
THE PERSISTENCE OF HABIT

Tantric Engagements with Dharmakīrti's View of Yogic Perception

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Abstract: *Dharmakīrti's view of yogic perception (yogipratyakṣa) and mental cultivation (bhāvanā) has generated a good deal of discussion—in Dharmakīrti's text tradition, in the works of its various critics, and in the contemporary study of Buddhist philosophy. It is discussed not infrequently in Buddhist tantric works, too. However, tantric authors' appeals to yogic perception are at odds with Dharmakīrti's intentions in important ways. In this paper, I show why this appropriation of Dharmakīrti on yogic perception might be surprising, and then I reveal a tantalizing thread of Dharmakīrtian thinking about cultivation that nevertheless runs through certain Sanskrit Buddhist tantric debates. What is most crucial about Dharmakīrti for these authors, I argue, is his reasoned defense of cultivation's power: its capacity to fundamentally and irreversibly transform the practitioner's cognitive, conative, and experiential habits. I develop this point with reference especially to a tantric treatise attributed to Śāntarakṣita, The Accomplishment of Reality (Tattvasiddhi).*

INTRODUCTION

Many tantric Buddhists engage critically and constructively with Buddhist philosophy. In commentarial literature, practice texts, and independent treatises, these authors seek to show that certain practices are rational and others are not; that certain conceptions of knowledge, mind, and existence make sense and others do not; and that we can adjudicate all this with reason in addition to appeals to tantric scripture. Their philosophical interlocutors extend beyond just Madhyamaka to Yogācāra and the epistemological tradition of Dharmakīrti (ca. 550–650) as well, and their interest in philosophy goes beyond philosophical doxography (though there is certainly plenty of that, too). Perhaps most well-known in this regard from the Sanskrit world is Ratnākaraśānti, the remarkable early eleventh-century polymath whose systematic unification of exoteric and tantric Buddhism is grounded on a fierce defense of Yogācāra.¹ But many others engaged philosophically with Buddhist Tantra, each in their own way—authors like Indrabhūti (ca. late eighth to early ninth century), Samantabhadra (ca. mid-ninth century), Maitrīpa (a.k.a. Advayavajra, a.k.a. Maitreya-nātha) and his disciples (ca. eleventh century), Abhayākara-gupta (ca. twelfth century), and more.² In Tibet, where thinking philosophically about Buddhist Tantra was even more prevalent, luminaries from Rongzompa (eleventh through twelfth century) to Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) to Ngorchon (1382–1456) to Mipham (1846–1912) continued this trend.³ There are of course iconoclastic figures who eschew and critique all reasoned argument, and perhaps some



“masqueraded” as philosophers, picking up the mantle of reason for the sake of the “derivative authority” it was thought to bring.⁴ But many others, like those we will consider here, engaged in philosophical inquiry out of a clear commitment to what reason can teach us about reality and the means to realize it.

Here, as further evidence of this, I will discuss a revealing thread of engagement with Dharmakīrti’s view of yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) that runs through some tantric authors writing in Sanskrit from the late eighth to the early thirteenth centuries. In the context of debates about the tantric practice of deity yoga (*devatāyoga*), these authors appropriate Dharmakīrti’s view to ends that are at odds with Dharmakīrti’s own aims. However, we will see that in doing so tantric authors are picking up on important worries about mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*) and repeated practice (*abhyāsa*) that run through Dharmakīrti’s discussions of yogic perception and his efforts more generally to ground the Buddhist path on reason. Like Dharmakīrti, these tantric authors are concerned with how the repeated practice of cultivation can transform the practitioner’s mental stream in ways that cannot be undone. Most experiential habits, or habitual ways of experiencing oneself, others, and the world, can be changed; those habits that characterize a buddha’s experience, however, have reached a level of perfection at which they become unbreakable. The tantric authors we will consider here aim to understand how the repeated practice of cultivation results in such unbreakable habits and which practices will do so. And it is with this in view that they turn to Dharmakīrti.

THE CONTEXT: DEBATING DEITY YOGA

In Buddhist tantric treatises and commentaries, ideas about yogic perception are often marshaled in the context of debates about deity yoga. This visualization exercise is taken by most to be constitutive of the generation stage (*utpattikrama*).⁵ This is the first stage of postinitiatory practice: that is, it comes after the practitioner has had a fleeting glimpse, in initiation (*seka*, *abhiṣeka*), of the experience of reality a buddha enjoys unendingly; and it comes before the second stage of postinitiatory practice, the completion stage (*utpannakrama*), which was variously understood by different authors to ingrain more deeply or to transcend the practices of the generation stage.⁶ In deity yoga, an imagined identification with a deity-image in a maṇḍalic palace via carefully visualized, variegated mental imagery gradually changes the practitioner’s physical, verbal, and cognitive dispositions. Through the repeated practice of this exercise, the practitioner proceeds to the completion stage, which promises to bring buddhahood in the course of a single lifetime.

An objection to deity yoga practice developed in tantric circles, however. Why should deity yoga help lead to a transformation that is real, lasting, and liberative? The imagined identification at deity yoga’s core, it might be said, is after all a deceptive fantasy. As Indrabhūti presents this argument in his eighth- through ninth-century *The Accomplishment of Gnosis (Jñānasiddhi)*, it is clear enough that the practitioner is not a buddha when undertaking this exercise. If the practitioner were already awakened, the practice would have no purpose. So, just as a pauper imagining himself to be a king will not thereby become one, the unawakened practitioner will not become a buddha just by imagining that it is so.⁷ Later, around the turn of the thirteenth century, Ratnarakṣita puts the still-current objection like this:

Moreover, buddhahood is the effect of the accumulation of merit and insight. How could that arise just through mental cultivation? For a poor man does not become a Cakravartin king through the cultivation of the thought, “I am a Cakravartin king!” Nor does someone all of the sudden become a hungry ghost just by imagining a hungry ghost, for there would be the unwanted consequence that good and bad actions would be fruitless.⁸

Perhaps the imagination can generate vivid imagery that appears as if it is real to a person lost in reverie. Still, like a lover pining for his beloved who might see her appearance as if before him, the meditator’s vision will last only a short time, “since its nature is false insofar as it is imagined” (*kalpitatvena mṛṣātmakatvāt*). It will be overturned. “Precisely insofar as they have their origin in attachment to the unreal, worldly phenomena are impermanent,” Ratnarakṣita’s opponent continues. So, being impermanent, all the imagery the practitioner identifies with is quite unlike the unending buddha-qualities it is supposed to represent.⁹ However vividly it is made to appear, the identification with the deity-image the practitioner accomplishes in deity yoga remains incongruous with the goal. It is fleeting, not everlasting. If the practitioner thinks the identification is true, they are just fooling themselves.

And the problems do not end there. Many proponents of deity yoga, in the course of their vision practice texts themselves, argue that the mental imagery these practices involve does not exist ultimately. These texts typically begin with a reflection on emptiness according to the author’s preferred set of arguments. So, an author might argue at this stage that all phenomena are empty of intrinsic nature because they are dependently arisen or because they have neither a unitary nor a manifold nature; another might argue that all phenomena are empty of duality because every awareness-event is devoid of object and subject, and so on. These arguments lead to insight born from rational reflection (*cintāmayī prajñā*), which in turn grounds the following practice.¹⁰ Only then, having understood that mental imagery is empty of ultimate existence, does the practitioner dissolve all phenomena into emptiness and generate the maṇḍala and deity-image out of illusion-like imagery. But if all this imagery does not ultimately exist, why should we think that the practitioner’s identification with it later in the practice will have any ultimate efficacy? If the imagery and identification are taken to be ultimately real and nondeceptive, then the practitioner is deluding themselves. If they are taken to be false and deceptive, what is the point?

There are different ways one might respond to these worries. One is to argue that deity yoga is indeed beside the point. It leads to worldly accomplishments (*laukikasiddhi*), but it will not result in the ultimate attainment of buddhahood, which is reached only through practices of the completion stage that do not involve such illusion-like, deceptive imagery. Some authors take this tack—most prominently, authors in the early Kālacakra tradition.¹¹ Proponents of deity yoga, however, try to save its soteriological efficacy. The imagery is ultimately unreal, yet its cultivation is still essential to reaching buddhahood. It is typically these proponents of deity yoga who appeal to Dharmakīrti’s view of yogic perception. Dharmakīrti had claimed that the gradual, repeated contemplation of anything, whether it is real or unreal, results in a vivid, transformative experience. Faced with the above objections, some proponents of deity yoga cite Dharmakīrti to this effect: the cultivation of the identification with the deity, they claim, will result in a vivid, transformative experience; it does not matter that the imagery this identification involves is false. Yet in this respect, their use of Dharmakīrti runs counter to Dharmakīrti’s own immediate aims in

his discussion of yogic perception. For, as we will see in a moment, Dharmakīrti had not meant to endorse imagining unreal mental imagery as an effective liberative practice. Far from it. And yet tantric authors seem to take him to be doing just this. Why? Are they appealing to Dharmakīrti just for the authority he brings? Or are they just being sloppy?

I will show in what follows that the appropriation of Dharmakīrti's discussion of yogic perception in tantric texts is rather on to something of philosophical importance. These tantric authors are not interested in the same epistemological problems that are of principal concern to Dharmakīrti when they cite him on yogic perception. Still, they rightly see in his work a clear expression of a fundamental Buddhist commitment to the power of mental cultivation—its power not just to change the practitioner's mind temporarily but to transform it fundamentally in a manner that cannot be undone. And some are committed, too, to the idea that *knowledge* of this fact should be motivating for a rational, judicious person (*prekṣāvat*). Just as Dharmakīrti had argued that the cultivation of compassion, insight into selflessness, and so on, is rational activity, so too some of the authors we will consider here argue that we can know that tantric practice will result in the goal of buddhahood and that this fact should motivate us to undertake it. Tantric appeals to Dharmakīrti on yogic perception and cultivation's power, then, are best understood in this light: as constructive and not unreasonable extensions of Dharmakīrtian ideas about the power of cultivation into the realm of tantric practice.

With this context in view, we will turn now to the adaptive reuse in tantric texts of two of Dharmakīrti's verses on yogic perception, namely, *Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge* (*Pramāṇavārttika*) 3.282 and 3.285 (= *The Ascertainment of the Sources of Knowledge* [*Pramāṇaviniścaya*] 1.29 and 1.31).¹² Then, we will turn to the power of cultivation to fundamentally transform a sentient being's mental stream in a way that is stable and irreversible. This, I will show, is what is most important about Dharmakīrti's view for these tantric authors. We will see that this is an important theme in the sections of the second chapter of Dharmakīrti's *Detailed Commentary* that deal with a practitioner's repeated practice of compassion (*karuṇābhyaśa*) and realization of the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*). Finally, we will turn to *The Accomplishment of Reality* (*Tattvasiddhi*), a tantric treatise attributed to a Śāntarakṣita (ca. ninth century), which contains a sustained discussion of the problem of irreversibility that is quite clearly indebted to Dharmakīrti's ideas.¹³

THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF DHARMAKĪRTI

Dharmakīrti's view of yogic perception has received a good deal of attention.¹⁴ A brief discussion will suffice for our purposes. Yogic perception is a direct source of knowledge that results from the repeated practice of cultivation. As an instance of perception, it is *nonconceptual* (*akalpa*, *nirvikalpa*, etc.). Famously, Dharmakīrti says at *Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge* 3.285 that repeatedly imagining anything, whether real or unreal (*bhūtaṃ abhūtaṃ vā*), will result in an awareness-event that is both nonconceptual and *vivid* (*sphuṭa*, *spaṣṭa*, etc.). He writes:

Therefore, whether it is real or unreal,

whatever is intensely meditated upon

results in a vivid and non-conceptual awareness-event

when the cultivation is perfected (*bhāvanāpariniṣpattau*).¹⁵

This counts for erroneous awareness-events as much as it does for yogic perception—that is, it counts for awareness-events that are *not* sources of knowledge as well as for those that *are*. As Dharmakīrti writes at *Detailed Commentary* 3.282:

Those who are deranged due to lust, grief, fear, or madness,

or are confused by dreams of thieves and the like,

perceive even false objects as if

they were present before them.¹⁶

Even something false might be experienced as not conceptually constructed and as having a vivid appearance through the power of the imagination, whether this is cultivated intentionally (as in certain meditation practices) or unintentionally (as in cases of lust, grief, and so on).

Dharmakīrti's primary interest in his definitions of yogic perception is to distinguish between cases of genuine yogic perception and mere episodes of yogic awareness (*yogijñāna*).¹⁷ To do so, Dharmakīrti stipulates that repeatedly turning attention *only to those things that were previously known by some other source of knowledge* can result in a vivid awareness-event that counts as perception. As he writes at *Detailed Commentary* 3.286, regarding the different kinds of vivid and nonconceptual awareness-events that arise from repeated cultivation:

Among those, that which is confirmed by a source of knowledge

and is related to a real object that has been ascertained earlier

is accepted as perception that arises from mental cultivation;

the rest are distortions.¹⁸

For Dharmakīrti and his followers, inference (*anumāna*)—and finally the perfection of this in rational insight (*cintāmayī prajñā*)—is this other source of knowledge.¹⁹ The practitioner who has ascertained the truth of impermanence, selflessness, and so on based on rational inquiry (*yukticintā*) might then begin to meditate on these truths. So, it is reason that grounds yogic perception as a source of knowledge and directs the cultivations that aim toward it. In the context of Dharmakīrtian epistemology, then, *Detailed Commentary* 3.285 almost serves as a warning, a caveat to the meditator: since even false things might be made real through mental cultivation, one has to do some rational, inferential work first to settle what should and should not be cultivated.²⁰

The reuse of Dharmakīrti's verses by proponents of deity yoga has a different purpose in view. When they cite *Detailed Commentary* 3.285, their aim is not to differentiate between those cultivations that lead to genuine instances of yogic perception and those that do not. (This is

supported in part by the fact that, as far as I know, tantric authors *never* cite *Detailed Commentary* 3.286 along with their citation of 3.285.²¹) Rather, their aim in citing 3.285 is to show that, even if the identification and imagery involved in deity yoga is all deceptive and false, per the kinds of objections we saw above, it will still have its desired transformative effect: it will result in an experience of buddhahood that is vivid, nonconceptual—and *unending*.

Consider Ratnarakṣita's citation of *Detailed Commentary* 3.285. He introduces the verse by saying, "It is proven by experience that, with regard to a thing made into the mind's object, there is the acquisition of stability (*sthairyalābha*) through repeated practice (*abhyāsa*) distinguished by careful attention and so on."²² That is, the careful, attentive practice of mental cultivation results in a transformative experience that will motivate judgment, speech, and behavior in ways that become "stable," "fixed," or "everlasting" (*sthira*) once that cultivation reaches its culmination. Then, *Detailed Commentary* 3.285 is cited to show that this is so regardless of whether awareness' object is unreal. As Ratnarakṣita cites the verse, with a not insignificant difference:

So, whether it is real or unreal,
whatever is intensively meditated upon
results in a vivid and non-conceptual awareness-event
when the cultivation's *power* is perfected.²³

Underlining that the power (*bala*) of cultivation is such that it results in a vivid awareness-event whether or not its object is real, Ratnarakṣita refers back to the opponent's example of the pauper imagining himself to be a king. "Insofar as all phenomena have a form that is merely mind-made," he writes: "what's the problem if, through even the cultivation of [oneself as] a Cakravartin king and so on, there is the vivid appearance of that?"²⁴ The opponent had taken the example of the pauper imagining himself to be a king to be clear evidence that a deceptive cultivation will not lead to the ultimate attainment of buddhahood. Ratnarakṣita here asserts the contrary on the basis of Dharmakīrti's authority: even in the case of the pauper imagining himself to be a king, the power of cultivation is such that, over a long period of time, kingship might be achieved.²⁵ *Detailed Commentary* 3.285 is no longer a caveat to the meditator. It is rather an exhortation to cultivate the image of the deity, however deceptive it might at first appear.

In the early eleventh century, Vāgīśvarakīrti cites Dharmakīrti to similar effect. At one point in his *Explanation* (*Vivarāṇa*) to his own *Beholding the Jewel of Reality* (*Tattvaratnāvaloka*), his opponent appeals to a distinction between practices with proliferations (*prapañca*) and those without proliferations (*niṣprapañca*), arguing that deity yoga might be useful provisionally, but its proliferation of mental imagery has to be abandoned at a higher stage of practice wherein only the real—sheer bliss alone (*sātamātra*)—is cultivated.²⁶ In response, Vāgīśvarakīrti argues that this distinction is unwarranted. "Surely," he responds, "the mind becomes stable regarding precisely that object to which it is directed again and again, without interruption and for a long time."²⁷ As proof of this point, he cites *Detailed Commentary* 3.285, with the same difference we find in Ratnarakṣita's citation.²⁸ The power of cultivation is able to stably transform the mind regardless of whether its object is real or unreal. If this were not so, Vāgīśvarakīrti points out, even the

advanced cultivations that his opponent claims are without mental imagery would not be able to transform the practitioner's mind in a way that is everlasting. So, rather than concluding that stability can never be achieved, the opponent should concede that, whether or not it involves proliferation (*prapañcam aprapañcam vā*)—indeed, whether or not it agrees with a source of knowledge (*pramāṇasaṃgatam itarad vā*)—the diligent practitioner ought to cultivate the illusion-like form of the deity.²⁹

This point about the power of cultivation is, I think, what is most crucial in these tantric reuses of Dharmakīrti's verses on yogic perception.³⁰ Regardless of its object, the power of cultivation is such that it can transform the mental stream of the practitioner, fundamentally and irreversibly. In many ways, this is a basic Buddhist point. In *The Discourse Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma* (*Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*), the Buddha makes clear that there was no turning back after his own direct realization of awakening. The Buddha says to the first five disciples: "Indeed, knowledge and seeing arose in me: 'Unshakeable (*akuppā*) is the liberation of my mind; this is my last birth: now there is no more renewed existence.'"³¹ Irreversibility is of great concern in the basic literature of the Mahāyāna, too, as Peter Gilks has shown in his very fine study of the topic.³² The seventeenth chapter of *The Perfection of Insight in Eight Thousand Lines* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*), for instance, is devoted to the marks that distinguish the bodhisattva who *cannot be turned back* (i.e., the *avinivartanīya* bodhisattva), and the *avinivartanīyabhūmi*, "the stage of one who cannot be turned back," would later become systematized as the eighth of the ten bodhisattva stages.³³

Still, it is with this point about irreversibility in view that tantric authors choose to appeal to Dharmakīrti in particular. In his ninth- through tenth-century, *An Ascertainment and Proof of Insight and Means Explaining Their Nonduality* (*Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi*), Padmavajra cites both *Detailed Commentary* 3.282 and 3.285 in support of a proof that he appears to borrow from Śāntarakṣita's *The Accomplishment of Reality*, one we will return to in more detail below:

With whatever thing [the mind is joined], through the power of repeated practice regarding it, a nature that is thoroughly distinguished manifests, which is characterized by the property that it does not turn back.³⁴

The mind's nature is clear like a crystal; it might take on many different forms. Padmavajra cites a verse from scripture to this effect: "A person's mind comes to consist of whatever it is joined with, like a crystal that takes on a variegated form."³⁵ However, repeated practice is able to transform the mind's very nature in such a way that the form it takes on is, so to speak, forever lodged there, never to fade. It is to establish this point that Padmavajra refers us to *Detailed Commentary* 3.282 and 3.285.

With another pointed reference to Dharmakīrti's *Detailed Commentary*, Vāgīśvarakīrti also tells us that there is no turning back when the imagination transforms the mental stream's nature in a way that is free of misfortune and suffering.³⁶ So, his opponent, who supposes that the mental imagery cultivated in deity yoga might be abandoned, is wrong in the first place because the right kind of habit that is deeply ingrained simply cannot be undone.³⁷ As we saw above, it was cultivation's attainment of stability, its coming to a point where it is everlasting, that framed

Ratnarakṣita's citation of *Detailed Commentary* 3.285. The mental stream is malleable. Our habits, to use William James's felicitous phrase, have a certain "plasticity": they are endowed with "a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once."³⁸ Yet, these authors claim, in some instances the power of cultivation generates habits so strong they will never yield.

UNBREAKABLE HABITS IN DHARMAKĪRTI

To understand why cultivation is capable of transforming the mental stream irreversibly, we can turn to *Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge*, chapter 2.³⁹ Here, Dharmakīrti argues that, in certain cases, cultivation is capable of transforming the natural, spontaneous flow of the mental stream, its *svarasa* or "natural inclination." This comes up most explicitly in Dharmakīrti's discussion of the bodhisattva's repeated practice of compassion (*karuṇābhyaśa*). An opponent argues that repeated practice cannot lead to the kind of limitless perfection Buddhists attribute to a buddha's compassion. Train as much as you like—you will never be able to jump 100 feet in the air; however much you might heat it, water cannot be heated beyond a boil. Compassion, the opponent claims, is like that too: there is a limit to what repeated practice brings.⁴⁰ In response, Dharmakīrti specifies that it is only certain properties that cannot be increased to a limitless state of perfection: those properties that are sustained through repeated effort (*punaryatna*) and those that have an unstable basis (*asthirāśraya*).⁴¹ As Eli Franco summarizes the point:

If these two conditions do not obtain, then cultivated properties become the own nature of the person, which means that they "proceed by their own essence" (*svarasena pravartante*), that is, they reproduce themselves (or more precisely: moments of their own kind) automatically, without any further effort, in the next moments of the succession of constituents that form the person.⁴²

Each jump depends on repeated efforts, and water cools down when it is removed from the flame, so these examples do not fit the case at hand. Instead, Dharmakīrti suggests, the cultivation of compassion is more like burning firewood: when the wood becomes charred, the black color it takes on does not require repeated efforts to be sustained, and the wood is such that it stably supports this new property.⁴³ Each moment in the causal stream reinforces the next, and so there is no uncharring the firewood once it is burned. In a similar way, as each repeated act of imagination gives rise to greater intensity, a mental property like compassion becomes the very nature (*svabhāva*) of the mental stream.⁴⁴

The example of firewood is helpful, but we still might doubt that it fits the case of mental properties like compassion. Why should we think that the mental stream's flow cannot be rerouted again, however long it has been directed toward compassion? All kinds of deeply ingrained habits—desire, aversion, greed, delusion, selfishness, and so on—reinforce themselves and ramify *seemingly* without end, and yet it is axiomatic in the Buddhist tradition that these habits *can* be undone. Why should we think that habits like compassion and selflessness cannot be broken but habits like desire and aversion can be?

This is something Dharmakīrti addresses at a number of places. He claims in the famous conclusion to *The Ascertainment of the Sources of Knowledge*, chapter 1, for instance, that "those

who diligently practice precisely the insight that consists in reflection will directly experience the ultimate source of knowledge, which is without error, stainless, and *unperishing* (*anapāyī*).⁴⁵ He considers the point in most detail, however, in his account of the Truth of Cessation (*nirodhasatya*) at *Detailed Commentary* 2.190–216, which has recently been edited, translated, and studied, together with Manorathanandin’s commentary, by Cristina Pecchia’s *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*. Here, Dharmakīrti argues for irreversibility from the absence of causes for backsliding. As he puts it in *Detailed Commentary* 2.205, once the practice of the path has transformed “the fundamental basis” (*āśraya*) of the mental stream, the arising of faults will not occur again “due to the absence of the power [to do so].”⁴⁶ Again, it is like firewood turned to ash and unlike water heated over a flame: the mind’s nature, once transformed, is stable and unerring.⁴⁷ On Dharmakīrti’s understanding of our existential condition, suffering is at root caused by the innate sense of self (*sahajā satkāyadṛṣṭiḥ*), his understanding of our fundamental delusion (*moha*) or ignorance (*avidyā*). When that innate sense of self is replaced by the direct experience of selflessness (*nairātmyadṛṣṭi*), the causes for the arising of suffering are brought to an end. These do not recur, he claims at *Detailed Commentary* 2.208, because the mind’s “natural disposition” (*prakṛti*) is “luminosity” (*prabhāsvara*); occlusions like desire, aversion, and delusion are so many wisps of cloud in the sky.

Errors like our innate sense of self, in other words, are “unstable” (*adṛḍha*). Once truly corrected, these errors forever cease. Dharmakīrti avails himself of the stock example of the mistaken apprehension of a snake where there is really a coiled rope: once the rope is directly apprehended as such, the mistaken perception as of a snake coiled beside the path at dusk will not recur. In the same way, once the innate sense of self is replaced by the direct experience of selflessness, the sense of self and the suffering it causes are forever eliminated.⁴⁸ What is left in that transformed mental stream is previously practiced compassion, now devoid of any conditions that might counteract its endless proliferation—all of which, again, would be grounded on the innate sense of self.⁴⁹ Once it is made the mental stream’s natural inclination through repeated practice, compassion is an irreversible disposition, unlike desire and aversion. “Upon their realization of the truth of suffering,” Dharmakīrti writes, “for one who is without obstruction, the arising of compassion is a real property, borne by the current of previous inclinations; it does not conform to the sense of self.”⁵⁰ Desire and aversion, on the other hand, are grounded on the innate sense of self, and so when that goes, desire and aversion cease, too. But compassion is not grounded on the innate sense of self. Instead, it is only intensified by the sense of self’s cessation and the uprooting of all desire and aversion. So, unlike desire and aversion, compassion can be made an unbreakable habit.⁵¹

UNBREAKABLE HABITS IN ŚĀNTARAKṢITA’S *THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF REALITY*

The irreversibility of transformations effected by cultivation is defended in great detail—and in clearly Dharmakīrtian terms—by Śāntarakṣita in his tantric treatise, *The Accomplishment of Reality*.⁵² Ernst Steinkellner in particular has drawn attention to this fascinating work in a series of articles.⁵³ *The Accomplishment of Reality* seeks to prove, through appeals to both reason and scripture, that the cultivation of great bliss (*mahāsukha*) in tantric practice is rational, an activity

that should be undertaken by any judicious person (*prekṣāvat*) who seeks liberation from suffering. The work's aim is normative and not only apologetic.⁵⁴ As Steinkellner has shown, its first two parts utilize Dharmakīrti's method of inferring the arising of an effect from the presence of its complete set of causal conditions (the so-called *kāryotpādānumāna*) in order to prove that the tantric practitioner who engages in sexual yogic practice will attain great bliss and the elimination of suffering.⁵⁵ The "complete set of causal conditions" in the case of this practice involves not just the ordinary physical bodies of the practitioner and consort (though Śāntarakṣita is clear that it does involve these); involved too are additional properties that distinguish the causal complex and lead necessarily to a distinguished, distinctive, or special (*viśiṣṭa*) result.⁵⁶ This is what it means to say that, for the practitioner, the forms and so on experienced are "embraced by insight and means" (*prajñopāyaparigraha*): the forms, bodies, and so on involved are all empowered by mantras and mudrās, and the practitioner is enjoined to experience himself or herself as the deity.⁵⁷ Śāntarakṣita cites *The Union of All Buddhas* (*Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*) to this effect: "I myself am indeed the nature of all buddhas and of all the heroic [bodhisattvas]. Through union with one's own deity (*svādhidaivatāyogena*), therefore, precisely I myself should reach accomplishment (*ātmāiva sādhayet*)."⁵⁸ Not just any pleasure results in the attainment of great bliss, then. Great bliss is attained only through the cultivation of those pleasures distinguished by deity yoga and the empowerments, mantras, and mudrās this involves.

The portion of the text that interests us here is the lengthy discussion of the structure and force of cultivation and irreversibility.⁵⁹ Śāntarakṣita states the proof that cultivation leads to permanent, irreversible change with the following:

Thus, given that the mind is like a crystal-stone, naturally luminous, one who is characterized by pleasure and delight attained through a distinctive conditioning by means of forms and so on should experience there, by force of that distinctive practice, the highest perfection of [that practice] that is embraced by insight and means. That is, an awareness-event—like in the case of discernment, crafts, and the practical arts—that partakes of a distinctive conditioning that is produced from the experience of objects like form and so on comes to have an accomplished nature that is supreme and permanent due to the power of the gradual repeated practice of mental cultivation, in virtue of reaching the highest perfection of cultivation; like the Sugatas and so on in our system and, in the common world [as Dharmakīrti says], like lust, grief, fear, madness, and so on. And [*pakṣadharmatā*:] the pleasure and delight and so on that are arisen from contact with sense objects] are cultivated. Therefore, they too are endowed with a distinction [whose nature is supreme and permanent when the practice is cultivated to its highest perfection].⁶⁰

The argument has a common form. First, Śāntarakṣita states the pervasion (*vyāpti*) between the reason (*hetu*) and the property to be proven (*sādhyadharma*). In this case, the reason is cultivation that has reached its highest perfection (*prakarṣaparyanta*) through repeated practice, and what is to be proven is the property of having an accomplished nature that is supreme (*parama*) and permanent (*śāśvata*). Śāntarakṣita then appears to give two sets of examples (*dṛṣṭānta*). First, there are cases like discernment, crafts, and the practical arts, wherein we also find a distinctive sort of conditioning. This example gives a sense of the sort of practice that is at stake. But the relevant

similar cases where the pervasion is observed (i.e., examples where cultivation that has reached its highest perfection is seen to be permanent, etc.) are cases like the Buddha's awakening—and, Śāntarakṣita says, other cases that are familiar from Dharmakīrti: cases like lust, grief, fear, madness, and so on. (The reference to *Detailed Commentary* 3.282 [= *Ascertainment* 1.29a] is unmistakable.) Finally, Śāntarakṣita establishes the so-called *pakṣadharmatā*, or the fact that the relevant case is in fact characterized by the presence of the reason. That is, the pleasure and delight that have arisen from sexual practice (the specific “contact” at issue here in Śāntarakṣita's discussion) are also cultivated to their highest perfection. So, he concludes, pleasure and delight so arisen also come to have a nature that is supreme and permanent.

Much of the following discussion is in defense of the pervasion asserted here. For, it might be objected, some property that has been cultivated *can* be turned back, and so the mere presence of cultivation does not prove the permanence of the cultivated quality. Habits might be plastic, as James put it. They might be relatively stable and hard to change, but this is not to say that they will in principle *never* change. They might be lost and forgotten over a long period of time or counteracted by some opposed repeated practice. The cases Śāntarakṣita himself refers to—namely, discernment (*prajñā*), crafts (*śilpa*), and the practical arts (*kalā*)—are good examples of this. I grew up playing piano, but it has been years since I have practiced, and so much of whatever skill I had is lost. Even the cases Śāntarakṣita cites from Dharmakīrti as similar cases wherein the pervasion is observed seem not to be quite right. His Buddhist interlocutor will grant that the Buddha does not backslide from liberation from suffering, but surely habits of lust, grief, fear, and madness can be changed, however deeply ingrained they might seem. The Buddhist path is predicated on this fact.

In response to this worry, Śāntarakṣita argues that it is only if a cultivation is brought to its highest perfection that it is irreversible. This kind of perfection is not always obtained. Perhaps it rarely is. We can imagine many instances (like my piano playing) where practice falls far short of perfection. As Dharmakīrti himself emphasized, it is not embodied practices like jumping and so on that can be cultivated “to the highest degree of perfection,” but rather mental dispositions. Still, Śāntarakṣita writes,

Whatever has reached its highest perfection does not turn back, just like liberation and so on. Pleasure, delight, and so on have the nature of the reason [insofar as they are brought to their] highest perfection. [So, they do not turn back]. This is a *svabhāva*hetu, a reason based on the nature [of the concepts involved].⁶¹

That is, it is simply in the nature of the reason in this case, namely, something *in fact reaching* its highest perfection, for it to be irreversible. When this perfection is reached, it is brought about by the sort of repeated practice that is observed to a limited degree in cases of discernment, crafts, and the practical arts. And, when it is reached, we speak of something's being “fully integrated” (*sātmīkaraṇa*): “[a property's] being fully integrated follows only from [cultivation] reaching its highest perfection [and not from a less fully developed cultivation].” So, Śāntarakṣita continues: “because of the power of a distinctive practice, this [property] reaches a state that cannot be turned back again. It does not turn back into something else again; it becomes the very nature of that [causal stream].”⁶² Skills might be lost as we fall out of practice. Habits are broken. Still,

Śāntarakṣita claims, when cultivation reaches a certain level, it leads to an irreversible transformation, just as firewood turned to ash does not turn back into wood.⁶³

At this point, we might wonder why some cultivations reach this level of perfection and others do not. Why do we sometimes fall out of practice? And is there any reason to think that tantric practice is the sort of thing that will *inevitably* lead to the highest degree of perfection and thus become irreversible? Here again, Śāntarakṣita follows Dharmakīrti's lead—though to rather surprising ends. As we saw above, Dharmakīrti argues that mental properties are the sorts of things that can be cultivated to a limitless degree. This goes for compassion (*kṛpā*) and desirelessness (*vairāgya*), as well as for states he views negatively as causes of continued existence in saṃsāra, like desire (*rāga*).⁶⁴ Compassion, however, is not grounded on the false sense of self in the way desire is, and so it might be cultivated and sustained even after the false sense of self is overcome. That false sense of self, meanwhile, is overcome once and for all by the direct experience of selflessness, the vivid result of sustained cultivation brought to its highest perfection: “That which is free of misfortune, true, and the nature of things,” Dharmakīrti writes at *Detailed Commentary* 2.210: “cannot be obstructed by opposing factors even with effort, for awareness sides with that (*buddhes tatpakṣapātataḥ*).”⁶⁵ When selflessness is directly experienced, there is no reason to unsee it. The mental stream flows forever in that direction. Śāntarakṣita refers to this idea in his discussion of irreversibility, too. In a clear reference to *Detailed Commentary* 2.210, he argues that, for a mental stream that has reached the state of perfection, there is no turning back “because awareness sides with that” (*buddhes tatpakṣapātāt*).⁶⁶ The “that” here, though, is not simply the direct experience of selflessness. It is the experience of bliss.

Early in his discussion of irreversibility, Śāntarakṣita had sought to establish a basic point about the nature of bliss. Using one of Dharmakīrti's models of our knowledge of absence via nonapprehension (*anupalabdhi*), he argues that, because the nature of bliss is opposed to the nature of suffering, the apprehension of bliss lets us infer the absence of suffering.⁶⁷ He writes:

For instance, the present apprehension of heat, etc., which is opposed to cold, etc., proves the absence of cold, etc., since there is no apprehension in a single place of things that are mutually opposed. In the same way, it is not at all possible for both pleasure and suffering to occur in what is one and the same continuum, for one is opposed to the other.⁶⁸

Granted, ordinary pleasures are mixed with pain, suffering, and dissatisfaction. However, Śāntarakṣita argues that, when great bliss distinguished by insight and means is cultivated to its highest perfection, fully integrated through repeated practice, and apprehended as such, then it brings suffering to an end—precisely because bliss and suffering are fundamentally opposed to one another in the same way as heat and cold.⁶⁹

This helps make sense of Śāntarakṣita's explanation of why the cultivation of bliss is one that will inevitably lead to its highest degree of perfection and thus to its irreversibility. On one hand, Śāntarakṣita is clear that the mind is completely pure by nature, and so “whatever [the mental stream] is perfumed with, and through the power of repeated practice on that, a nature that is thoroughly distinguished manifests which is characterized by the property that it cannot be turned back.”⁷⁰ But still, because it is by nature opposed to the arising of suffering, the cultivation of great bliss is perhaps unique among mental qualities that might be cultivated. For, unlike discernment,

crafts, and practical arts (or unlike the brahmins' trained aversion to impurity, or *nairghr̥ṇya*, to use another of Śāntarakṣita's examples), Śāntarakṣita claims that no judicious person will interrupt his or her cultivation of great bliss, since no judicious person intentionally cultivates suffering. As he writes:

For, having understood suffering and so on not to be beneficial, suffering and so on are abandoned by judicious people. And a judicious person will not look somewhere for a cause that will produce suffering again; otherwise, they are not a judicious person—they are something else, like a madman.⁷¹

In the course of practicing the tantric path, even before bringing the cultivation of great bliss to its highest perfection, a judicious person sees that it is of benefit insofar as its presence is by nature opposed to the arising of suffering. Other practices will be interrupted before they are perfected, but tantric practice is special. Not only is it irreversible once it reaches its highest perfection; further, once a judicious person sets off on the path, it becomes more and more evident as the person progresses that the cultivation of great bliss, distinguished by all the marks of deity yoga, is of the highest value. So, no judicious person will turn away from it.

CONCLUSION

Even more clearly than the various citations of *Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge* 3.282 and 3.285 we saw above, *The Accomplishment of Reality* shows us what is most crucial about Dharmakīrti's view of cultivation for tantric authors: its power to effect a permanent transformation. This is all the more pointed in the case of *The Accomplishment of Reality* given Śāntarakṣita's *disagreement* with Dharmakīrti about how yogic perception really works. Tellingly, Śāntarakṣita never cites *Detailed Commentary* 3.285, and he does not argue that conceptual sorts of cultivation can result in nonconceptual awareness. Indeed, he argues explicitly that this *cannot* happen, as Steinkellner has shown.⁷² Based on the principle that like begets like, Śāntarakṣita argues that the omniscience of a buddha is an awareness-event that forever involves mental construction. As he begins his argument:

Is this awareness of the Omniscient Ones that occurs at cultivation's highest perfection strictly conceptual? Or is it non-conceptual? Among these alternatives, in the first place, if it is asserted to be strictly non-conceptual, then how could it be that what is arisen from the power of a conceptual cultivation is non-conceptual? For there cannot be in any way whatsoever the generation of a non-conceptual awareness-event from a conceptual awareness.⁷³

The omniscience a buddha obtains must be, he goes on to argue in no uncertain terms, a *conceptual* awareness-event—or an awareness-event that involves mental constructions, a *savikalpakajñāna*.

Much could be said about this surprising view.⁷⁴ But, for our purposes here, what is important is that, despite Śāntarakṣita's disagreeing with what we might think is the basic Dharmakīrtian point about yogic perception—namely, whatever is cultivated, whether real or unreal, will result in a vivid, *nonconceptual* awareness-event at the culmination of that cultivation—Śāntarakṣita still

considers himself to be working in a Dharmakīrtian milieu. He cites him as support by name, refers to other passages of the *Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge*, and structures his text around the proof that tantric practice is rational in squarely Dharmakīrtian terms. This suggests that, at least as far as Śāntarakṣita is concerned, what is most central about Dharmakīrti's view is not the idea that a conceptual awareness-event could be made nonconceptual with enough sustained concentration. What is essential is rather Dharmakīrti's proof of the power of cultivation to transform the mental stream of the practitioner in a way that is irreversible and the reason this gives us to undertake such cultivation. This is the case too, I think, for other authors like Ratnarakṣita or Vāgīśvarakīrti who do cite *Detailed Commentary* 3.285. Whatever they might think about the capacity of sustained reflection to transform conceptual awareness into nonconceptual awareness, what they in fact emphasize in their use of Dharmakīrti's verses on yogic perception is the stability of the transformation tantric practice is able to bring about. These tantric authors, then, highlight an important aspect of Dharmakīrti's thought about cultivation: the concern with how we can fundamentally and irreversibly change our cognitive, affective, and behavioral dispositions—how we might develop new habits that persist forever.

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- Tattvaratnāvalokavivaraṇa* of Vāgīśvarakīrti. See Pandey 1996.
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NOTES

¹ See Harunaga Isaacson, “Yogācāra and Vajrayāna according to Ratnākaraśānti,” in *The Foundation for Yoga Practitioners: The Buddhist Yogācārabhūmi Treatise and Its Adaptation in India, East Asia, and Tibet*, ed. Ulrich Timme Kragh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1036–1051; Davey K. Tomlinson, “The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti’s Philosophy of Mind,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (2018): 355–372; Davey K. Tomlinson, “Limiting the Scope of the Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument: The Nirākāravādin’s Defense of Consciousness and Pleasure,” *Philosophy East & West* 73, no. 2 (2023): 392–419; Gregory Max Seton, “Ratnākaraśānti: The Illumination of False Forms,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. William Edelglass, Pierre-Julien Harter, and Sara McClintock (London: Routledge, 2023), 587–600; and the sources cited therein.

² See, for instance, Indrabhūti’s *Jñānasiddhi* (Torsten Gerloff and Julian Schott, *Indrabhūti’s Jñānasiddhi: A New Critical Edition of the Sanskrit Text and Its Tibetan Translation, with English Translation and Reproductions of the MSS* [Naples: Università di Napoli “L’Orientale,” 2024]); Samantabhadra’s *Sāramañjarī* (Margherita Serena Saccone and Péter-Dániel Szántó, *Tantra and Pramāṇa: A Study of the Sāramañjarī* [Naples: Unior Press, 2023]); Maitrīpa’s “*Amanasikāra* cycle,” especially the *Tattvadaśaka* and *Tattvaratnāvalī* (Klaus-Dieter Mathes, *A Fine Blend of Mahāmudrā and Madhyamaka: Maitrīpa’s Collection of Texts on Non-conceptual Realization [Amanasikāra]* [Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015]) together with Sahajavajra’s **Tattvadaśakaṭīkā* (Karl Brunnhölzl, trans., *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions* [Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2007]) and Vajrapāṇi’s **Guruparamparākramopadeśa* (Mark Tatz, “Philosophic Systems according to Advayavajra and Vajrapāṇi,” *The Journal of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies* 1 [1994]: 65–120), though see also his more technical tantric works like the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivarāṇa* (*Explaining the Seals of the Five Tathāgatas*) (Mathes, *Fine Blend*) and the *Sekanirdeśa* (*An Explanation of Initiation*) with Rāmapāla’s *Pañjikā* (*Commentary*) (Harunaga Isaacson and Francesco Sferra, *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyanātha [Advayavajra] with the Sekanirdeśapañjikā of Rāmapāla* [Naples: Università Degli Studi di Napoli, 2014]); and Abhayākara Gupta’s *Abhayapaddhati* (*The Fearless Guidebook*) (Chog Dorje, *Abhayapaddhati of Abhayākara Gupta: Commentary on the Buddhakapālatantra* [Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2009]; Hong Luo, *Abhayākara Gupta’s Abhayapaddhati, Chapters 9–14* [Hamburg: Asien-Afrika-Institut and China Tibetology Research Center, 2010]) and *Amnāyamañjarī* (*Blossoms of the Lineage*), the Sanskrit of the latter still unedited; and so on. For recent more general discussions, see Adam Krug, “Tantric Epistemology and the Problem of Ineffability in The Seven Siddhi Texts,” in *Buddhism and Linguistics: Theory and Philosophy*, ed. Manel Herat (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 149–84; Dominic Sur, “The Dzokchen Apology: On the Limits of Logic, Language, and Epistemology in Early Great Perfection,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 50 (2022): 1–46; and Vesna Wallace, “The Tantric Buddha: Primordial Buddhas as Philosophical Authors,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. William Edelglass, Pierre-Julien Harter, and Sara McClintock (London: Routledge, 2023), 46–63.

³ For a few recent discussions, see Heidi I. Koppl, *Establishing Appearances as Divine: Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo on Reasoning, Madhyamaka, and Purity* (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2008); Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tantric Techniques* (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2008); Thomas Yarnall, *Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra (sngags rim chen mo): Chapters XI–XII, The Creation Stage* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2013); Tsongkhapa, *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra, Volume One: Tantra in Tibet; With a Commentary by the Dalai Lama*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2016); Yael Bentor and Penpa Dorjee, *The Essence of the Ocean of Attainments: The Creation Stage of the Guhyasamaja Tantra according to Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2019); Dominic Sur, “Dzokchen Apology”; and Rae Erin Dacheille, *Searching for the Body: A Contemporary Perspective on Tibetan Buddhist Tantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

⁴ See Ronald Davidson, “Masquerading as Pramāṇa: Esoteric Buddhism and Epistemological Nomenclature,” in *Dharmakīrti’s Thought and Its Impact on Indian and Tibetan Philosophy—Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Dharmakīrti and Pramāṇa, Hiroshima, November 4–6, 1997*, ed. Katsura Shoryu (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 30. The verse from Saraha is *Dohākoṣa* 56b,

per Roger Jackson, *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85.

⁵ Ratnarakṣita, for instance, defends this position: see Ryugen Tanemura, Kazuo Kano, and Kenichi Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī—A Preliminary Edition of the Excursus in Chapter 13, Part 2,” *Journal of the Kawasaki Daishi Institute for Buddhist Studies* no. 4 (2019): 1–42. Some disagree about the restriction of deity yoga to the generation stage. Tsongkhapa, for instance, argues that deity yoga is definitive of tantric practice generally, and so is part of all postinitiatory practice. See Tsongkhapa, *Great Exposition*; Yarnall, *Great Treatise*.

⁶ On competing tantric theories of the glimpse in relation to Dharmakīrtian views of yogic perception, see Davey K. Tomlinson, “Tantric Initiation and the Epistemic Role of the Glimpse,” *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* 6 (2024): 90–122. A consideration of different views of the relation between the generation and completion stages is beyond our scope here. Ratnākaraśānti provides one typical way of parsing the difference when he defines the generation stage as that in which the yogin generates the image of the deity, the *devatākāra*, through the use of mantras, seed-syllables, signs, and so on, and performs various practices in that form; the completion stage, on the other hand, involves just the cultivation of innate bliss, without the further proliferation of mental images. See Harunaga Isaacson, “Ratnākaraśānti’s *Hevajrasahajasyadyoga* (Studies in Ratnākaraśānti’s Tantric Works I),” in *Le Parole e i Marmi: Studi in onore di Raniero Gnoli nel suo 70° compleanno*, ed. Raffaele Torella (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2001), 468–472; Davey K. Tomlinson, “Buddhahood and Philosophy of Mind: Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra, and the Debate over Mental Content (Ākāra)” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2019), 125–127.

⁷ See *Jñānasiddhi* 2.1–9; Yael Bendor, “Maintaining Identification with a Buddha: Divine Identity or Simply False?,” in *Histories of Tibet: Essays in Honor of Leonard W. J. van der Kuip*, ed. Kurtis K. Schaeffer, Jue Liang, and William A. McGrath (New York: Wisdom, 2023), 307–322.

⁸ Ryugen Tanemura, Kazuo Kano, and Kenichi Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī—A Preliminary Edition of the Excursus in Chapter 13, Part 1,” *Journal of the Kawasaki Daishi Institute for Buddhist Studies*, no. 2 (2017): 5–6: *kiṃ ca buddhatvaṃ puṇyajñānasambhārakāryam. katham tad bhāvanāmātreṇa syāt. na hi daridrasya rājāhaṃ cakravartīti bhāvanayā cakravartitvalābhaḥ. pretabhāvanayā pretatvalābhaḥ kasyacid akasmāt, śubhāśubhakarmavaiphalyprapasaṅgāt*. See the summary in Bendor, “Maintaining Identification,” 310.

⁹ See Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī, Part 1,” 6: *atattvābhīniveśaprabhavatvenaiva hi laukikadharmāṇām anityatvam*. See again the summary in Bendor, “Maintaining Identification,” 310.

¹⁰ On this stage of the *sādhana*, see Elizabeth English, *Vajrayoginī: Her Visualizations, Rituals, and Forms* (Boston: Wisdom, 2002), 125–131, with her especially detailed endnotes.

¹¹ See for instance Puṇḍarīka’s *Paramākṣarajñānasiddhi* in the fifth chapter of the *Vimalaprabhā* (*Stainless Light*) (vol. 3, 60–103). Verses on this same idea from Puṇḍarīka’s introduction to the *Vimalaprabhā* (vol. 1, 6–8) are cited in Anupamarakṣita’s *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (*Sixfold Yoga*); see Francisco Sferra, *The Ṣaḍaṅgayoga by Anupamarakṣita with Raviśrījñāna’s Guṇabharanīnāmaṣaḍaṅgayogaṭippaṇī: Text and Annotated Translation* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2000), 83–94, 245–253.

¹² On the idea of “adaptive reuse,” see Elisa Freschi and Phillip Maas, *Adaptive Reuse: Aspects of Creativity in South Asian Intellectual History* (Wiesbaden, DE: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), especially their introduction. As they define the idea there, “The concept of reuse comprises four main aspects, viz. (1.) the involvement of at least one consciously acting agent, who, (2.) in order to achieve a certain purpose, (3.) resumes the usage (4.) of a clearly identifiable object after an interruption in its being used. The attribute ‘adaptive’ presupposes that the reusing person pursues a specific purpose by adapting something already existent to his or her specific needs” (13). They juxtapose “adaptive reuse” with “simple re-use”: “In contrast to simple re-use, adaptive reuse is not merely the repetition of a previous use; it implies more than an item just being used again. In adaptive reuse, the reuser expects his or her audience to recognize the reused elements in order to achieve a well-defined purpose, as for example adding prestige, credibility, etc. to the newly created item” (14). In the present case, though Dharmakīrti’s verses on yogic perception appear not to have gone out of fashion, tantric authors adapt his verses to a new context with aims in view that are at odds with Dharmakīrti’s own immediate aims, as I will show in the next section.

¹³ There is good reason to agree with Ernst Steinkellner’s assessment that the Śāntarakṣita who authored the *Tattvasiddhi* is very likely not the more famous Śāntarakṣita, author of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (*Collected Verses*

on the Nature of Things) and Ornament of the Middle Way (*Madhyamakālaṃkāra*) and founder of bSam yas monastery in Tibet. It is perfectly plausible that that Śāntarakṣita might have written tantric works. The *Tattvasiddhi*, however, includes central claims that seem not to fit with the view defended by the author of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*—not just the use of the *kāryotpādānumāna* (i.e., the inference of the arising of an effect from the presence of its complete causal complex), which Ernst Steinkellner notes is absent from Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla's work ("Is the Ultimate Cognition of the Yogin Conceptual or Non-conceptual? Part 2: Introducing the Problem in the Final Section of the Tantristic *Tattvasiddhi* with Analysis and Translation," in *Esoteric Buddhist Studies: Identity in Diversity: Proceedings of the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies, Koyasan University, 5 Sept.–8 Sept. 2006* [Koyasan, JPN: ICEBS Editorial Board, 2008], 292–293), but also the unapologetic proof that omniscience (*sarvajñajñāna*) is a conceptual awareness-event (*savikalpakajñāna*). (Steinkellner, "Is the Ultimate, Part 2" includes a translation of the *Tattvasiddhi*'s final section devoted to this proof; Ernst Steinkellner, "Is the Ultimate Cognition of the Yogin Conceptual or Non-conceptual? Part 1: A Critical Edition of the Tantric *Tattvasiddhi*, Final Section," in *Le Parole e i marmi: Studi in onore di Raniero Gnoli nel suo 70° compleanno*, ed. Raffaele Torella et al. [Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001], 835–852, includes his edition of the Sanskrit.) Any claim that the authors of the *Tattvasiddhi* and *Tattvasaṃgraha* are one and the same Śāntarakṣita would have to account for the apparent discrepancy between the account of omniscience in the *Tattvasiddhi* and that found in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (on which, see McClintock, *Omniscience*), or else offer some explanation as to why this discrepancy need not be accounted for. Note, however, that Allison Aitken shows in her forthcoming *Introduction to Reality: Śrīgupta's Tattvāvatāravṛtti* that there is an important precedent for the *Tattvasiddhi*'s view of omniscience in Śrīgupta's *Tattvāvatāra* (*Introduction to Reality*), a work very influential for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. (My thanks to her for correspondence about this.) We will not be able to settle this question definitively here.

¹⁴ See, for instance, John D. Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti's Theory of Yogic Perception," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34, no. 6 (2006): 497–519; Sara L. McClintock, *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation and Religious Authority* (Boston: Wisdom, 2010); Vincent Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics: Studies on the History, Self-Understanding and Dogmatic Foundations of Late Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014); Birgit Kellner, "Using Concepts to Eliminate Conceptualization: Kamalaśīla on Non-conceptual Gnosis (*Nirvikalpajñāna*)," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 43 (2020): 39–80; and Cristina Pecchia, "Seeing as Cognizing: Perception, Concepts, and Meditation Practice in Indian Buddhist Epistemology," *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatique* 74, no. 4 (2020): 771–796. See also Davey K. Tomlinson, "A Buddhist's Guide to Self-Destruction: Jñānaśrīmītra on the Structure of Yogic Perception," *Religious Studies* 60, no. 2 (2024): 219–234; and "Meditative Cultivation and the Force of Truth in Dharmakīrti's Philosophy," in *Practices of Truth in Philosophy: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Pietro Gori and Lorenzo Serini (London: Routledge, 2024), 84–102.

¹⁵ *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285 (= *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.31): *tasmād bhūtam abhūtaṃ vā yad yad evābhībhāvyate | bhāvanāpariṇiṣpattau tat sphuṭākālpadhīphalam* ||. Pecchia, "Seeing as Cognizing," 791, modified slightly; compare Dunne, "Realizing the Unreal," 514; Vincent Eltschinger, "On the Career and Cognition of Yogins," in *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco in collaboration with Dagmar Eigner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 192n99; and Eli Franco, "Perception of Yogis—Some Epistemological and Metaphysical Considerations," in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, and Birgit Kellner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 84. Compare the reading *bhāvanābalaniṣpattau* in *pada c* ("when the cultivation's power is perfected"), which, as Isaacson and Sferra note in *Sekanirdeśa of Maitreya-nātha* (267n70), occurs in a number of tantric and nontantric citations of the verse. See note 23 below.

¹⁶ *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.282 (= *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.29): *kāmaśokabhayonmādacaurasvapnādyupaplutāḥ | abhūtān api paśyanti purato 'vasthitān iva* ||.

¹⁷ That is, this is his primary interest at *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.281–287; *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.28–32; *Nyāyabindu* (*An Epitome of Reasoning*) 1.11. On certain meditation practices that generate forms of yogic awareness rather than perception, see *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.284.

¹⁸ *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.286: *tatra pramāṇasaṃvādi yat prāñnirñitavastuvat | tad bhāvanājam pratyakṣam iṣṭam śeṣā upaplavāḥ ||*. Compare *Pramāṇaviniścaya* ad 1.28, per the translations in Dunne, “Realizing the Unreal,” and Pecchia, “Seeing as Cognizing.”

¹⁹ See Kellner, “Using Concepts”; Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 298–328; Tomlinson, “Meditative Cultivation.” Dharmakīrti makes this clear both at *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.286 and at *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.28 and the following prose.

²⁰ In addition to the sources cited above, see Kamalaśīla’s first *Bhāvanākrama* (*The Stages of Cultivation*) on this point, as cited and translated in Saccone and Szántó, *Tantra and Pramāṇa*, 30n2. There, he makes especially clear the way that *cintāmayī prajñā* discerns the real (*bhūta*) from the unreal (*abhūta*), thus allowing the practitioner to cultivate only that which leads to liberation.

²¹ Perhaps, it might be said, the reason for this is that tantric authors all have *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.31 in mind rather than *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285. This is not impossible, given that both the verses tantric authors cite, viz. *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285 and 3.282, are also found in *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (1.31 and 1.29, respectively). Still, the point made by *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.286 is made by *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.28 and the following prose, and our authors fail to cite this, too. In any case, this *never* is no doubt too strong: many tantric works remain unedited and unstudied, and so it is possible citations of either *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.286 or *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.28 might be discovered in them. However, were such instances found, I expect they would be exceptions that prove the rule.

²² Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī, Part 1,” 10: *ādarādiviśiṣṭenābhyāseṇa cittasyālambyamāne vastuni sthairyālābhasyānubhavasiddhatvāt*. Ratnarakṣita then continues, *tad utkam*—and cites *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285, with the reading *bhāvanābalanīṣpattau* in *pada c*.

²³ Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī, Part 1,” 10: *tasmād bhūtam abhūtam vā yad yad evātibhāvyate | bhāvanābalanīṣpattau tat sphuṭākālpadhīphalam ||*. Emphasis mine. Against the reading of *pada c* that appears to be supported by the commentators on and Tibetan translation of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, viz. *bhāvanāparinīṣpattau*, the reading *bhāvanābalanīṣpattau* occurs in a number of tantric and nontantric citations of the verse, the earliest of which appears to be Haribhadra’s *Abhisamayālaṃkāṛāloka* (*Light on the Ornament of Realization*). For some references, see Isaacson and Sferra, *Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyañātha*, 267n70. All the tantric citations of the verse I am aware of have this reading. Note, with Isaacson and Sferra, that the compound *bhāvanābalanīṣpannam* occurs in the Dharmakīrti’s prose immediately following this verse as it occurs at *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 1.31. Finally, the (I think insignificant) change in *pada b* from *-abhibhāvyate* to *-atibhāvyate* is found at a number of places, too. This appears not to be consistent across citations of the verse I am aware of and, I think, is likely due to the orthographic similarity of *bhi* and *ti* in many manuscripts.

²⁴ Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita’s Padminī, Part 1,” 10: *manomayamātramūrtitvena sarvadharmāṇām cakravartyādibhāvanābhyo ’pi tatsphuṭībhāve ko virodhaḥ*.

²⁵ It is worth noting that Ratnarakṣita justifies this view with reference to Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*) 5.10–11, too. On Śāntideva’s authority, he claims, all the perfections of the exoteric method of perfections (*pāramitānaya*) are really just perfections of mental attitudes cultivated with sustained concentration over a long period of time.

²⁶ This distinction between *prapañcacaryā* and *niṣprapañcacaryā* is thematized in early tantric works, like Āryadeva’s ca. ninth-century *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* (*Lamp That Integrates the Practices*), a.k.a. *Sūta*. See Christian Wedemeyer, ed., *Āryadeva’s Lamp That Integrates the Practices* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, 2007), chap. 9 and chap. 10. There is good reason to think the opponent here is Vāgīśvarakīrti’s colleague Ratnākaraśānti.

²⁷ *Tattvaratnāvalokavivaraṇa* (*An Explanation of Beholding the Jewel of Reality*) 144: *nanu yatraivālabane cittam punaḥ punaḥ preryate niranantaraṃ dīrgakālaṃ ca tatraiva sthīrībhavati*.

²⁸ See *Tattvaratnāvalokavivaraṇa* 144, where we again find the reading *bhāvanābalanīṣpattau* in *pada c*.

²⁹ See *Tattvaratnāvalokavivaraṇa* 144–145.

³⁰ Compare, too, Tsongkhapa's use of *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.282 and 3.285 in his discussion of the generation stage in the *Sngags rim chen mo* (Yarnall, *Great Treatise*, 154–159), where “vividness,” “firmness,” and “stability” are of central concern (though note that *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285 is also used in the context of nonconceptuality at Yarnall, *Great Treatise*, 101). My thanks to Tom Yarnall for referring me to these passages. Unfortunately, a discussion of the role of Dharmakīrti's yogic perception verses in Tibetan debates about deity yoga is beyond the scope of this paper.

³¹ “Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: The Discourse on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel (of Vision) of the Basic Pattern: The Four True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled Ones,” translated from the Pali by Peter Harvey, Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), November 2, 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.harv.html>.

³² Peter Gilks, “No Turning Back: The Concept of Irreversibility in Indian Mahāyāna Literature” (PhD diss., The Australian National University, 2010).

³³ See Gilks, “No Turning Back,” chap. 5 and chap. 6.

³⁴ *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi* 217: *yena yena hi bhāvena tatra tatrābhyāsabalād viśiṣṭatarasvabhāvam āviṣkaroty apunarāvṛttidharmatālakṣaṇam*. Compare the *Tattvasiddhi* 13.16–17: *yena yena vāsyate tatra tatra cābhyāsabalād viśiṣṭatarasvabhāvam āviṣkaroty apunarāvṛttidharmatālakṣaṇam*. Note that the line in Śāntarakṣita's text also immediately precedes the citation of *Yoginīsañcāratāntra* (*The Tantra on the Movements of the Yoginīs*) 11.2, as it does in *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi*. I have emended the text of the edition of the *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi* from *apunarārṣṭa-* to *apunarāvṛtti-* on the basis of the *Tattvasiddhi* and the available *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi* manuscript evidence. My thanks to Torsten Gerloff for sending me an image of the relevant passage that confirms the reading. This work appears not to have been translated into Tibetan, to the best of my knowledge.

³⁵ *Yoginīsañcāratāntra* 11.2 (= *Samvarodayatantra* 31.31): *yena yena hi bhāvena manah saṃyujyate nṛṇām | tena tanmayatām yāti viśvarūpo mañir yathā ||*. This verse is cited often in tantric works together with Dharmakīrti's verses on yogic perception. Padmavajra cites this verse with his citations of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.282 and 3.285 in the *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi*, 217. Ratnarakṣita cites it together with his citation of Dharmakīrti at Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi, “Ratnarakṣita's Padminī, Part 1,” 10. In his *Upadeśānusāriṇīvyākhyā* (*A Commentary Following the Instructions*) on *Yoginīsañcāratāntra* 11.2, Alakakalaśa cites *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.282 as support for idea the verse conveys (Janardan Pandey, *Yoginīsañcāratāntram with Nibandha of Tathātagarakṣita and Upadeśānusāriṇīvyākhyā of Alakakalaśa* [Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1998], 102). As Tanemura, Kano, and Kuranishi note (see “Ratnarakṣita's Padminī, Part 1,” 21, for references), it is also cited in Muniśrībhadrā's *Yogimanoharā* (*A Delight for Yogins*) and in Vīryaśrīmitra's *Marmakalikā* (*Enumerating the Vital Points*) ad *Tattvajñānasamśiddhi* (*The Thorough Accomplishment of the Gnosis of Reality*) 1.1. Finally, as we will see in some detail below, it is also cited in Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasiddhi*, 13, in the context of the irreversibility of tantric realization.

³⁶ The position that the image of the deity might be abandoned and there can be the cultivation of just *sātamātra* is not a good one, Vāgīśvarakīrti says, “because it is not possible to abandon what is deeply ingrained (*sātmībhūta*) insofar as its nature is free of misfortune and real.” *Tattvaratnāvalokavivaraṇa* 143: *nirupadravabhūtārthasvabhāvatvena sātmībhūtasya tyaktam aśakyatvāt*. (Note that I understand this reason with the following rather than the preceding: read a full stop after the edition's *dvitīyasya kalpanā[mā]trateti* and a comma after *aśakyatvāt*.) Vāgīśvarakīrti appears to be referring to Dharmakīrti explicitly here. See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.210: *nirupadravabhūtārthasvabhāvasya viparyayaiḥ | na bādhā yatnavattve 'pi buddhes tatpakṣapātataḥ ||*. We will return to this verse below.

³⁷ Even a more obscure use of *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.285 by Rāmapāla in his *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* might be read in this same way. Rāmapāla puts the point in the mouth of an opponent who thinks, contra Vāgīśvarakīrti, that the cultivation of bliss (*sāta*), without the imagery of the deity and so on, can become vivid spontaneously (*svayam*) in virtue of cultivation that is attentive and so on (*sādarādibhāvanā*). See Isaacson and Sferra, *Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyanātha*, 266n69.

³⁸ Cited in Clare Carlisle, *On Habit: Thinking in Action* (London: Routledge, 2014), 21.

³⁹ My translations of verses from *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.120–131ab in what follows have especially benefited from those of Masatoshi Nagatomi (“A Study of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*” [PhD diss., Harvard University,

1957], 129–135), as well as from comments in Prajñākaragupta’s *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra* (*The Ornament of the Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge*) and Manorathanandin’s *Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti* (*A Commentary on the Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge*). For other translations of this portion, each based primarily on the Tibetan translation and a different Tibetan commentary, compare Roger Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakīrti and rGyal tshab rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-Self and Liberation* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1993) (with the commentary of Gyaltsab jé[1364–1432]); Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso, *Establishing Validity: The First Chapter of Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso’s Ocean of Literature on Logic and the Corresponding Chapter from Dharmakīrti’s Commentary on Validity*, trans. David Karma Choephel (Woodstock, NY: KTS Publications, 2016) (with the commentary of Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso [1454–1506]); and Gorampa Sönam Sengé, *Light on Samantabhadra: An Explanation of Dharmakīrti’s Commentary on Valid Cognition*, trans. Gavin Kilty (New York: Wisdom, 2023) (with the commentary of Gorampa Sönam Sengé [1429–1469]). For the edition and translation of verses from *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.190–216, see Cristina Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering: A Critical Edition with Translation and Comments of Manorathanandin’s Vṛtti and Vibhūticandra’s Glosses on Pramāṇavārttika II.190–216*, with the assistance of Philip Pierce (Leiden: Brill, 2015). For Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla’s discussion of this point, see McClintock, *Omniscience*, 208–212.

⁴⁰ This line of objection might originate in Kumāṛila. See the verse attributed to Kumāṛila’s *Bhṛhatṭikā* (*Great Commentary*), as translated and discussed in McClintock, *Omniscience*, 208: “One who, having jumped, goes up to ten cubits (*hasta*) in the air is not able to go a league (*yojana*), even after practicing hundreds of times.”

⁴¹ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.120–121: *abhyāsenā viśeṣe ’pi laṅghanodakatāpavat | svabhāvātikramo mā bhūḍ iti ced āhitāḥ sa cet || punaryatnam apekṣeta yadi syād asthirāśrayaḥ | viśeṣo naiva vardheta svabhāvaś ca na tādrśaḥ ||*. “[Opponent:] ‘Even if there is some distinction brought about by repeated practice, it cannot transgress its nature, like in the cases of jumping and heating water.’ [Reply:] If the distinction that is accomplished were to depend on further effort [as in the case of jumping] or have an unstable basis [as in the case of heating water], then that distinction would not increase and it would not have such a nature.” Against Miyasaka’s edition, I read *punaryatnam* in compound and *vardheta* for *bardheta*.

⁴² Eli Franco, *Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1997), 6.

⁴³ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.124: *kāṣṭhapāradahemāder agnyāder iva cetasi | abhyāśajāḥ pravartante svarasena kṛpādayaḥ ||*. “Compassion and so on, produced through repeated practice in the mind, proceed by their natural inclination, just as for wood, mercury, and gold [there is a distinction produced] through [the application of] fire and so on [and this distinction then proceeds by its natural inclination].” See Nagatomi, “Study of Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*,” 131–132, for the alchemical processes referred to here in Prajñākaragupta’s and Manorathanandin’s commentaries. We will stick to the straightforward case of charring wood.

⁴⁴ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.125–126: *tasmāt sa teṣāṃ utpannaḥ svabhāvo jāyate guṇaḥ | taduttarottaro yatno viśeṣasya vidhāyakaḥ || yasmāc ca tulyajātīyapūrvabījapraraddhayaḥ | kṛpādibuddhayaś tāsāṃ saty abhyāse kutaḥ sthitaḥ ||*. “Therefore, that quality [such as compassion and so on], arisen for those [who repeatedly practice it], becomes the nature [of their mental stream]. Each further effort increases that distinction. And since awareness-events like compassion are further increased due to previous seeds of the same kind, how could there be an end [to their increase] when they are repeatedly practiced?”

⁴⁵ *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, 44.4–5: *cintāmayīm eva tu prajñām anuśīlayanto vibhramavivekanirmalam anapāyi pāramārthikapramāṇam abhimukhīkurvanti*. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁶ See Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 144–147; 170–171. As Pecchia helpfully glosses this verse earlier in her study, “This [irreversibility of the cessation of suffering] can be understood as the result of an irreversible state of insufficiency of causes of suffering that comes about because the development of the force of some causes is interrupted, while the force of other causes does continue to develop, to the point where they may bring about a radical transformation of the previous condition. The complex of causes necessary for the arising of any occurrence of suffering becomes definitively insufficient when the cessation of the development applies to the view of a self, whose definitive obstruction is marked by the end of the development of its innate form” (21).

⁴⁷ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.216, which we will return to in a moment. In Dharmakīrti's "dissimilar case" (*vipakṣa*) there is the solidity that returns to gold as it cools, but the same point would apply to water heated over a flame. See Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 21–22, for a discussion of this point, in addition to her translations of *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.216 and Manorathanandin's commentary.

⁴⁸ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.207, per Pecchia's edition and translation (*Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 146–149). We might push back against Dharmakīrti here. True, as I inspect the rope, I am unlikely to superimpose the idea of a snake upon it. But however well I might know that there is a jacket on the coatrack by my door, when I come downstairs in the dark at night I still start at the mistaken apprehension of a person there. In such a case, though, Dharmakīrti might say that the true causes of the error have not really been uprooted. If they had been, then, because it is the mind's natural disposition to apprehend what is real as it is, and because it is the object's nature to generate an awareness-event that apprehends it as it is, I would not jump back in alarm. The innate sense of self and the desire and aversion it causes still shape my mental stream, and so I fall prey again to the illusion of a person standing in the dark.

⁴⁹ See again the section on the repeated practice of compassion, viz. *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.129–131ab: *krpā svabījaprabhavā svabījaprabhavair na cet | vipakṣair bādhyate citte prayāty atyantasāmatām || tathā hi mūlam abhyāsaḥ pūrvāḥ pūrvāḥ parasya tu | krpāvairāgyabodhādeś cittadharmasya pātave || krpātmakatvam abhyāsād ghrṇāvairāgyarāgavat |*. "If compassion, whose origin is its own seeds, is not defeated by its opposites, the origin of which is their own seeds, then it reaches its uninterrupted nature in the mental [stream]. For, in this way, each preceding repeated practice is the basis for the acuteness of another mental property such as compassion, desirelessness, or understanding. One comes to have the nature of compassion through repeated practice, as in the case of disgust, desirelessness, and desire." I read *citte* in 2.129c with Prajñākaragupta's and Manorathanandin's commentaries and the Tibetan translation (*sems la* or "in the mental [stream]"), against *cet te* in Miyasaka's edition.

⁵⁰ *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.194: *duḥkhajñāne 'viruddhasya pūrvasaṃskāravāhinī | vastudharmo dayotpattir na sā sattvānurodhinī ||*. My translation of the verse here is rather free, incorporating points from Manorathanandin's commentary, per Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 136–139; for a more literal translation, see Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 169.

⁵¹ This point is made perhaps most clearly at *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.194–196. See Pecchia's translation, with Manorathanandin's commentary *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 136–139). At issue here, too, is what Prajñākaragupta calls the "great difference" between compassion (*dayā*, etc.) and desire (*rāga*). See *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra* ad *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.195 (= 2.196 in *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra*'s numbering).

⁵² On the relationship between this Śāntarakṣita and the more famous author of the same name, see note 13 above.

⁵³ See Ernst Steinkellner, "Yogic Cognition, Tantric Goal, and Other Methodological Applications of Dharmakīrti's Kāryānumāna Theorem," in *Dharmakīrti's Thought and Its Impact on Indian and Tibetan Philosophy: Proceedings of the Third International Dharmakīrti Conference, Hiroshima, November 4–6, 1997*, ed. Shōryū Katsura (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 349–362; "Is the Ultimate, Part 1"; and "Is the Ultimate, Part 2." Compare, too, two translations of the *Tattvasiddhi* that have recently appeared: one, in Marie-Louise Fricquegnon and Arthur Mandelbaum, *Tattvasiddhi and Madhyamakalankara* (New York: Cool Grove Press, 2017), based on the Tibetan translation; another, self-published in Laul Jadusingh, *The Perfection of Desire as the Path* (Self-published, 2017), based (I believe) on K. N. Mishra's Sanskrit edition. Still, I have found it necessary to return to the Sanskrit text edited by K. N. Mishra, made accessible by Fricquegnon and Mandelbaum's inclusion of Mishra's edition as an appendix, together with the portion reedited in Steinkellner, "Is the Ultimate, Part 1." I refer to the page and line number in Mishra's edition of the *Tattvasiddhi*, then, in the notes below. Translations are my own, based on an initial draft translation made in collaboration with Douglas Duckworth.

⁵⁴ It is quite true that Śāntarakṣita does engage in some lengthy apologetics when he discusses what Steinkellner ("Is the Ultimate, Part 2," 293) calls the "second thesis," namely, that "just as the Blessed One taught that form and so on and the transformations of bliss that arise from it are the cause of the highest result, so too the transformations of bliss that arise from contact (*sparśa*) [are the cause of the highest result]." See the text per Steinkellner, "Is the Ultimate, Part 2," 293n14: *yathā bhavagatā rūpādayaḥ tannirjātāḥ [ca] sukhapariṇāmanā*

anuttaraphalāhetur uktāḥ, tathā sparśanirjātasukhapariṇāmanā api. Cf. *Tattvasiddhi* 6.13–14. An opponent objects that the implied physical sexual contact here is prohibited for monastics by the Buddha. Śāntarakṣita responds that that prohibition is in fact restricted just to people for whom embodied forms are embraced by ignorance (*avidyāparigrhītāmūrti*); it does not apply to people for whom forms are embraced by insight and means (*prajñopāya*). He then gives an extended scriptural defense of this idea, starting at *Tattvasiddhi* 7.2 and ending at 12.2. Still, much of the rest of the work, including the parts that will be our focus here, is not invested in these apologetics as such but rather in showing what practices a judicious person should undertake and why.

⁵⁵ See Steinkellner, “Yogic Cognition” and “Is the Ultimate, Part 2.” Dharmakīrti typically holds that we cannot infer the arising of an effect from a cause given the possibility of some obstacle (see *Pramāṇavārttika* 1.8, for instance). We might be able to infer the “possibility of” or “fitness for” (*yogyatā*) the arising of an effect from the complete set of causal conditions (*hetusāmagrī*)—but, in ordinary cases, this will occur in the moment just before the arising of the effect, and so it will be useless practically speaking. However, as he summarizes his findings, Steinkellner (“Is the Ultimate, Part 2,” 292–293n8) has shown that “Dharmakīrti developed this tool [viz., the *kāryotpādānumāna*] in order to provide a rational basis for the assumption that a bodhisattva, after having reached the point of no return (*anivartana*), will necessarily reach his goal on the grounds of having created the complete complex of the causal conditions through his earlier efforts. While on the level of everyday practice it must be acknowledged that there is no certainty that a cause or causal complex will produce its effect, and thus an inference from cause to effect is uncertain, this does not hold good for a saintly person who has attained a level in his progress where a complete causal complex can no longer be impeded.”

⁵⁶ As Śāntarakṣita says at the opening of the work, “As is well-known to all parties of this debate, ‘A distinguished causal complex produces only a distinguished result.’” *Tattvasiddhi* 1.15–2.1: *viśiṣṭā hi sāmāgrī viśiṣṭam eva phalaṃ janayatīti sarvavādaprasiddham*. See Steinkellner, “Is the Ultimate, Part 2,” 293, where he cites Dharmakīrti’s discussion of this maxim at *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* (“The Auto-commentary on the Detailed Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge”) 10.8f. Throughout this discussion, I translate *viśeṣa* as “distinctive” when it is used as an adjective and as “distinction” when it is used as a noun, and I translate the past participle *viśiṣṭa* as “distinguished.”

⁵⁷ See, for instance, *Tattvasiddhi* 2.4–6 and 4.9–15.

⁵⁸ *Tattvasiddhi* 6.5–6 (= *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga* 1.24); see Āryadeva’s citation of this verse in the *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* at Wedemeyer, *Āryadeva’s Lamp*, 366.

⁵⁹ This discussion is a long and fascinating one, spanning *Tattvasiddhi* 12.3–23.4. We will be able to consider only some of its complexities here.

⁶⁰ See *Tattvasiddhi* 12.3–10: *tena prakṛtiprabhāsvarasphaṭikopalasadrṣe manasi rupādibhir āhitasamskāra-viśeṣasukhasaumanasyalakṣaṇaḥ saḥ tatra prajñopāyaparigrhītasābhyāsaviśeṣabalāt prakarṣaparyanta-rūpatām āsādayed iti. tad yathā — prajñāśilpakalādivad rūpādiviśayānubhavaśāñjātasamskāra-viśeṣabhāgi jñānam asakṛdbhāvanābhyāsasāmarthyād samāhitaparamāśāsvatasvabhāvam, bhāvanāprakaṣaparyanta-gamanāt, svasiddhānte sugatādivad loke ca kāmāśokabhayonmādādivat. sparśajanitasukhasaumanasyādayaś ca bhāvyante. tasmāt te ’pi paramaviśeṣaśālina iti.* The text here is problematic. I have made changes to Mishra’s edition following Steinkellner, “Is the Ultimate, Part 2,” 294n22.

⁶¹ *Tattvasiddhi* 17.14–16: *ye ye prāptaprakarṣaparyantāḥ na te vyāvartante, tad yathā mokṣādayaḥ. prakarṣaparyantakāraṇasvarūpāḥ sukhasaumanasyādayaḥ iti svabhāvahetuḥ.*

⁶² *Tattvasiddhi* 18.1–4: *prakarṣaparyantagamanamātrānubandhi sātṁkaranam. tac cābhyāsaviśeṣabalād apunarāvṛttidharmatām āsav āsādayati.*

⁶³ Śāntarakṣita uses this example at *Tattvasiddhi* 18.4–5. Compare *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.125–126, translated in note 44 above.

⁶⁴ See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.130cd–131ab, translated in note 49 above.

⁶⁵ *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.210: *nirupadravabhūtārthasvabhāvasya viparyayaḥ | na bādhā yatnavattve ’pi buddhes tatpakṣapātataḥ ||*. Compare Pecchia, *Dharmakīrti on the Cessation of Suffering*, 173.

⁶⁶ *Tattvasiddhi* 18.13.

⁶⁷ See *Tattvasiddhi* 12.10 ff. Śāntarakṣita refers here to a type of nonapprehension (*anupalabdhi*) known as “the apprehension of something of an opposed nature” (*svabhāvaviruddhopalabdhi*). Dharmakīrti defines this at, e.g., *Nyāyabindu* 2.34: *svabhāvaviruddhopalabdhir yathā nātra śītasparśo vahnir iti.* “The apprehension of

something of an opposed nature [is also evidence of absence], for instance: There is no cold feeling here, because there is fire.” Śāntarakṣita refers to this case in his exposition of the point, as we will see in a moment.

⁶⁸ *Tattvasiddhi* 12.14–17: *tad yathā — śītādiviruddham uṣṇādikam upalabhyamānam śītādyabhāvaṃ pratipādayati, yenaikatra sthāne paraspāram na viruddham upalabhyate, evam anāyoraṃ api sukhaduḥkhaṃ na caikatra santānātmani katham api sambhavaḥ tadviruddhatvāt tasya.*

⁶⁹ See *Tattvasiddhi* 12.10–12: *ihāpi duḥkhādiviruddham sukhasaumanasyādilaṅkāraṃ kāryam, taś cābhyāsabalāt sātmbhāvaṃ āśādyamānam upalabhyate yadā, tadā tadviruddham duḥkhadaurmanasyādikam nivartayati.* “Here, too, the effect, which is characterized by bliss, delight, and so on, is opposed to suffering and so on, and when that [effect characterized by bliss, delight, and so on] is apprehended to be fully integrated [and] to presently obtain through the power of repeated practice, then suffering, dejection, and so on, which are opposed to that, cease.”

⁷⁰ *Tattvasiddhi* 13.16–17: *yena yena vāsyate tatra tatra cābhyāsabalād viśiṣṭataraśvabhāvaṃ āviśkaroty apunarāvṛttidharmatālaṅkāraṃ.* This leads immediately into the citation of *Yoginīśāncāra* 11.2. Compare Padmavajra’s citation of this at *Advayavivaraṇaprajñopāyavinīścayasiddhi* 217, cited and discussed above at note 35.

⁷¹ *Tattvasiddhi* 19.6–8: *na hi duḥkhādīni hitarūpatayā ’vagamyā kenacit prekṣāvatā tyajyate. na ca punas tadutpattikāraṇam anviśyate prekṣāvān kvacid, anyathā prakṣāvan na syāt, tad anyo mattakādivat.*

⁷² See Steinkellner, “Is the Ultimate, Part 1”; and “Is the Ultimate, Part 2.”

⁷³ Steinkellner “Is the Ultimate, Part 1,” 840: *kiṃ ca savikalpakam eva tad bhavanāprakarsaparyantavartī sarvajñājanam ahośvin nirvikalpakam iti. tatra yadi tāvaṃ nirvikalpakam eśyate, tadā bhāvanavikalpa-sāmarthyān nirjātasya katham nirvikalpakatvam. na hi savikalpakād vijñānād nirvikalpakasya jñānasya prasūtiḥ katham api sambhavati.* The translation follows that of Steinkellner, “Is the Ultimate, Part 2,” 299, with some modifications.

⁷⁴ Steinkellner discusses this in his translation of the relevant passage (Steinkellner, “Is the Ultimate, Part 2”), and I hope to address it in more detail elsewhere. See too Allison Aitken’s discussion of this point in her forthcoming study of Śrīgupta’s *Tattvāvatāra*, *Introduction to Reality: Śrīgupta’s Tattvāvatāravṛtti*. She shows there that, though there appear to be important differences between Śrīgupta’s and Śāntarakṣita’s views of the matter, each argue against Dharmakīrti on this point.