it has the sense of a statement being authoritative or reliable. For example, a passage describing the reaction of the early Śākya princes to the sage Kapīla’s advice to marry their half-sisters reads, “‘The sage’s words are valid (*tshad ma*),’ they thought...”³⁶ In such narrative contexts, the word *valid*

³⁵ *Vinaya Vastu*, ‘*dul ba lung gzhi*. This is based on a search of the Jang Litang Kangyur.

³⁶ *Vinaya Vastu*, ‘*dul ba lung gzhi*, JK ‘Dul ba ga pa, 294a. *de na de rnams drang srong gi tshig ni tshad ma yin no snyam nas*.

means authoritative and worth heeding, and applies primarily to words. This is similar to one usage of the word *pramāṇa* by non-Buddhists sects that assert the Vedic scriptures are verbal validity because they are “not of human origin,” a notion that Dharmakīrti refutes briefly here and at greater length in other chapters of his *Commentary*. Yet though he denies verbal validity, Dharmakīrti does seem to accept this sense of the word as meaning authoritative, in particular in reference to the Bhagavān as ultimate validity. Because he has perfected the qualities of abandonment and realization through cultivating compassion and training in the path, the Buddha is said to be valid—that is, an authoritative, reliable guide.

Yet much of the time, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti use the word *pramāṇa* on the level of epistemology and conventional validity. This usage of the term seems to come from their participation in the pan-Indian *pramāṇa* tradition and shared systems of logic that started around the second century with the founding of the Nyāya school. From this time onward, there were lively inter-sectarian debates, and each school posited its own criteria for and classification of validity, though there was enough common ground among the schools that they could use it as the basis for their debates.³⁷ For most of the non-Buddhist schools, it refers to the means of knowledge—the perception, inference, scriptures, and so forth that lead to knowledge, which is considered result of the valid.³⁸ But Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers take a more restrictive view of validity. For them validity (at least on the conventional level) must be cognition itself, not the means to knowledge: the means of knowing—the *pramāṇa*—and its resulting knowing are essentially two simultaneous aspects of the same cognition, as Dharmakīrti describes in his chapter on perception. As Dharmakīrti says here, “The valid is an undeceiving mind.”³⁹ Thus on this epistemological level, Dharmakīrti rules out anything other than cognition (such as scriptures, the sensory faculties, and so forth) being considered valid.

³⁷ Dunne, p. 19.

³⁸ As Dunne points out, knowledge for the *Pramāṇa* theorists has a different connotation than for contemporary European and American philosophers. Rather than indicating a justified true belief or attitude, knowledge is instead considered a cognitive event that is an act of knowing indubitably. See Dunne, p. 18.

³⁹ Verse 3a.

Additionally, for Dharmakīrti the valid must “dwell in the ability to function,”⁴⁰ or to dwell in *arthakriyā*, a Sanskrit term he uses with different meanings in different contexts. In the chapter on perception, he uses it in the sense of causal efficacy, but here it has the sense of attaining a goal or aim: the valid enables an individual to encounter an entity as it is apprehended. Chödrak Gyatso explains:

The meaning of *undeceiving* is that the individual is able to encounter the entity as the valid cognition itself indicates. This is called by the term *undeceiving*. It means nothing other than that it makes an individual comprehend the object without error by way of producing recognition that realizes the way the object is.

Additionally, Dharmakīrti only considers undeceiving cognitions that engage real things (here called specific characteristics,⁴¹ which on the level of external realism refers to atoms and instants of cognition) to be valid, not those that engage conceptual projections such as universals (that is, some sort of “jugness” or “cowness” that would inhabit specific vessels and bovines and make them into jugs and cows). This is because only specific characteristics can fulfill aims—actual water can slake thirst while a concept of water cannot. As Dharmakīrti says:

Cognition that knows the unknown specific
Characteristics is intended, since
One analyzes specific characteristics.⁴²

In this way, Dharmakīrti’s approach is typically concrete and pragmatic: any description of real or unreal must be based on specific experience, not conceptual projections.

⁴⁰ Verse 3b.

⁴¹ Specific characteristics (*svalakṣaṇam*, *rang mtshan*) refers to the actual particulars that can perform causal functions or fulfill aims, such as the atoms that make up coarse physical objects or specific instances of cognition that comprise a mental continuum. They are contrasted with universal characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇam*, *spyi mtshan*), which are the conceptual ideas of a universal nature that inhabits the instances of a specific class, such as being a jug or being a cow.

⁴² Verse 8b-d.

And yet such a characterization of validity can only operate on a lower level of analysis, for a cognition that engages without deception an external object such as fire can only be considered valid on levels where the independent existence of such external objects is not directly challenged. Thus at the end of the first chapter of his *Ascertainment*, Dharmakīrti makes a distinction between such valid cognitions—which he calls conventional validity—and ultimate validity, which is the eventual result of contemplation and meditation:

...in relation to being undeceiving about the conventional, it [conventional validity] is valid here. This here is in all respects a description of the nature of conventional validity, because others are deluded about it and the world is thus deceived. By becoming familiarized with the intelligence produced by contemplation, one is separated from confusion of misunderstanding and manifests ultimate validity, which cannot be turned back from the stainless.⁴³

That is to say, ordinary beings misunderstand what validity is and thus treat things that are not valid or authoritative even conventionally—the faculties, Vedas, and so forth—as if they were and then perform actions such as animal sacrifice that will only create more suffering for themselves and others. When taught conventional validity, however, they can contemplate it and develop a view that accords with the true nature, the four noble truths. By meditating on this, they will free themselves from confusion and achieve nirvana, the stainless ultimate validity. In this manner, distinguishing between conventional and ultimate validity can be seen as one aspect of the different phases and levels of analysis described above, and conventional validity becomes a part of Dharmakīrti’s method for gradually guiding beings to progressively more profound insights.

⁴³ PVin 167a. *tha snyad la mi slu la ltos nas 'dir tshad ma yin no/ l'di ni kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma'i rang bzhin brjod pa yin no/ l'di la yang pha rol rmongs pas 'jig rten slu bar byed pa'i phyir ro/ l/bsams pa las byung ba nyid kyi shes rab goms par byas pas rnam par 'khrul pas dben zhing dri ma med la ldog pa med pa'i don dam pa'i tshad ma mngon sum du byed do//*

Though Dharmakīrti does not explain this distinction in this chapter, Chödrak Gyatso does bring it into his analysis of Dharmakīrti’s text, explaining several of these verses in terms of both ultimate and conventional validity. In doing so, he brings out yet another meaning of the Sanskrit *arthakriyā*: the function or *artha* that the Buddha fulfills is the twofold benefit (*artha*) for self and other. As Chödrak Gyatso says:

Due to his perfect intent, he performs all temporary and ultimate benefit for wanderers. Because of the cause of the perfect training of the path, he dwells in the ability to achieve that function of benefiting and is proven to be the protector who never deceives.

Thus for Chödrak Gyatso, the Bhagavan himself is the ultimate validity: he has achieved the perfect abandonment and realization of the sugata and thus fulfilled the ultimate benefit for himself. At the same time, as the protector who teaches the path without deception, he has achieved the ultimate benefit for others.

Dharmakīrti’s Argument for Rebirth

Of all the various issues that Dharmakīrti covers in this chapter, the one for which it is most famous is his proof of rebirth and reincarnation. This is not merely among contemporary academics. For centuries, Dharmakīrti’s defense of rebirth has been celebrated and studied in India and Tibet within a social context where belief in rebirth is the cultural norm. Dharmakīrti’s discussion of the logic and supporting arguments occur in two long passages that together account for well over a third of the chapter—113 of 287 stanzas.⁴⁴ From the length and depth of his arguments, it is clear that this is just as important an issue for Dharmakīrti as it has been for later scholars.

The reasons become clear upon looking at the context for the proof. Dharmakīrti first addresses the issue in support of his assertion that the cause of achieving buddhahood is cultivating compassion over many lifetimes—a standard Buddhist position dating back to

⁴⁴ In typical Dharmakīrtian fashion, he does also explore other, tangential issues during these two passages, but only in order to prove subsidiary aspects of his main proof.

the many occasions when the Buddha spoke of past and future lives recorded in the sutras and the vinaya. Dharmakīrti returns to the topic of rebirth a second time to defend his position that “Suffering is the samsaric aggregates”⁴⁵ against the opponents’ assertion that there is no samsara where beings come from one lifetime and go on to the miseries of the next. These are two key points of Buddhist thought: without rebirth, the achievement of buddhahood would be impossible, and striving for it would be pointless as well since sentient beings would cease to exist after death and thus be automatically released from any suffering whether they had done any spiritual practice or not. In other words, without rebirth there could be neither samsara nor nirvana, and there would be little need for Buddhism.

But accepting rebirth is difficult for many who have received a Western education. In the materialistic viewpoint that has the ascendancy in the sciences, education, and mainstream media, there is little room for such things as rebirth or afterlife that are difficult to physically measure and quantify. An infinite cycle of rebirth also seems strange to those Christians and others who posit an eternal afterlife. Thus many people these days are skeptical at best about rebirth, and the idea that humans “have a brief tenure on Earth, bracketed by infinities of nothingness,”⁴⁶ resonates strongly for many. Even among the Western Buddhist community, there are some well-known authors who deny rebirth and attract a sympathetic following, and it is not uncommon for people to say one can be Buddhist without accepting rebirth. Perhaps this skepticism is for the best. People who read the viewpoints of the proponents and opponents, contemplate the matter, and decide for themselves will come to greater certainty than they would if they unthinkingly accepted rebirth as truth or fiction without really questioning their own beliefs and cultural biases. And those biases may just as easily be those of someone educated in a materialist, scientific environment as those of a person steeped in Buddhism and talk of reincarnation since birth. Thus arguments such as Dharmakīrti’s are important for us in the twenty-first century as well—not so much to convince us but to provoke the contemplation that will bring us to greater understanding.

⁴⁵ Verse 148c.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Franzen, “Jonathan Franzen: what's wrong with the modern world,” <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/13/jonathan-franzen-wrong-modern-world>.

In many treatises, rebirth and karma are described as extremely hidden objects, beyond the sphere of ordinary perception or inference. Such objects are often said to be essentially a matter of faith that need to be accepted based on scriptural authority, but Dharmakīrti does not assert that in this chapter. Instead, Dharmakīrti presents an argument based upon the principles of cause and result, implicitly taking the position that rebirth can be proven logically and therefore known through inference.

The crux of Dharmakīrti's argument is that the mind and matter both arise out of substantial causes of their own kind, and therefore any cognition, including the first cognition of this life, must have been preceded by an earlier one. Here *substantial* and *substance* do not necessarily mean material or physical but can also refer to the immaterial natures of phenomena such as cognition. Matter and cognition have very different substances—one physical and the other not—and thus they are considered fundamentally different in kind. Thus the body and mind cannot be each other's substantial causes.

In Dharmakīrti's presentation, everything that arises has a substantial cause that interacts with various supporting conditions to produce a result. For example, when a lump of clay is made into a pot, the clay is the substantial cause and the various factors that influence its production—the potter, the wheel, the implements, and so forth—are all conditions that affect the finished pot but are different in substance from the clay. Likewise, each instant of cognition has a substantial cause (the previous instant of cognition) that is of the same substance as well as various conditions (the sensory faculties, the object of cognition, and so forth) that affect it but are not of the same substance. Thus the body cannot be the substantial cause of mind because it is different in substance—it is material, not mental—though it can affect cognition by way of being one of its conditions, such as its object.

Additionally, Dharmakīrti follows the general Buddhist principle that all composite phenomena, such as mind or physical matter, are impermanent, arising and perishing in each moment. Each moment of matter acts as the substantial cause of the next moment of matter. Likewise, each cognition acts as the substantial cause of the next cognition, which arises in the following instant. Since every moment of cognition must have a substantial cause, the very first cognition in a given lifetime must have also have a substantial cause, and that would have to be the last cognition of the previous lifetime since it cannot arise

without a cause—out of nothing—or out of only physical causes.⁴⁷ Therefore for Dharmakīrti, the previous life is proven. As he says in verse 166:

Nonconsciousness is not the substantial cause
Of consciousness, so it is also proven.

As a corollary to this, Dharmakīrti also argues that just as it can be seen that each cognition in this life has the power to produce the next cognition, so too must the consciousness at the time of death also have the capability of producing the next consciousness, which is the first consciousness of the next stage of existence.⁴⁸

Dharmakīrti’s argument comes down to the dualistic idea that the mind and body have separate continua, at least on a conventional, commonsense level.⁴⁹ For this reason, the main objections Dharmakīrti addresses are those of the Cārvāka school, which (much like materialist scientists and philosophers of today) asserts that consciousness arises from physical causes, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. Starting from verse 39d, Dharmakīrti devotes most of the first passage on rebirth to rebutting this position, examining logically the relation between mind and the body. He explains why the mind cannot be a quality of the body, the same in substance as the body, or a result of the body. By demonstrating this, he establishes that the mind and body must have separate substantial continua.

Though he asserts that continua of the body and mind are separate, Dharmakīrti does not argue that they are so radically separated that they have no affect upon each other. Instead, he argues that the body and mind also coexist as cooperating conditions for each other—conditions that are different in substance from the substantial cause but that work together with it to produce a result. For example, decisions we make in our minds cause

⁴⁷ Various Buddhist schools differ about whether there is a between state (*bardo*) between the moment of death and the moment of conception in the next life. Dharmakīrti does not mention this issue here, and it is immaterial to his argument. Whether there is a between state or not, the first cognition in a given lifetime would have to be part of a continuum that can be traced back to a previous state of existence.

⁴⁸ Unless the condition of craving is absent, as Dharmakīrti discusses in v. 83 and v. 185–91.

⁴⁹ On deeper levels of analysis, Dharmakīrti asserts that the body is merely a projection of the mind, and ultimately even that mind is emptiness, so this logic of rebirth only applies on the conventional level and on the levels of external realism. On these more profound levels of analysis, rebirth is seen as an illusion, but one that appears consistently to deluded beings and is thus called relative truth.

our body to do things, and physical changes in the body can affect our mental state as well. In particular, changes in the body can be an internal object of cognition. As he says in verse 77:

Increases of desire and such from thriving
And such are sometimes born from pleasure or pain.
They’re from the presence of internal objects—
The balance of the elements and so forth.

Dharmakīrti elaborates on this explanation later in the second passage in which he discusses rebirth. He addresses whether the mind and specific mind states arise out of physical causes, such as anger arising from imbalances in the three humors of bile, phlegm, and wind, or from afflictions such as desire produced by the sight of an attractive person. For Dharmakīrti, though such physical events can affect the mind by way of being an object that is perceived, they do not *necessarily* entail changes in the mind and are thus proven not to be substantial causes of the mind. If they were the substantial cause of mind, then such changes in the humors would necessarily create changes in the mind. Instead, they are merely cooperating conditions for the next instant of cognition.

Thus the body and mind have separate continua that nonetheless are linked and affect each other. Because they are substantially separate, they initially come from different sources—the body from the parents’ sperm and ovum (the father’s sperm and mother’s blood according to traditional treatises) and the mind from the previous life. Likewise, after the moment of death the physical body becomes a corpse, and the mind goes on to the next lifetime. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

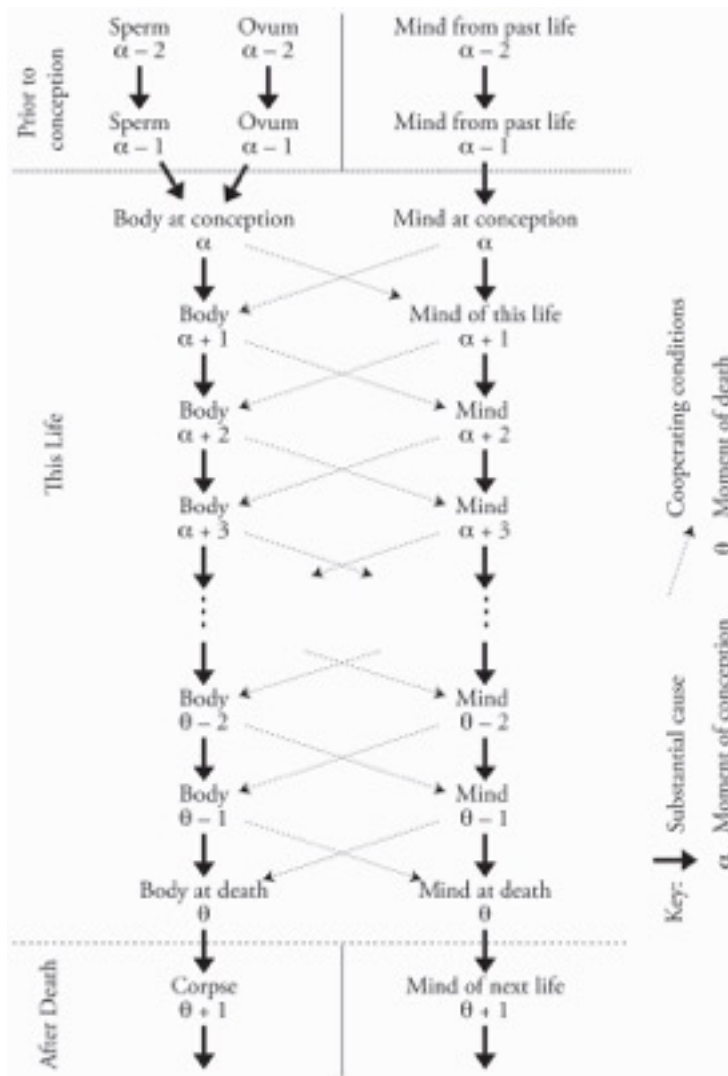


Figure 2: Relationship of body and mind according to Dharmakīrti

Yet such a relationship between body and mind can be difficult for people in contemporary societies with modern educations to accept. In recent years, the dominant voice in articles and books about neuroscience, psychology, and consciousness has been the materialist viewpoint that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of the brain or its neural networks. Correlations have been observed between certain emotional states or cognitive processes and activity in particular parts of the brain, leading many to conclude that the activity in the brain either is consciousness or causes it in some manner. However, exactly how that electro-chemical activity would become subjective awareness is still unsolved; this is often called the “hard problem” even by the proponents of this argument.

So widespread is the literature promoting this materialist view that many people accept as a proven fact that consciousness is a manifestation of the brain, disregarding the reality that the hard problem has not yet been solved, which leaves a rather large hole in the materialist argument. And if the materialist view were indeed proven fact, Dharmakīrti’s argument for past and future lives would not stand.

But that materialist belief is not unanimous, and there are scientists and thinkers who argue that the correlation of brain activity and certain types of awareness is neither proof positive of a causal connection between the two nor confirmation that they are somehow the same in identity. Instead, they may perhaps just “provide evidence for the role of neuronal networks as an intermediary for the manifestation of thoughts.”⁵⁰ Indeed, several have noted that there is not necessarily a correlation between brain activity and consciousness. There are many instances recorded in medical literature of people who have had cardiac arrest and whose brains show none of the activity usually correlated to consciousness by materialists (even as measured by an electro-encephalogram in some studies⁵¹) and yet upon being resuscitated, report subjective experiences that entail consciousness such as near-death or out of body experiences. Many survivors have described in accurate detail events that happened while they were technically dead, which could not occur if there were no consciousness. A large enough number of survivors of cardiac arrest report such experiences—varying sources report that up to fifteen percent have them⁵²—that they cannot be written off as an anomaly.⁵³ Regardless of the content of such experiences, there merely being a continuum of experience in situations where there is no brain activity shows that consciousness can occur independent of brain activity and thus cannot merely be a byproduct of it. And if this is so, then Dharmakīrti’s argument

⁵⁰ Dr. Sam Parnia and Josh Young, *Erasing Death: The Science That Is Rewriting the Boundaries Between Life and Death* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), Kindle edition, p. 189.

⁵¹ Parnia and Young, p. 71.

⁵² Mario Beauregard, *Brain Wars: The Scientific Battle Over the Existence of the Mind and the Proof That Will Change the Way We Live Our Lives*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), Kindle edition, location 2409.

⁵³ Some scientists posit that these experiences could be because of a lack of oxygen in the brain or because of seizures in the brain, but such arguments are not without their difficulties. See Parnia and Young, p. 148ff.

that there must be past and future lives because consciousness has its own continuum of substantial causes merits serious consideration.⁵⁴

In the final analysis, whether such arguments are convincing for any given individual comes down to their own experience and analysis of the issue. Though Dharmakīrti’s arguments—whether about rebirth or about the authority of the Buddha—are philosophical on the surface level, individuals can test them by looking at their own minds and seeing how one cognition gives rise to the next, how physical sensations affect their minds, how cognitive events in the mind also have an effect on their bodies, and so forth. Regarded in this way, Dharmakīrti’s logic becomes a tool for individuals to honestly examine themselves and their own experience to come to certainty on their own about such important issues as past and future lives as well as the nature of the Buddha’s authority.

Translation Methodology

In approaching this translation, it quickly became apparent that *The Ocean* is a work whose multiple layers—Dignāga’s opening verse, Dharmakīrti’s brilliant commentary, and Chödrak Gyatso’s explanations of both—are interleaved with each other. Each of these layers is a distinct work that has a separate author with a separate voice, and ideally each should be approached on its own terms, to whatever extent that is possible. Due to my training in Tibetan and the Karma Kamtsang tradition and since these texts have been kept alive by Tibetan tradition, this translation is to a large degree filtered through the lens of Tibetan translations and commentaries, though I have tried to examine the available Sanskrit materials to the best of my abilities.

The deepest stratum (though the thinnest if measured by quantity) is Dignāga’s homage along with his own explanation of it in his autocommentary. This text survives in two Tibetan translations, one by Vasudhararakṣita and Genyen Senggyal found in the Dergye Tengyur and the other by Kaṇakavarman and Depay Sherap from the Narthang Tengyur. The original Sanskrit has been lost, but enough fragments identified over the

⁵⁴ Additionally, there has been much discussion of cases where young children have memories of past lives that are then corroborated by independent researchers such as Dr. Ian Petersen, even in countries such as the United States where rebirth is not universally accepted. However, Dharmakīrti does not consider memory to be valid and does not discuss this line of reasoning in the chapter.

years have survived as citations in commentaries and other texts that several scholars have prepared retranslations of the Sanskrit from the Tibetan or reconstructed it based on the available fragments. For this translation, I have referred to Ernst Steinkellner’s 2005 reconstruction of the first chapter of the *Compendium* as well as to the two Tibetan translations. Since *The Ocean* cites from the Dergye Tengyur translation, this is the translation mentioned in citations here, even though many scholars consider the other Tibetan translation to be superior.

History has been kinder to the Sanskrit text of Dharmakīrti’s *Commentary*, a few complete copies of which were found in Tibet, and modern editions of it are available. In addition, the Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen’s translation is deservedly recognized as a paragon of faithful translation. In preparing the English translation of this chapter of *The Commentary*, I have compared the Sakya Paṇḍita’s translation with the Sanskrit as well as with the commentaries by Devendrabuddhi, Śākyabuddhi, and Prajñākaragupta that are available in the Tibetan Tengyur. Devendrabuddhi’s commentary in particular has been helpful, not only because it is a word-by-word explanation of Dharmakīrti’s text but also because it uses a different Tibetan translation of the root verses, giving an alternate window on the original. In examining these sources, I have located about a dozen minor discrepancies between the Tibetan and the Sanskrit original, which are noted in the text of the chapter. (Several of these could have been due to typographical errors introduced into various editions over the centuries.) The goal of this process has been to translate Dharmakīrti’s work—to the greatest extent possible—without the filter of Chödrak Gyatso’s interpretation so that this translation will be useful to scholars and translators from various traditions.

One important aspect of Dharmakīrti’s *Commentary* is that it is written in metered verse, and on examination it is clear that Dharmakīrti took a great deal of care with his language. Likewise the Sakya Paṇḍita’s translation is also in verse. Thus in translating the text, I have also attempted to render it in verse, though I have allowed myself more freedom in prosody than either Dharmakīrti or the Sakya Paṇḍita and there are many irregularities. The intent is that the rhythms of the words in the ear help the meaning stay in the mind, though whether this indeed happens is for the reader to decide.

The uppermost layer in this book is Chödrak Gyatso's text from *The Ocean*. For convenience I have primarily used an electronic version of the text, but I have also checked questionable passages against scans of the original woodblocks and other editions. There are a few passages that are unclear or nonsensical in the available editions. Most of these have been resolved by comparing the text with Chödrak Gyatso's sources, Devendrabudhi and Prajñākaragupta; by checking other sources, particularly those in the Tengyur and Ju Mipham Rinpoche's commentary; and by consulting various Tibetan scholars. These passages are noted where they occur.

One difficulty translators, scholars, and readers all face is the lack of standardized translations for logical and Buddhist terms. Many translators have translated various Indian and Tibetan texts on logic, and different sets of English terminology for standard logical terms have developed. While some terms seem to have become more or less standard, there is considerable variation for others. Though at the outset of this project my intention was to pick one existing set of terminology as the basis for this translation, it soon became apparent that each set of terminology has its own strong and weak points. Thus I decided to take what I felt were the clearest terms from the various texts I have read and combine them here. Some explanations of my choices are given in notes on the first appearance of the term; others I hope will be evident enough from the context.

Attempting a large translation of an important text such as this involves more chutzpah than wisdom for someone whose study of validity has been incomplete at best, and I have only done so because Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche asked me to. Any errors contained in this book are solely the products of my own pride and ignorance, and for them I beg the pardon of those with greater knowledge of this vast and profound topic.

—David Karma Choephel