

STUDIES IN INDIAN AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

FOUNDATIONS OF DHARMAKĪRTI'S PHILOSOPHY

John D. Dunne



Wisdom Publications • Boston

1 Pramāṇa Theory: Dharmakīrti's Conceptual Context

IF WE ARE TO ENGAGE with Dharmakīrti's philosophy in a manner that enables us to think through his style of reasoning, then we must learn to speak Dharmakīrti's language: that is, we must become skilled in the discourse that makes Dharmakīrti's philosophical choices possible. Since that philosophical language is highly complex and precisely inflected, some readers may find it helpful to have a primer of sorts. With those readers in mind, I have provided in this chapter a basic overview of Dharmakīrti's conceptual context.¹ To do so, the chapter emphasizes some significant points of convergence among South Asian philosophers of Dharmakīrti's era who participated with him in a style of discourse that I call "Pramāṇa Theory." Thus, in a secondary sense, this chapter will also alert readers to some of my presuppositions, for any attempt at a synoptic overview inevitably reveals at least some of its author's assumptions.

1.1 *The Process of Knowing and Its Instrument*

To understand Dharmakīrti's conceptual context, we must appreciate that his location within the Buddhist tradition is only part of a more complex landscape. Although he clearly owes much to his Buddhist predecessors, his work also draws from other traditions. In some cases, Dharmakīrti appears to adopt others' theories, but most notably he adopts a particular mode of

¹ Readers who seek a more extensive introduction may find Jonardon Ganeri's *Philosophy in Classical India* (2001) to be especially helpful. A fine introductory work focused on the relevant Buddhist philosophical traditions is Paul Williams' *Buddhist Thought* (2000). For another, somewhat different overview of the notions shared among Pramāṇa Theorists, see Matilal (1986:22–26, 29 and 35–37).

discourse in which subject matter, technical vocabulary, rhetorical style, and approach to reasoning are all shared by numerous philosophers from several traditions. We can refer to this style of discourse as *Pramāṇa Theory*, or "theory of the instruments of knowledge."² It is the kind of philosophy practiced by the most important of Dharmakīrti's principal interlocutors, including the Naiyāyika Uddyotakara, the Vaiśeṣika Praśastapāda, and the Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila.³ The primary concern of *Pramāṇa Theory* is the determination of what constitutes indubitable or indisputable knowledge and the reliable means of attaining it.⁴ While many South Asian philosophers examine knowledge in a general fashion, *Pramāṇa Theorists* discuss this issue in great detail through a shared technical vocabulary that permits and encourages dialogue across traditions.

That is, philosophers who focus on the study of *pramāṇa* deliberately engage with other philosophers—both from their own philosophical lineage (*paramparā*) as well as other traditions—over specific questions within a larger, shared context. To some extent, this larger context consists of a particular style of Sanskrit verse and prose, but it also stems from incessant attention to an ongoing dialogic context. Hence, these thinkers continually refer not only to previous texts within their own traditions, but also in others' traditions. In employing such deliberate intertextuality, *Pramāṇa The-*

2 In speaking of "*Pramāṇa Theory*," I am following Matilal (1986:22). As for the term "knowledge," its use in this context is a matter of some dispute (see especially Potter 1984: *passim*). However, the central issue here is *pramā* rather than *jñāna*, and as Potter (1984:311) has indicated, a nondispositional use of "knowledge" is acceptable for *pramā*, especially if "knowledge" is used for the determinate content that is necessarily the result of a *pramāṇa* when it is taken to its fullest extent—that is, when it guides action (*pravṛtti*) relative to a human aim (*puruṣārtha*). See, for example, NBh 5 and 21 *ad* NS1.1.1. See also the discussion in chapter 4, where I also discuss at length the use of the term "instrument."

3 The dates of these philosophers are uncertain, but they were all active at some point between 550 and 625. Their relative chronological order is: Praśastapāda, Uddyotakara, Kumārila.

4 Matilal understands *Pramāṇa Theory* to be based upon what he calls the "Nyāya method." He notes that this method "aimed at acquiring evidence for supporting a hypothesis... and thus turning a dubiety to certainty" (1986:69). He also notes, "The goal of the Nyāya method is a *nirṇaya*, a philosophic decision or a conclusion which is certain." Even a cursory glance at the literature within this style of discourse shows that its philosophers were concerned with certainty (although we will see in chapter 4 that certainty need not entail veridicality). It is important to note that for these philosophers, the pursuit of certainty requires some initial doubt (*saṃśaya*) or desire to know (*jijñāṣā*) as its motivation. See NBh (35) *ad* NS1.1.1, *nānupalabdhe na nirṇite 'rthe nyāyaḥ pravartate kim tarhi saṃśayite 'rthe*. Dharmakīrti (for example, PVS *ad* PV1.46) also maintains this view. See also Matilal (1986:53) and Butzenberger (1996:364–366).

orists do not simply note what had been thought in the past; rather, they attempt to justify a particular interpretation by responding to the criticisms of others, whether within or outside their own traditions. Each generation of philosophers thus represents a new layer of interpretation formed by new criticisms and rebuttals. Already by Dharmakīrti's time, the debates between various traditions had gone back and forth several times, and his work is thus thoroughly ensconced in the context formed by earlier criticisms and his own attempt to justify what he sees as the Buddhist view. One upshot of all this is that, in some ways, Dharmakīrti shares more with thinkers from other traditions than he does with Buddhists such as Sthiramati or Candrakīrti, who do not engage in *pramāṇa* discourse.⁵

The general contours of Pramāṇa Theory that delimit Dharmakīrti's own thought find their first systematic expression in the *Nyāyasūtras* of Gautama (ca. 150 C.E.).⁶ Even at this early stage, a notable characteristic of Pramāṇa Theory is the development of a technical vocabulary that all later Pramāṇa Theorists inherit and share. A central theme in this vocabulary is the use of what I call the "*kāraka* system," a formulaic way of analyzing the "functional elements" or *kāraṇas* that contribute to an action (*kriyā*).⁷ Following Gautama's lead, Vātsyāyana (ca. 475), the earliest commentator on the *Nyāyasūtras*, applies the *kāraka* system to the verb *pramā*, "to know indubitably."⁸ Of the possible *kāraṇas* or elements in an action, three are particularly relevant to the analysis of the act of knowing: the agent (*kartr*) who acts on an object or "patient" (*karman*) by means of an instrument (*kaṛaṇa*). Adding to these three the action (*kriyā*) itself, Vātsyāyana and all

5 A clear example of such divergence is the approach to scriptural citation. Buddhist thinkers such as Sthiramati cite Buddhist *sūtras* on many occasions, and some Buddhist thinkers such as Candrakīrti employ scripture with great frequency. This appeal to what are in effect literary sources is almost entirely absent in Dharmakīrti's work, and he shares this general tendency with most Pramāṇa Theorists in non-Buddhist traditions.

6 Of course, the questions concerning the nature and means of attaining indubitable knowledge are easily traced to much earlier works, including some early Upaniṣads as well as Buddhist texts, and attempts have been made to examine the early history of this mode of thought (see, for example, Jayatilke). For our purposes, however, what is of primary interest are the characteristics of such philosophy that directly form the context for Dharmakīrti's work. For a historical summary of Nyāya authors and works, see Potter (1977:1-18).

7 The *locus classicus* of the *kāraka* system is the *Kāraṇika* of Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, 1.4.23ff.

8 This verb's etymology yields meanings such as "to measure" or "to determine the extent of," but in actual use it conveys meanings such as "to ascertain," "to know indubitably," "to know without the possibility of error," and so on. See, for example, Matilal (1986:36).

subsequent Pramāṇa Theorists apply this *kāraka* analysis to the verb *pramā* so as to derive four terms: *pramātṛ*, *pramiti* (or *pramā*), *prameya*, and *pramāṇa*.⁹ These terms refer to the agent who knows (*pramātṛ*), the action of knowing (*pramiti* or *pramā*), the object known (*prameya*), and the instrument used to acquire that knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Using these four terms, Pramāṇa Theorists developed a fourfold style of analysis to analyze knowledge events. That is, their overall analytical framework assumed that every knowledge event involved the event as an *action*, an *agent* engaged in that action, a *means* for the production of that action, and an *object* to which that action is principally related. Analyses of the process of knowing through these four terms became standard among Pramāṇa Theorists.¹⁰

Before we continue with our discussion of these four facets of knowing, we must first recognize that readers familiar with the epistemological theories developed in the Euroamerican philosophical traditions may feel that our use of the term "knowledge" here is somewhat irregular. On most Euroamerican accounts, "knowledge" is a belief or attitude that is true (under some set of conditions or truth theory). As a belief or attitude, "knowledge" is dispositional, and it therefore cannot be an act in itself. But on the account of Pramāṇa Theory that we have given above, "knowledge" (*pramiti* or *pramā*) is the act (*kriyā*) of "knowing indubitably" that is constituted by a process involving the interaction of an agent, instrument, and object of knowledge. This model requires that the "action of knowing" (*pramā* or *pramiti*) be a cognitive event occurring in a particular person's mind within a particular set of circumstances. A theory of knowledge must therefore take into account any relevant aspect of those circumstances that, for example, might distort a cognitive event in such a manner that we should not consider it knowledge. In examining distortions that prevent a cognitive event from being a knowledge event, these theorists shared a general conception of the relation between body and mind. Hence, they all think it relevant to discuss at length the way in which physical infirmities such as jaundice or cataracts might distort cognitive events: a person with jaundice will see conch shells as yellow; a person with cataracts thinks that his water-jug is filled with small pieces of hair. They also generally maintain that intense emotions such as intense anger or lust so strongly affect the

9 NBh:22-24 and *passim*.

10 The ubiquity of this practice reflects the influence of Sanskrit grammar on Pramāṇa Theory. For an account of the role of grammar in this regard, see Matilal (1985:372-389). For a more specific study in relation to Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, see Biarreau (1964:30-63).

mind that all cognitions occurring with those emotions are necessarily distorted. This way of approaching cognitive distortion—and numerous other such issues—clearly indicates that an account of the cognitive event or act called “knowledge” (*pramiti* or *pramā*) is concerned largely with the process of producing that event. And the model that we have cited—involving the interaction of agent, object, and instrument—provides the overall structure for Pramāṇa Theorists’ analysis of that process.¹¹

When Gautama, Vātsyāyana, and subsequent Pramāṇa Theorists used this model to give an account of knowledge-events, their works address especially the *pramāṇas* or “instruments of knowledge,” and it is for this reason that Matilal and others refer to this genre of philosophical literature as Pramāṇa Theory. But why take an analysis of the instrument as one’s thematic focus? Why not focus instead on the agent, object, or event itself?¹² To answer such questions in a somewhat speculative manner, we might give a historical argument that borrows a principle of Pramāṇa Theory itself: if two persons are to have an argument, they must first share many points of agreement. That is, if any two discussants are to disagree meaningfully on some point, their discussion must be framed within some area of agreement.¹³ When discussing the acquisition of indisputable knowledge, Pramāṇa Theorists generally agree on many basic notions about the instruments of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), whereas they generally encounter fewer areas of agreement on other aspects of that process. Since they tend to agree more readily on issues related to the instrument or means in the process of knowing, the instrument naturally becomes the focus—the propositional subject—of their discussions. The difficult problem we face in making this type of argument is that we cannot readily explain why it is that these thinkers tended to agree more readily on issues related to the instrument of knowledge. We may suspect that some large pool of common assumptions underlies the emphasis on the instruments of knowledge, or perhaps that an emphasis on the instrument most readily affirms their approach by excluding other styles of discourse. Somewhat ironically, these

11 Matilal (1986:105) succinctly points to the process in question as causal: “In the term *pramāṇa*, the notion of ‘cause’ and ‘because’ merge into one.”

12 For those already familiar with Pramāṇa Theory, one may simply ask: Why does *pramāṇasāstra* sound like a reasonable moniker for this style of discourse, whereas *pramitiśāstra* and *pramātyśāstra* sound ridiculous?

13 On a Pramāṇa Theory account, one can only argue about the truth of a proposition (*pratijñā*) if one begins by accepting (at least provisionally) the existence of that proposition’s subject (*pakṣa*, *dharmin*).

suspensions require us to acknowledge that Pramāṇa Theorists would not explicitly discuss shared assumptions or covert exclusions, since all such issues would be obscured by their very givenness. Hence, due to the relative lack of research in this area, the subtler form of this historical argument can only be suggestive at this point.¹⁴

Putting aside covert notions, one can also point to arguments made by the theorists themselves. Among these are two distinct arguments that explicitly acknowledge an emphasis on the importance of the *instrument* of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), rather than the agent (*pramātṛ*), object (*prameya*), or the action of knowing itself (*pramiti*). The first argument is suggested by the comparatively early works of Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara.¹⁵ This argument amounts to the claim that the emphasis on analysis of the instrument of knowledge derives from its primacy in the process of knowing. To use the analogy of a person cutting a tree with an axe: the person and the tree can be identified as the “cutter” and the “cut object” only when the action of cutting occurs, and that action can only occur when a cutting instrument—the axe—is employed. It is only by changing the type of instrument used that the action then becomes a different action. That is, if we replace the agent with some other person, or if we can direct the axe against some other object, the action is still the action of cutting. In short, neither the agent nor object can change the character of the action. If, however, some other kind of instrument, such as a yardstick, is used, then the agent (“the cutter”), object (“that which is cut”) and action (“cutting”) all take on a different character: they become the “measurer,” the “measured” and the action of “measuring.” Hence, inasmuch as the character of the instrument determines the character of the other three factors, the instrument is primary. This way of understanding the instrument as primary appears to have been widely accepted among Pramāṇa Theorists, including Dharmakīrti.¹⁶

14 Potter's *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (1963) is one early attempt at examining some unstated assumptions. Ruegg (1964 and 2001) has engaged in a similar discussion through the motif of the “religious substratum.” In terms of assumptions, I am referring to the types of issues—conceptions of matter, the body, the cosmos, and so on—that would bear directly on choices made in a philosophical argument. Hence, recent work on medicine (Zysk 1991 and 1993), for example, advances our understanding in this regard.

15 See NBh (430–445) and NV (430–445) *ad* NS 2.1.15–16 and especially NV (16–20). Vācaspatiśra's comments (NVTT:16–20) are useful here, although they come much later in the historical development of Nyāya. A major concern of these passages is the contextuality of the *kāraṇas* and the definition of an instrument (*karana*) as the “most prominent causal factor” (*sādhakatama*).

16 The argument for the primacy of *pramāṇa* that I have summarized here is from the

The second set of arguments that explicitly acknowledge the emphasis on the instruments of knowledge are adduced only by Buddhist philosophers, beginning with Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. These philosophers reject the notion of an agent, and on their view, the cognitive event identified as knowledge is ontologically identical to the instrument, which they conceive to be a mental image. In some contexts, they also regard the object or patient as dependent in some sense on the instrument, either because it is not ontologically distinct from the instrument, or because the character of that object is determined by the character of the instrument itself. Hence, on their view, the instrument is clearly primary, since all of the other functional elements in a knowledge event are either unreal or determined by the instrument. In subsequent chapters, we will have an opportunity to examine Dharmakīrti's views on all these issues in greater detail.

Finally, one can also note that the emphasis on the instruments of knowledge allows (or even requires) Pramāṇa Theorists to discuss at length the place of scripture (*āgama*) or verbal testimony as such an instrument. In all Pramāṇa Theories, scripture plays a special role, in that it is an *instrument* (*pramāṇa*) or means that enables one to obtain knowledge that is otherwise utterly beyond one's ken. Many claims verifiable only by scripture often bear directly on the soteriological goals of the tradition in question. If we assume that Pramāṇa Theorists took those soteriological goals seriously, we would expect them to be especially concerned with knowledge derived from scripture, since scripture is the means to that soteriologically relevant but otherwise unobtainable knowledge. For this reason as well, Pramāṇa Theorists might be inclined to think that the instrument is the most important aspect in the process.

Regardless of the historical and philosophical reasons, two issues remain clear: first, that Dharmakīrti's conceptual context is formed by an intensive analysis of the process of knowing as embodied by the aforementioned model; and second, that it is especially a knowledge-event's instrument—and not its object, agent, or the event itself—that most concerned the theorists that Dharmakīrti directly addresses. As we have noted, it is likely that

uniqueness of the instrument (i.e., NV:19.7: *pramāṇam asādhāraṇakāraṇatvāt pradhānam*; cf. the related argument at NV:20.1: *pramāṇakāraṇasamyogaviśeṣakatvam*). This is only one of several proposed by Uddyotakara (18ff) in his analysis of *sādhakatamāva*. Other arguments include: 1) variations on the basic theme that the agent and object can only be considered an agent and object when the instrument is functioning (i.e., *bhāvābhāvayos tadvattā, akartṛtvam yadabhāvāt*); and 2) variations on the claim that the instrument is primary because it comes just before the actual production of the action (i.e., *caramabhāvitā, pratipatter ānantaryam*).

this shared emphasis on the importance of the instrument is encouraged by a host of covert and obscure assumptions. Nevertheless, we can still summarize a rather large number of quite clear and explicit assumptions offered by these theorists themselves.

With this in mind, I begin this sketch of the conceptual context of Dharmakīrti's thought by discussing the *pramāṇas* or "instruments of knowledge" so as to highlight the notions that he shared with other Pramāṇa Theorists. I will move on to examine some shared notions concerning instrumental objects (*prameya*), and after highlighting the importance of purpose, I will conclude with some brief remarks concerning the agent (*pramātṛ*) and knowledge-event itself (*pramā* or *pramiti*).

Two Ubiquitous Instruments: Perception and Inference

When speaking of the instruments of knowledge, the various traditions of South Asian philosophy and the individual philosophers within those traditions disagree considerably on exactly what ways of knowing should be considered instrumental (i.e., instances of *pramāṇa*), and what forms are spurious or faulty. They also disagree about the criteria through which one can adjudicate whether a particular form of knowledge is instrumental or not. Despite these and other disagreements, they find considerable common ground on a number of other issues.¹⁷ The foremost of these is simply the notion that the instruments of knowledge must be investigated; for most of these philosophers, this need stems from the centrality of knowledge in the search for spiritual freedom or *mokṣa*. That is, to become free, one must rely upon correct knowledge, but if one is unable to distinguish correct from incorrect knowledge, how could one recognize one's knowledge as correct?¹⁸

With the renowned but comparatively sparse exception of the Lokāyata or Cārvāka tradition,¹⁹ all Pramāṇa Theorists respond to the need for a means of obtaining indubitable knowledge by positing *at least* two basic instru-

17 Indeed, the Naiyāyikas, at least, explicitly discuss the notion that there are certain philosophical principles that are shared by philosophers; for them, all of these principles are aspects of Pramāṇa Theory (see NS1.1.28 with NV and NBh *ad cit.* (263)).

18 The claim that correct knowledge is indispensable for the attainment of liberation is made by a number of authors, including Praśastapāda (PDS:2), Gautama (NS1.1.1), Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara (NBh and NV:65–68 *ad cit.*), Dharmakīrti (PV2.273–274), and so on.

19 See Franco (1987) for one of the few in-depth works on this form of South Asian philosophy.

ments: perceptual awareness (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*).²⁰ Of course, the virtually ubiquitous acceptance of perception and inference does not prevent these thinkers from disagreeing on exactly how these instruments of knowing operate. Nevertheless, in accepting perception and inference as instruments of knowledge, Pramāṇa Theorists share certain presuppositions and basic doctrines concerning the instruments of knowledge.

Shared Notions Concerning Perceptual Awareness

When speaking of perceptual awareness, Pramāṇa Theorists agree, first of all, that this way of knowing depends directly on the senses. Indeed, the centrality of the senses in this way of knowing is implied by the term *pratyakṣa* itself, which is often construed etymologically to mean “before the senses.”²¹ We must be careful, however, to recall that in addition to the five senses familiar to Euroamerican traditions, these philosophers also stipulate a sixth sense: the mental faculty (*manas*). Hence, any instance of “perceptual awareness” may be an awareness of a mental object, rather than a visible form, sound, smell, taste, or tactile object. Pramāṇa Theorists nearly all agree on the stipulation of a sixth sense, and they all agree on the centrality of the senses in perceptual awareness.²²

Another general point of agreement concerns the manner in which perceptual awareness occurs. All Pramāṇa Theorists agree that perceptual awareness necessarily involves the contact (*sannikarṣa*, *sparsa*, etc.) of an object (*viśaya*, *artha*, etc.) with a sense faculty (*indriya*).²³ And except in the case of mental objects, they generally assume it appropriate to consider this contact to involve a relation involving matter (*rūpa*) or substance

20 Many philosophers accept other forms of *pramāṇa*, such as *arthāpatti* (presumptive induction), *upamāna* (analogical induction), and *āgama* (knowledge through scripture). For an overview of the various forms of *pramāṇa*, see the respective chapters in Bhatt.

21 For example, NBh (85 *ad* NS:I.1.3): *akṣasyākṣasya prativīṣayaṃ vṛttiḥ pratyakṣam*; PDS (234): *tatrākṣam akṣam pratītyotpadyata iti pratyakṣam*; and *Nyāyapraveśa* (4): *akṣam akṣam prati vartata iti pratyakṣam* (cf. Tillemans 1990:274, n.367).

22 Although Kumārila in ŚV (*pratyakṣa*, 169) maintains that there are only five sense organs, Jha (1942:41–42) notes that in *Śāstradīpikā* the mind is also posited as a sense. Gautama (NS:I.1.14) also spoke of only five senses, but Uddyotakara (NV:123 *ad* NS:I.1.4) and subsequent Naiyāyikas accepted the mind as a sense (see Dignāga's criticism of this inconsistency in PS:1968:194 and 195; Hattori 1968:38–39).

23 See, for example: YD (I:150, 161; II:222), NV (94–97 *ad* NS:I.1.4), and ŚV (*pratyakṣa*:38–39ab and 252cd–253). Dharmakīrti does not offer any extensive comments on the theory of sense faculty contact (*indriyasannikarṣa*), but as is evident in other contexts (i.e.,

(*dravya*). They also agree that physical (i.e., material or substantial) defects in the sense faculties can contribute to certain types of errors in perceptual awareness, as when a person with cataracts apparently sees small hairs or bugs in front of their eyes.²⁴ Another important point of agreement is that perceptual awareness is either the most vivid or the least mediated form of awareness, and that in this sense it takes precedence over other instruments of knowing, such as inference.²⁵ Most of these philosophers also agree that the basic building blocks of matter are irreducible, partless atoms or "infinitesimal particles" (*paramāṇu*). According to the philosophers who accept this notion, infinitesimal particles are too small to be perceived by ordinary persons; instead, the matter perceived by ordinary persons consists of particles that have somehow been aggregated into an entity of perceptible size.²⁶

Although these points of agreement are certainly significant, it is important to note that Pramāṇa Theorists often disagree upon the precise content of perceptual awareness, either because their ontologies conflict, or because they differ over the degree to which perceptual awareness is deter-

PV3.194), his theory of sense perception is largely based upon Vasubandhu's work along with the (quite significant) modifications proposed by Dignāga (see PS1). If we assume that, in the contexts where Dharmakīrti admits external sense objects, he follows Vasubandhu's work wherever it is not superseded by Dignāga, his theory of sense organ contact would be similar to the one found in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* (AK:3.30 and AKBh *ad cit.*).

24 See PV (3.293), ŚV (*codanā*:53–54), YD (II:327), and NV (II4 *ad* NS:1.1.4).

25 For Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara, perceptual awareness is what finally puts all doubt to rest and eliminates any further "desire to know" (*jijñāsā*) that object (NBh and NV:92–93 *ad* NS:1.1.4). For Dharmakīrti, only perceptual awareness is "vivid" (*spṛṣṭa*; see chapter 2, 90 and n.58), in contrast to inference and other conceptual cognitions. This issue becomes particularly salient for Dharmakīrti in his discussion of yogic perception (PV3.281–287).

Kumārila does not endorse any notion of vividness, perhaps in support of his rejection of yogic perception (ŚV, *pratyakṣa*:26–37), which would otherwise supplant the Vedas as a means of knowing *dharma*. He does maintain, however, that other instruments of knowledge (such as inference) are necessarily preceded by perceptual awareness (ŚV, *pratyakṣa*:95–97). I see this notion of precedence, which is taken for granted by all Pramāṇa Theorists (Mohanty 1992:238–241), as an epistemic parallel to more psychologistic concerns with vividness.

26 See, for example, PDS (235), where the specifications *mahatyānekadravyavattva* are in part meant to distinguish the perceptions of ordinary persons, who cannot perceive infinitesimal particles, from that of *yogins*, who are described as being capable of perceiving them (PDS:241). See also NBh (497) *ad* NS 2.1.34: "Substance in the state of an infinitesimal particle is not the object of perception (*darśana*) because particles are beyond the senses." [*paramāṇusamavasthānam tāvad darśanaviṣayo na bhavaty atīndriyatvād aṇūnām* /]. Dharmakīrti, when speaking from the External Realist standpoint, expresses the same opinion (e.g., at PV3.194ff). See below, 98.

minate. We will consider some of these debates when examining Dharmakīrti's particular theory of perception, but for now, let us turn to an overview of inference (*anumāna*).

Shared Notions Concerning Inference

Inferential knowledge and the topics related to it are particularly important to Pramāṇa Theorists.²⁷ One can point to three basic reasons for the importance of inference: first, it provides access to entities that are to some degree unavailable to the senses, and such entities are often under dispute. Second, it is closely tied to the understanding of language, an issue that is essential to the success of the South Asian philosophical enterprise.²⁸ And third, it provides the framework for formal disputation, an undeniably crucial aspect of South Asian philosophy.

As Matilal has noted, the earliest theories of inference probably arose out of a concern with the codification of philosophical debate, but properly speaking, what is meant by inference here is not a "syllogism" or some other argument. Rather, an inference produces or constitutes a knowledge-event that knows its object by means of knowledge about another object that is invariably related to that object. A stock example is the inferential cognition that knows fire is present in a particular locus by means of perceptual knowledge of smoke in that same locus. Inference clearly involves some steps, for in providing knowledge of one thing by means of knowing something invariably related to it, the act of inference requires a sequential structure, which we will discuss below. Nevertheless, the central concern for these thinkers is not the formalism of that structure itself; instead, they are most concerned with the way in which that structure supplies the necessary conditions for an inference.

Pramāṇa Theorists generally speak of two forms of inference: "inference-for-oneself" (*svārthānumāna*) and "inference-for-others" (*parārthānumāna*).

27 The vast majority of *pramāṇa* treatises give far more attention to inference and its related topics (such as the nature of conceptual cognition) than to perceptual awareness. Note also Mohanty's observation: "In a work devoted to the concept of reason, a theory of inference must occupy a central place" (1992:100).

28 Many South Asian philosophers were aware that if one could not give an adequate account of language, the attainment of spiritual freedom (*mokṣa*), the explicit goal of nearly all known South Asian philosophers of this period, would be impossible. To a great extent, the crucial role of language in the attainment of liberation rests on its use as a tool that allows one to supplant false beliefs (*mithyājñāna*, *avidyā*, etc.) with indubitable knowledge.

The former is simply an inferential cognition: one looks at a smoky room, for example, and (with other conditions in place), one infers that fire is present. In contrast, an inference-for-others is one that is stated verbally so as to induce an inferential cognition in another person. In other words, this latter "inference" (which is actually a series of statements and not an inference) is meant to result in another person having his own inference-for-himself with regard to the question at hand. In this sense, inference-for-himself lies at the core of these thinkers' inferential theory. But ironically, the structural elements that are necessary for one to have an inference-for-himself are primarily explored in discussions of inference-for-others. To avoid the confusion that this overlap incurs, below I will often speak simply of "inference," with the understanding that our main focus is the examination of the conditions necessary for a correct (as opposed to a spurious) inferential cognition to occur.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF INFERENCE

As one might expect, the aforementioned importance placed on inference prompts considerable disagreement among Pramāṇa Theorists, but their analyses of inference always include the same basic, minimal structure.²⁹ Schematically, I render it as follows:

S is P because E

A typical example of this type of inference is:

The hill (S) is a locus of fire (P) because of the presence of smoke (E).³⁰

Here, S is the "subject," called the *sādhya* or *pakṣa* in Sanskrit;³¹ P

²⁹ The disagreements among Pramāṇa Theorists focus on the way in which this basic structure must be supported and elaborated. This amounts to an argument about the elements (*aṅga*) of an inference. Bhattacharya (1989:209–214) offers a clear summary of the various positions on this issue. These differences will be summarized below (n.45).

³⁰ Specialists will note that the minimal structure I propose here is not *per se* stated in a form admitted by any Pramāṇa Theorist; rather, it is the type of inference one finds in commentarial literature, as exemplified by the oft-debated statement, *śabdasyānityatvaṃ kṛtakatvāt*. My contention is that the structure of this statement is the basic core of *anumāna* properly construed.

³¹ Note that the term *pakṣa* has been used twice here: once to refer to the subject of the proposition, and once to refer to the entirety of the proposition. As Dharmakīrti remarks in

is the "predicate," known as the *sādhya-dharma*; and E is the "evidence," known as the *hetu* or *liṅga*. The first two elements, the subject and predicate, together form the "proposition" (*pratijñā* or *pakṣa*), "S is P."³² Hayes and others have employed an alternative terminology, where the subject is called the "quality-possessor" and the predicate the "quality."³³ This terminology has the advantage of conveying more literally the sense of the Sanskrit terms (*sādhya-*)*dharmin* and (*sādhya-*)*dharma*, and it avoids any

his *Svavṛtti* (PVSV:1 ad PV1.1), in its primary sense *pakṣa* denotes the proposition, consisting of the *sādhya-dharmin* and *sādhya-dharma*; however, since the *sādhya-dharmin* is a part (*ekadeśa*) of that proposition, the term *pakṣa* (proposition) may be used as a metaphor (*upacāra*) for the *sādhya-dharmin* or "subject."

32 The use of the English word "proposition" for *pratijñā* or *pakṣa* has met with some criticism, most notably from Mohanty (1992:109–110, a reworking of 1985). Mohanty's point is that "at least one of the senses of 'proposition'" does not accurately characterize "the content of a mental act as understood in the Indian logics." Specifically, on this sense of "proposition," it is "that entity towards which many numerically as well as qualitatively different attitudes and acts, belonging to the same or to different selves, may be directed." In other words, it is "an abstract entity towards which one may take different attitudes, or the same attitude at different times." On his view, this sense of "proposition" is not appropriate to the "Indian logics," because in comparison to the content of a mental act (as described by the Nyāya, at least) a proposition in this sense "is not as finely individuated across the range of varying propositional attitudes." In other words, the Nyāya (and other systems concerned with Pramāṇa Theory) distinguish between the various modes in which the content of a mental act is presented, but despite their modal differences, all these mental acts would be equally directed to the same "proposition," in the sense used above. Mohanty provides further support for this when he notes that a proposition, being "an abstract entity towards which a mental act is directed," is "independent of, and transcends, any [mental] act directed towards it." However, on the South Asian (by which he primarily means the Nyāya) view, the content of a mental act "is that act's structure, not its object, not a transcendent entity."

Part of Mohanty's aim in this argument is to point out the useful aspects of the psychologism of Pramāṇa Theory. He notes that the above notion of a proposition is an impoverished way of examining mental content, and it thus impoverishes one's approach to inference in general.

It is possible, however, to employ "proposition" in another sense. The sense Mohanty has focused on is extensional, but "proposition" may also be used in an intentional sense, where it no longer refers to an "abstract entity" that is somehow independent of a mental act's content, but rather consists of that content itself *with a particular structure*. Rather than creating misunderstanding, this way of using "proposition" can be helpful when applied to the *pratijñā/pakṣa* of an inference, for it suggests the structure that is specific to such cases—namely, the *dharmin/dharma* structure—is parallel in important ways to a proposition construed as a premise. Moreover, in the works of Dharmakīrti and his Brahmanical counterparts, it is hard to argue for any "individuation" in the "range of propositional attitudes" applied to that structure. For these reasons, the use of "proposition" does not seem quite so problematic in the context of *anumāna* as Mohanty would have us believe.

33 See, for instance, Hayes (1988a: *passim*).

potential misunderstanding concerning the notion of a proposition. Nevertheless, "quality-possessor" is quite cumbersome, and inasmuch as the English term "quality" can also be misleading, "subject" and "predicate" appear to be the best choices.³⁴

THE EVIDENCE-PREDICATE RELATION AND ITS EXEMPLIFICATION

According to Dharmakīrti and his fellow Pramāṇa Theorists, any theory of inference must contain at least the relations implicit in the basic model presented above. The first such relation is generally called the *vyāpti* or "pervasion"—it is the relation between the evidence (E) and the predicate (P).³⁵ In our example, this is the relation between fire and smoke. Pramāṇa Theorists generally consider this relation to have two aspects: the positive concomitance (*anvaya*) and the negative concomitance (*vyatireka*).³⁶ The positive concomitance is a state of affairs such that wherever the evidence (E) is present, the predicate (P) must be present. In our example, this would be stated, "wherever there is smoke, there is necessarily fire." The negative

34 An additional problem here is that, in a Euroamerican philosophical context, "qualities" are understood to be repeatable, but the English term "quality" is often used to translate *guṇa*, which refers to a nonrepeatable quality-instance.

35 Although the Sanskrit term *vyāpti* and other, related terms (such as *vyāpaka*, *vyāpya*, and *vyāpta*) occur in the works of Uddyotakara (e.g., NV:144 and 285, etc.) and Praśastapāda (e.g., PDS:128), these philosophers do not always describe the relation between predicate and evidence as *vyāpti*; indeed, in many cases, they make only implicit reference to the relation. In contrast, both Kumāṛila (e.g., ŚV, *anumāna*: *passim*) and Dharmakīrti (PV, HB, PVin, NB: *passim*) use the term *vyāpti* systematically to describe the predicate-evidence relation, and following Dignāga's lead, they appear to be the first Pramāṇa Theorists to employ *vyāpti* consistently—a practice that soon became the norm.

36 The unwieldy translations "positive concomitance" and "negative concomitance" have become standard for *anvaya*[-*vyāpti*] and *vyatireka*[-*vyāpti*]. Despite their inelegance, I have chosen to employ these translations here so as to avoid the unnecessary confusion of introducing new terms. For *anvaya*, Oberhammer et al. (1991:67) recommend "Gemeinsames Vorkommen [von Grund und Folge]," but it is not at all clear how this term would be distinguished from *sahabhāva* (co-occurrence). Although *anvaya* does indeed amount to mere copresence (*sahabhāva*) in its earliest use in the context of inference (cf. Oberhammer, et al., 1991:68), this interpretation of *anvaya* is applicable to relatively few texts, for it is rejected by the Pramāṇa Theorists of Dharmakīrti's time, or even before (see below, n.38). My own preference for *anvaya*, when understood to mean *anvayavyāpti*, would be "entailment." This term captures both the metaphorical sense ("following along") and the logical sense (strict or necessary implication) of the term as it was used by Pramāṇa Theorists of Dharmakīrti's time and after. For *vyatireka* (when used in the sense of *vyatirekavyāpti*), I would recommend "restriction," since the intention here is to show that occurrences of the predicate are necessarily restricted to occurrences of the evidence. One of the problems with translations that involve the English word "negative" (as in "nega-

concomitance specifies that the evidence (E) is present only in the presence of the predicate (P) and not in any other circumstances. Dharmakīrti often states the negative concomitance, or "restriction," in an affirmative statement (i.e., a statement that involves no grammatical negation). In our example, the positive statement would read, "There is smoke *only* where there is fire."³⁷ Most Pramāṇa Theorists, however, formulate the negative concomitance or restriction in negative terms; following our example, a negative statement of this concomitance would read, "wherever there is no fire, there is necessarily no smoke." For Dharmakīrti and Kumārila—and probably also for Uddyotakara and Praśastapāda—the positive and negative concomitance are in contraposition: if smoke is necessarily present when fire is present, then in the absence of fire, smoke is also necessarily absent.³⁸

According to these philosophers, in order to have an instance of inferential knowledge one must be aware of the pervasion—the twofold relation consisting of the positive and negative concomitance. So too, the pervasion must be general: it cannot be restricted to a single case, but must pertain to

tive concomitance") is that *vyatireka* is not necessarily stated as a negation. See, for example, Dharmakīrti's formulation of *vyatireka* in PVSV *ad* PV1.1 (G:2.13): *vyāpyasya vā tatraiva bhāvah* (= HB:2*.7–8).

37 See the previous note for more on Dharmakīrti's positive formulation of the negative concomitance.

38 I have chosen the English term "necessarily" and its related forms to convey two types of Sanskrit constructions: those that employ the restrictive particle *eva*, and those that employ an adverb such as *dhruvam* (e.g., ŚV, *anumāna*:124b) or *avasyam* (e.g., PVSV *ad* PV1.28; G:19.3). The usage of *eva* ("just," "only") in the formulation of the evidence-predicate relation is an important development in Pramāṇa Theory in Dharmakīrti's time, for it enables these philosophers to understand that relation as a necessary relation, rather than a mere copresence (*sahabhāva*, etc.). In his discussion of the historical transition from theories that posit a mere copresence of evidence and predicate to those that posit a necessary relation, Potter (1977:191–194) has argued that philosophers such as Uddyotakara and Praśastapāda represent an intermediate stage between the relation as copresence and the relation as necessary. While it is true that Praśastapāda's work (PDS:247–248, 268) exhibits only a modest attempt to move beyond mere copresence, Uddyotakara, in his critique of Dignāga (NV:163–167 *ad* NS1.15; cf. Hayes 1980:149ff) and elsewhere, appears to understand positive and negative concomitance as contrapositional. The implication here is that the evidence-predicate relation is necessary on his theory. Uddyotakara's recognition of the evidence-predicate relation as necessary is also suggested by the fact that, even in cases where only the negative concomitance or restriction can be exemplified, the evidence-predicate relation still contains both (NV:144–145).

Dharmakīrti's recognition of the evidence-predicate relation as necessary is abundantly clear, and his distinctive contribution lies in the formulation of a *svabhāvapratibandha* (see Steinkellner 1971:201–204 and also below, chapter 3). Dharmakīrti employs an even more precise use of *eva* (e.g., in his initial presentation of *vyāpti* in PVSV *ad* PV1.1; G:2.12–13). His

all cases of the kind in question. In the dialogical context of inference-for-others, these two requirements—that one have knowledge of the pervasion and that it be general—are reflected by a frequent claim: namely, that an inference-for-others must be accompanied by at least a supporting example (*sādharmyadr̥ṣṭānta*). Most philosophers maintain that a counterexample (*vaidharmyadr̥ṣṭānta*) may also be necessary, at least in some cases. The supporting example is drawn from the domain of “homologous instances” (*sapakṣa*)—namely, loci that are similar to the proposition to be proven (*S* is *P*) in that they are qualified by *P*. In an inference of fire from smoke, a kitchen (*mahānasa*) is the typical example. The aim is to appeal to a non-controversial case that exemplifies the relationship between the evidence (*E*) and the predicate (*P*): one’s past experience of kitchens illustrates the positive concomitance of smoke with fire, in that one’s observations conform to a necessary relation between the presence of smoke and the presence of fire. The counterexample is drawn from the domain of heterogeneous instances—loci that are dissimilar to *S* in that they lack *P*. A typical counterexample for the smoke-fire inference is a lake. Here, the point is to show that the presence of the evidence (*E*, the smoke) is not observed in the absence of the predicate, fire; or alternatively, that smoke is present only when fire is present, and not otherwise.³⁹

position has some similarities with Kumāṛila’s, whose descriptions of the positive and negative concomitance include the following:

If the presence of smoke were pervaded by the presence of fire, then non-fire, being excluded from smoke, would be present only in the case of non-smoke. Thus, in this way, non-fire becomes that which is pervaded by non-smoke. Likewise, inasmuch as non-fire is pervaded by non-smoke, smoke is excluded from non-fire; as such, it is necessarily (*dhruvam*) pervaded by fire because it has no possibility of existing in some other non-fire locus. [*dhūmabhāve ’gnibhāvena vyāpte ’nagnis tataś cyutaḥ || adhūma eva vidyety evaṃ vyāpyatvam āsnute tathānagnāv adhūmena vyāpte dhūmas tataś cyutaḥ || anyatrānavakāśatvād vyāpyate dhruvam agninā. ŚV, anumāna:122cd–124ab*].

39 Whether one or more examples needs to be cited in an inference-for-others (*parārthānumāna*) depends in part upon the type of evidence being adduced and in part upon the views of the philosopher in question. Uddyotakara (NV:144–145), Kumāṛila (ŚV, *anumāna*:118), and Dharmakīrti (PV1.26) all recognize that in some inferences only the positive concomitance can be exemplified because the domain of heterogeneous cases is empty; that is, there are no instances of entities that do not possess the property to be proven. Such cases are primarily those in which existence is impossible without the predicate in question. For example, for a philosopher who maintains that all real things are necessarily impermanent, an inference in which impermanence is a predicate has no heterogeneous cases—there are no existent, permanent things. In such cases, it is not necessary to present a counterexample. For Dharmakīrti and Kumāṛila, the superfluity of the counterexample stems from the contrapositive

In part, the use of examples indicates the psychologism within *pramāṇa* discourse.⁴⁰ That is, these philosophers are not interested only in the formal aspects of inferential reasoning; rather, they wish to demonstrate the conditions necessary for the occurrence of a knowledge-event that is inferential in form. The distinction here is between the knowledge that smoke is always concomitant with fire, on the one hand, and the knowledge that a smoke-producing fire is present in a particular case, on the other. For Pramāṇa Theorists, the positive concomitance is a relation that must pertain between the evidence (E) and the predicate (P) if we are to infer that the subject (S) is qualified by the predicate (P) because it is qualified by the evidence (E). But for these theorists, it is also crucial that *the knowledge* of the positive concomitance is a necessary part of the process that leads to an inferential cognition of fire in a locus by way of a perceptual cognition of smoke in that locus.⁴¹

In addition to the psychologism underlying the use of examples, one can also point to certain ontological concerns that are implicit in claims for the

nature of positive and negative concomitance (*anvaya* and *vyatireka*). Uddyotakara may also share this view (NV:144–145). Although Uddyotakara's position is not entirely clear, it seems likely that for him positive concomitance is not a matter of mere copresence, since a theory that permits well-formed inferences when only the positive concomitance is exemplified would not be successful if that relation were not necessary.

Uddyotakara (NV:144–145) maintains that in some inferences only the negative concomitance (*vyatireka*) can be exemplified and the positive concomitance (*anvaya*) cannot be. Here, the problem is that the domain of homologous instances (*sapakṣa*) is empty. However, unlike cases where the heterogeneous domain is empty, the absence of homologous examples does not have to do with an incompatibility between the presence of the predicate in question and the existence of the subject. Instead, in these cases all possible instances are included in the subject under disputation. In short, there are no noncontroversial cases in which the positive concomitance could be demonstrated. For different reasons, both Kumārila (SV, *anumāna*:131–133) and Dharmakīrti (PVSV *ad* PV1.13ab, G:13.1–11) reject this type of argument.

In addition to allowing that the counterexample is not necessary in all cases, Dharmakīrti (PV1.27–28, PVSV *ad* cit) goes as far as to say that one can dispense with examples altogether if the pervasion (*vyāpti*) is already familiar to the interlocutors; in such cases, the pervasion does not need to be explicitly stated. For further sources and analyses on these and other related issues, see Tillemans (1990).

40 Mohanty (1985 and 1992:101–115) remarks at length on psychologism in South Asian theories of inference.

41 The claim that these philosophers “are not interested” in formal reasoning may seem a bit extreme, but given the abiding concerns with practical application (*pravṛtti*) and purpose (*prayojana*) in Pramāṇa Theory, developing a system of formal reasoning would probably appear pointless, inasmuch as formal systems deliberately divorce themselves from those concerns.

necessity of examples in an inference-for-others. According to many South Asian philosophers, the twofold relation between evidence and predicate cannot be stated in abstraction from the substances that bear those predicates. When a disputant (let us call him "Devadatta") attempts to induce another to infer the presence of fire on a mountain from the smoke on that mountain, Devadatta must demonstrate to his interlocutor that the presence of smoke is necessarily concomitant with the presence of fire. But he cannot do so by appealing to the case at hand—the smoke and fire on the mountain—precisely because this case is under dispute. Of course, Devadatta might simply state that relation in abstraction from any given locus or substance, but many Pramāṇa Theorists, especially those from non-Buddhist traditions, resist this approach. This is due in part to the notion that, if the predicates in question are real, they must be instantiated in some substance or locus; and if one cannot appeal to any such undisputed instantiation, then the reality of those predicates remains dubious. Hence, for some Pramāṇa Theorists, one of the reasons for insisting upon examples is that they serve to demonstrate the reality of the entities adduced as predicate and evidence. This ontological requirement also has a certain resonance with an epistemic requirement—namely, that the relation in question must have its final appeal in sense perception itself. In this sense, even if one can logically adduce reasons why some state of affairs must hold true, one's arguments are generally considered unreliable if one cannot appeal to sensory experience to support that reasoning.⁴²

42 While Kumāṛila (ŚV, *anumāna*:133) clearly links the statement of a homologous example to ontological concerns, it is Uddyotakara who insists that inference must also be grounded in perception. His comments, which often go unnoticed, are worth citing in their entirety. The argument begins as a response to a Buddhist opponent who, through the consequences of the Buddhist critique of extended entities, has been pushed by Uddyotakara into claiming that all perceptions are inferential. Uddyotakara (NV:467) responds as follows:

If one were to take the position that all cognitions are inferential, then there would be no inferences at all because the subject would not have been cognized through perception. And if the subject is not cognized through perception, an inference does not occur. Some have said that one can have an inference of supersensible objects, but there are no such inferences, since it is not possible to infer supersensible objects. Why? Because, as I have just said, the subject has not been cognized. [*sarvam evānumānam ity etasmin pakṣe 'numānābhāvaḥ pratyakṣato 'navagatatvād dharmīṇaḥ, na dharmīṇi pratyakṣato 'nadhigate 'numānaṃ pravartate / yad apy atīndriyeṣu artheṣu anumānam uktam, tan nāsti na hy atīndriyārtho 'numātuṃ śakyah / katham iti ? dharmīṇo 'nadhigatatvād ity uktam* ॥].

Uddyotakara goes on to note that the minimal requirement for inference is that the subject and evidence are perceptible.

THE EVIDENCE-SUBJECT RELATION

So far we have discussed the basic form of inference, and we have discussed one of the key relations in this inference: the twofold pervasion (*vyāpti*) consisting of positive and negative concomitance (*anvaya* and *vyatireka*) that pertains between the evidence and the predicate. One other key inferential relation must also be discussed: the relation called *upanaya* ("application") or, as Buddhist thinkers tend to call it, *pakṣadharmatā* ("presence of the quality in the subject"). In some ways, this relation is straightforward: it simply consists of the relation between the evidence and the subject (the *dharmin* or *pakṣa*) of the proposition in question. In other words, for *pakṣadharmatā* to hold true, the evidence must be known to be a quality or predicate (*dharma*) of the proposition's subject. In the example of inferring fire on a mountain from the presence of smoke, *pakṣadharmatā* would simply mean that the smoke used as evidence is present on the mountain. The need for this relation is probably quite obvious; after all, it would make little sense to prove that the mountain is on fire by noting that smoke is present in my pipe. An even more obvious example would be the inference: "Joe is a bachelor because of being unmarried." *Pakṣadharmatā* here would simply mean that evidence adduced—the fact of being unmarried—pertains to him, not someone else. Otherwise, we might infer: "Joe is a bachelor because his dog is unmarried." And this does not make any obvious sense. Thus, the basic point of *pakṣadharmatā* is that one must readily know that the evidence is a predicate or property of the subject. Some philosophers, such as the Naiyāyika Uddyotakara, claim that this relation must always be known through perception,⁴³ but Dharmakīrti and subsequent Buddhists maintain that this relation may be determined through another inference.⁴⁴

A RESTATEMENT

With the above discussion in mind, let us restate the basic elements of inference according to Pramāṇa Theorists. This restatement combines the elements of both inference-for-oneself and inference-for-others, and it is meant as a heuristic overview of inference, rather than the depiction of any philosopher's theory:

43 See the previous note.

44 Dharmakīrti makes this claim most notably in HB (2*.13).

Proposition (pratijñā, pakṣa): The mountain (S) is a locus of fire (P).

Evidence (hetu, liṅga): Because there is smoke (E).

The Evidence-Predicate Relation (vyāpti, pervasion) and *Its Exemplification*: Wherever there is smoke (E) there is fire (P), as in a kitchen. And without fire (¬P), there is no smoke (¬E), as on a lake.

The Evidence-Subject Relation (pakṣadharmatā or upanaya): This mountain (S) is a locus of smoke (E).

All of these elements figure explicitly or implicitly in every Pramāṇa Theorist's analysis of inference. In the case of inference-for-oneself, the exemplification *per se* is superfluous, but the principle expressed by that exemplification—that the evidence-predicate relation be generalizable beyond the case at hand—is still required. In a sense, all the elements are also only implicit in an inference-for-oneself, in that they are not explicitly stated, whereas at least some of the elements must be explicitly stated in an inference-for-others. Numerous disagreements arise, however, on the details of inference-for-others. We have already noted, for example, that these philosophers do not agree on the degree or type of exemplification necessary in an inference-for-others. Similar disagreements abound concerning which elements may be dropped as superfluous to a statement of inference, or whether some additional statements are required. But these disagreements focus primarily upon the explicit presentation or repetition of one element or another; the implicit presence of these elements in an inference is not a matter of contention.⁴⁵

45 Concerning which elements must be explicitly stated, Uddyotakara and his fellow Naiyāyikas stand at one end of the spectrum, while Dharmakīrti and his followers take a diametrically opposed view. According to the standard Nyāya view defended by Uddyotakara, the proposition must be stated not only at the beginning, but it must also be repeated at the end as a conclusion or "summation" (*nigamana*). Hence, for Naiyāyikas, a full-fledged inference-for-others has five elements or "limbs" (*aṅga*):

1. The mountain is a locus of fire (the proposition: *pratijñā*)
2. Because it is a locus of smoke (the evidence: *hetu*)
3. Wherever there is smoke, there is fire, as in a hearth; without fire, there is no smoke, as in a lake (pervasion and exemplification: *udāharaṇa*)
4. The mountain is a locus of smoke (the application: *upanaya* or statement of *pakṣadharmatā*)
5. Therefore, the mountain is a locus of fire (conclusion or summation: *nigamana*).

We have now covered the most salient views that Pramāṇa Theorists share about the two ubiquitous forms of instruments of knowledge: perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). Let us now turn to some basic views concerning the instrumental object (*prameya*), the object of an instrument of knowledge.

1.2 Prameya: *The "Real"*

As noted previously, the term *prameya* refers to the object of the indubitable knowledge derived from an instrument of knowledge or *pramāṇa*, and to clarify that a *prameya* is specifically an object of this kind of knowledge, I will generally translate *prameya* as "instrumental object."⁴⁶

For Pramāṇa Theorists, an instrumental object is necessarily what we might call "real" in English. I am thinking here especially of the Sanskrit term *sat*, a participle formed from the verb "to be/exist" (*as*). The connota-

In its fullest form, this model includes both the positive and negative concomitance in the exemplification, but as we have seen, Uddyotakara also admits inferences that involve only positive concomitance (i.e., a *kevalānvayin*) or only negative concomitance (i.e., a *kevalavyatirekin*). For additional remarks and views on the Naiyāyika approach, see especially Matilal (1986:77–78), Potter (1977:180–182), and Mohanty (1992:101–106).

In contrast to Uddyotakara, Dharmakīrti, on his most mature view, prefers a parsimonious approach. This parsimony stems from his contention (inherited from Dignāga) that an inference should only contain the "means" (*sādhana*) for generating an inferential cognition in the interlocutor. As one might expect, on this basis Dharmakīrti rejects the restatement of the proposition as a conclusion, but he even rejects the need to state the proposition *at all*. His point is that the proposition is not actually a "means" to the intended inferential cognition; rather, the means is constituted by the "threefold evidence" (*trairūpyalinga*), i.e., evidence characterized by its relation to the subject and by established positive and negative concomitance. For this reason, Dharmakīrti also rejects the need to state the reason separately (as in, "because it is a locus of smoke"). Instead, the only elements necessary are the statement of the pervasion (in most cases with at least positive exemplification) along with the statement of the evidence-subject relation (*pakṣadharmatā*). See Tillemans (1984 and 1999).

Kumārila takes an intermediate position between Uddyotakara and Dharmakīrti. He maintains that an inference-for-others should always include statements of the proposition, the *pakṣadharmatā* or evidence-subject relation, and the pervasion exemplified by at least a positive example. The proposition may be stated as either an initial "thesis" (*pratijñā*) or a conclusion (*nigamana*), depending on whether it is stated before or after the *pakṣadharmatā* and exemplified pervasion. See ŚV (*anumāna*: 107ff). For an ahistorical but useful account, see Bhatt (1989:203ff).

46 Similar to the translation "instrument of knowledge" (*pramāṇa*), "instrumental object" (*prameya*) is a convenient shorthand for "object of an instrument of knowledge." See chapter 4 (223ff) for an extensive discussion of this choice of translation.

tions of *sat* converge on the notion of something that is present in a substantial fashion, be it directly or indirectly. Such an object is "real" because only "the real" can be the content of a correct or indubitable knowledge-event: for Pramāṇa Theorists, it makes no sense to speak of an indubitable cognitive event whose object is unreal.⁴⁷ Clearly, this position rests on several assumptions, the most obvious of which is the notion that cognitive events always have objects. This is less trivial than it sounds, for these philosophers maintain that every mental state or form of consciousness is a cognitive event; in short, they espouse an intentional theory of consciousness. That is, all moments of consciousness necessarily have objects, and there are thus no instances of contentless awareness or moments of consciousness without objects. Pramāṇa Theorists thus claim that, even in instances where a cognition is mistaken, one must still account for the presence of an object, even though that object is somehow incorrectly cognized.⁴⁸

In addition to claiming that instrumental objects (*prameya*) are real, these philosophers also maintain that the "real" is necessarily "knowable" (*jñeya*), and this is understood to mean that the "real" necessarily can be taken as an instrumental object.⁴⁹ The overall epistemological implication here is that, for these thinkers, it is absurd to assert that some entity is real and yet utterly beyond anyone's knowledge. Or, to put it another way, any argument for the reality of some entity must ultimately rest on some means to know that entity indubitably.

47 Butzenberger (1996:365) has noted: "As 'knowable' [i.e., *prameya* or *jñeya*] is, within most theories of *pramāṇa*, equivalent to 'existent,' ascertainment and determination equally serve as criteria for existence." In his note on this remark (1996:n.14), he comments that "on this subject, there exists a vast literature from both Indian and Western authors...." The point here is that if a *pramāṇa* occurs, it necessarily has a real thing as its object. Hence, anything known by a *pramāṇa* is necessarily real. This is indeed a ubiquitous claim among Pramāṇa Theorists; in Dharmakīrti's case, it is reflected in the claim, "To exist is to be perceived" (*sattvam upalabdhir eva*; PVSV ad PV1.3). For more on Dharmakīrti's views in this regard, see chapter 2 (84ff).

48 I refer here to the notion of illusion or the problem of erroneous consciousness (*bhṛānti*, *viparītajñāna*, *pratyakṣābhāsa*, etc.). N.S. Dravid (1996:37) notes that "all Indian philosophical schools..., for all their doctrinal differences, are in agreement on one point, namely epistemological realism. The object of cognition can never be an unreal entity." To say that this is true of "all philosophical schools" is an overstatement. For example, on Candrakīrti's view, the content of an ordinary person's perception is *always* an unreal entity (*Madhyamakūvatārabhāṣya* 107–108 ad *Madhyamakāvatāra* 6.28; cf. Tillemans 1990a:45–49). Nevertheless, Dravid's basic point certainly applies to Pramāṇa Theorists: even in cases of error, one cannot claim that consciousness occurs without an object. For a study of some problems that an intentional theory of consciousness creates for Buddhist philosophers, see Griffiths (1986).

49 See Potter (1968–69) for more on this issue.

Beyond this fundamental epistemological principle, Pramāṇa Theorists shared other basic assumptions about the real (*sat*). For our purposes, the most pervasive and relevant assumption is that "the real" is "simple" (*eka*).⁵⁰ A brief examination of this shared issue will also allow us to appreciate a fundamental difference that distinguishes Dharmakīrti's thought from that of his opponents.

The Simplicity of the Real and a Fundamental Difference

'Simplicity' translates the Sanskrit terms *ekatva* and *ekatā*, which literally mean "singularity" or "oneness." A thing that is qualified by simplicity is singular or "one" (*eka*)—it is a seamless unit.⁵¹ Simple things stand in contrast to those that are qualified by "multiplicity" (*anekatā*), a term that might also be translated as "nonsimplicity," "complexity," or "plurality."

When Pramāṇa Theorists claim that the real is simple and hence non-plural, they adduce three general forms of arguments. The first are arguments from experience. Proceeding from the principle that a perceptual object is real, many philosophers argue that an object of perception is singular. If we take a water-jug, for example, as the object of our visual perception, the water-jug appears as singular in our perception. This first type of argument often occurs in conjunction with the second type: arguments from language. In claiming that a water-jug presents itself as singular in perception, many Pramāṇa Theorists appeal to perceptual judgment: the water-jug presents itself as singular because the perception leads to (or includes) a conceptual determination of that perceptual object as a single thing, namely, a water-jug. In short, our perception allows us to correctly think or say,

50 Among Dharmakīrti's opponents, Kumārila is the only philosopher who appears willing to make some concessions against the intuition that the real is simple (see especially ŚV, *śūnyavāda*:217–221). It seems likely, however, that Kumārila's point here is that in terms of its cognition by various persons, a single entity may have many, even mutually contradictory qualities. This generally accords with his presentation of a "quality-possessor" (*dharmin*) as the perceptual object (see especially ŚV, *pratyakṣa*:151–153). As is often the case, Kumārila's construal of relations in terms of "difference-nondifference" (*bhedābheda*) makes a precise assessment of his position difficult.

Note that, unlike its usage in the context of inference, "quality-possessor" is probably the best translation of *dharmin* in this context, since *dharmin* is here roughly equivalent to the *avayavin* of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

51 The English words "unit" and "unity" are tempting translation for *eka* and *ekatva/ekatā*, but only if one attends to their etymologies. In a related context, Matilal (1971:73) also uses "simple" for *eka*.

"That is a water-jug." Since the term "water-jug" here is singular, it must refer to a single object. These arguments rest on the claim that the grammar of expressions corresponds to the real properties of objects. More specifically, the singularity of an expression corresponds to the singularity (*ekatā, ekatva*) of the object to which it is applied. In short, in this regard at least, grammar and ontology stand in a relation of isometric correspondence.⁵²

When combined with the notion that the real is simple or singular, this alleged isometric correspondence between grammatical and ontological number leads to the second type of argument as an important corollary, namely, that a grammatically plural expression must in fact refer to multiple objects that are ontologically singular or simple. Thus, if it is meaningful, a grammatically plural expression or concept must correspond ontologically to numerous, ontologically simple entities.

This contingency of grammatical plurality on ontological singularity points to the third set of arguments in favor of the real as simple. These arguments rest on the use of reductive analysis (*vibhāga, vicāra*, etc.) and the principle that the real is irreducible. That is, when we apply the appropriate form of analysis to a real entity, we should not be able to break or analyze it into smaller parts, since a real entity is simple. If that seemingly real entity can successfully be further analyzed—broken into parts, as it were—then its simplicity is only apparent; it seems to be simple, but in fact it is complex, and as such, it is not truly real. In this way, ontological simplicity corresponds to analytical irreducibility. Thus, if any real thing is necessarily simple or unitary, it is also necessarily irreducible under reductive analysis.⁵³

Many Pramāṇa Theorists use (or at least allude to) all three forms of argument to establish a real thing as simple, but throughout these arguments, the notion that the real must be simple remains uncontested for Dharmakīrti and his principle opponents. Their unanimity on the issue of simplicity, however, leads them to a shared problem, which we can illustrate in terms of the alleged whole that is a water-jug. We may claim that, when we see a

52 The arguments presented here are those found in the works of Vātsyāyana (NBh:462–512) and Uddyotakara (NV:462–513 *ad* NS2.1.31–36). See Mohanty (1993:86–93) for an especially useful summary of these arguments. Many scholars have recognized the importance of grammar to South Asian thought, but the strongest form of the argument thus far is found in Bronkhorst (1999).

53 Although Halbfass refers frequently to the notion of the real as the "irreducible" in Vaiśeṣika philosophy (1992:72, 92, 115, 144), the secondary literature on Brahmanical Pramāṇa Theory places little emphasis on this important, common theme. This is perhaps because irreducibility is so strongly associated with Buddhist philosophical method.

water-jug, we are seeing a single thing, but we must also admit that we can readily see its parts—the base, the rim around the top, and so on—in the same fashion. We thus encounter an apparent antinomy: the water-jug is a single real thing located in a particular time and place and consisting of a certain amount of matter, and yet in that very same time, place, and matter, we also see (and can meaningfully speak of) multiple real things such as a base and rim. Thus, we must ask: are we seeing one thing or many things?

The possible responses are perhaps obvious: one can either choose to defend the simplicity of things that presuppose the existence of real parts, or one can insist that the simple is necessarily partless. The former position is characteristic of those South Asian philosophers such as Uddyotakara who stress the perceptual and linguistic approaches to simplicity: for these thinkers, any account must preserve the ontological intuitions that stem from the way we perceive and speak of things such as a water-jug. If a spatially extended object such as a water-jug appears to be one thing, and if we can speak meaningfully of it in the singular, then our ontological account of the water-jug must likewise show how a single, real, unitary water-jug does not lose its simplicity even though that single entity is distributed over multiple parts that are themselves simple and real. With this issue in mind, philosophers such as Uddyotakara speak of a real “whole” or “part-possessor” (*avayavin*): a real substance instantiated or participating in its real parts, and yet entirely distinct from them.

A theory of substantially existent, unitary wholes that are distinct from their parts may satisfy some intuitions about perception and language, but even on the view of its proponents it leads to some difficulties. For example, given these thinkers' view of matter, they must admit that a whole water-jug should weigh more than the total weight of its parts. That is, before the two halves of a water-jug are conjoined, they have a certain weight, and when they are conjoined, a new, additional substance—the water-jug—comes into being. Since the conjoining of the halves creates a new substance over and beyond the halves of the water-jug, one would expect there to be some additional weight from the presence of that new substance. Uddyotakara, in a rather undistinguished attempt to deal with this problem, claims that a whole does indeed weigh more than the total weight of all its parts but that the difference in weight is undetectable.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Uddyotakara makes this claim at NV:493 (*ad* NS:2.1.33) in his extensive discussion of the *avayavin* (NV:478–513 *ad* NS:2.1.33–36). For Dharmakīrti's refutation of this view, see, for example, PV4.151–163; see also Dignāga's comments in PSV (472–473).

In contrast, South Asian Buddhist thinkers utterly reject the real existence of wholes; indeed, a mereological critique of wholes is one of the earliest and most paradigmatic forms of reductive analysis in Buddhist thought. In their critique of wholes, Buddhist thinkers maintain that entities such as water-jugs may seem to be simple, but in fact they are not because it is not possible for a real entity to be distributed over or participate in parts that are themselves simple. Many of the arguments that they adduce for this critique fall into a genre that Tibetan thinkers later called the “neither-one-nor-many” argument. This style of critique relies on *reductio ad absurdum* to demonstrate that it is untenable to maintain that a whole is identical to its real parts or that a whole is distinct from its real parts. And since any real thing must be either identical to or distinct from any other real thing, if the parts are indeed real, then one must conclude that the whole is unreal.⁵⁵ Hence, on the view of Buddhist thinkers, only partless things can be simple, which is to say that simple things cannot be distributed over or instantiated in other simple things. And since they agree that only the simple can be real, they must insist that only the partless—the undistributed—is real.

Although they reject the existence of real wholes, Buddhist thinkers understand that they must also account for our perceptual and linguistic practices, whereby we believe ourselves to be perceiving and speaking of wholes such as water-jugs that are distributed over their parts. This leads Buddhist philosophers to discuss *two different types of reality*: an apparent reality in which things can only be called “real” (or “true”) in conventional, contingent, or nominal terms (*saṃvṛtisat* or *prajñaptisat*), and a highest level of reality in terms of which things are ultimately real (*paramārthasat*). This fundamental notion of the “two realities” or “two truths” occurs throughout Buddhist texts, and the works of Dharmakīrti are no exception. Within the Buddhist context that informed Dharmakīrti’s thought, the most relevant statement of these two levels of reality occurs in the *Abhidharmakośa* (and *bhāṣya*) of Vasubandhu:⁵⁶

55 For the “neither-one-nor-many argument” in general, see Tillemans (1982 and 1983). Kapstein (2001:181–204) discusses some of the mereological versions of this style of analysis. It is worth noting that the success of such arguments presupposes a nondeviant form of logic.

56 The commentators Devendrabuddhi (e.g., PVP:80a *ad* PV1.186–187, and 189a *ad* PV3.194) and Śākyabuddhi (e.g., PVT:202b) frequently cite Vasubandhu as the source of some of Dharmakīrti’s theories.

That of which one does not have a cognition when it has been broken [into parts (*avayava*)] is conventionally real (*saṃvṛtisat*); an example is a water-jug. And that of which one does not have a cognition when other [elemental qualities (*dharma*)] have been excluded from it by the mind is also conventionally real; an example is water. That which is otherwise is ultimately real (*paramārthasat*).⁵⁷

57 AK6.4: *yatra bhinne na tadbuddhir anyāpohe dhiyā ca tat / ghaṭāmbuvat saṃvṛtisat paramārthasad anyathā*. The bracketed phrases "into parts" (*avayavaśah*) and "elemental qualities" (*dharmān*) come from Vasubandhu's own commentary, which reads (AKBh:890):

That of which one does not have a cognition when it has been broken into parts is conventionally real. An example is a water-jug, for when a water-jug is broken into shards, one does not have a cognition of it. And that of which one does not have a cognition when other elemental qualities (*dharma*) have been excluded (*apohya*) by the intellect (*buddhi*) is also to be known as conventionally real. An example is water, for when one mentally excludes its form and so on, one has no cognition of water. That is, conventional designations are applied to those things such as water-jugs and water. Hence, when we say, by the force of convention, "There is a water-jug and water," we have spoken the truth (*satyam*) [that is, we have spoken of what is real (*sat*)]; we have not uttered a falsehood. Hence, it is called a "conventional truth" [or "conventional reality"].

The existence of things in a way other than that is ultimate reality. That of which one still has a cognition even when it has been broken is ultimately real. And that of which one still has a cognition even when other elemental qualities are mentally excluded is also ultimately real. An example is form (*rūpa*). For when that form is broken into infinitesimal particles, one still has a cognition of that real thing (*vastu*) [namely, form]. And when other elemental qualities such as taste are mentally excluded from it, one still has a cognition of that whose nature is form. One should see that this is also the case with sensation and so on. Something is said to be ultimately real [or true (*satyam*)] because it exists ultimately. The previous masters have said that the ultimate reality exists in the way that it is apprehended by transcendent (*lokottara*) awareness or by the mundane awareness that is obtained subsequent to that transcendent awareness. And conventional reality exists in the way that it is apprehended by other forms of awareness. [*yasminn avayavaśo bhinne na tadbuddhir bhavati tat saṃvṛtisat / tadyathā ghaṭaḥ / tatra hi kapāśo bhinne ghaṭabuddhir na bhavati / yatra cānyān apohya dharmān buddhyā tadbuddhir na bhavati, tac cāpi saṃvṛtisat vedī-tavyam / tadyathā ambu / tatra hi buddhyā rūpādīn dharmān apohyāmbubuddhir na bhavati / teṣu eva tu saṃvṛtisamjñā kṛteti saṃvṛtivalāt ghaṭaś cāmbu cāstīti bruvantaḥ satyam evāhur na mṛṣā ity etat saṃvṛtisatyam / ato 'nyathā paramārthasatyam / tatra bhinne 'pi tadbuddhir bhavati / anyad dharmāpohe 'pi buddhyā tat paramārthasat / tadyathā rūpaḥ / tatra hi paramāṇubhinne vastuni rasārthān api ca dharmān apohya buddhyā rūpasya svabhāve buddhir bhavaty eva / evaṃ vedanādayo 'pi draṣṭavyāḥ / etat paramārthena bhāvāt paramārthasatyam iti / yathā lokottareṇa jñānena grhyate tat prajñālabdhena vā laukikena tathā paramārthasatyam / yathā 'nyena tathā saṃvṛtisatyam iti pūrvacāryāḥ*].

Vasubandhu's presentation of the two realities reflects the Buddhist mereological critique mentioned above. Although the *Abhidharmakośa* is not explicit on this point, Vasubandhu's theory thus rests largely on a critique of spatial extension. In other words, if a thing is extended in space, then it necessarily has parts in that it at least has "sides"—top, bottom, left, right, and so on. Since that extended thing can therefore be reduced (through actual physical force or through analysis) to its parts, it is not simple. And since it is not simple, it is not truly or ultimately real. In contrast, the simple entities that remain after analysis are ultimately real. On the view found in the *Abhidharmakośa*, these simple entities are infinitesimal particles (*paramāṇu*) or irreducible mental entities and states. In a later text, Vasubandhu applies a mereological analysis to infinitesimal particles of matter themselves, and he leads his readers to the conclusion that even matter is not ultimately real because it does not withstand mereological analysis.⁵⁸ Following Vasubandhu's lead, Dignāga and especially Dharmakīrti also apply a mereological style of critique to temporal extension, with the result that all real entities—whether particles or mental states—are "momentary" (*kṣaṇika*), in that they exist for only an infinitesimal amount of time.⁵⁹

As the critique of temporal extension suggests, a mereological analysis of wholes provides a paradigm for the critique of entities that are whole-like: that is, they exhibit "distribution" (*anvaya*). A whole is a distributed entity in that it is a single real thing that is somehow instantiated in other single real things that are its parts. The same may be said of a perdurant entity that allegedly endures over time: to be real, it must be a single thing distributed over numerous temporal instances. Dharmakīrti likewise extends this style of critique to universals: if a universal (such as *gotva* or "cow-ness") is to be real, it must also be a single real thing that is distributed over all the individuals that we call "cows." But perhaps the quintessential form of this style of argument is Dharmakīrti's critique of relations.

Dharmakīrti presents his critique of relations in the *Sambandhapariṣā*, where he responds to various positions that argue for the existence of ultimately real relations. Dharmakīrti systematically rejects all such claims, and on his view, a relation can only be real in a conventional or nominal sense. His argument rests on the uncontested claim that he shares with his opponents: namely, that an ultimately real thing must be simple. Hence, if a

58 The text in question is the *Vimśatikā* and its *Vṛtti*. See Kapstein (2001:191–204).

59 See the discussion in chapter 2 (91ff).

relation were to be ultimately real, then it too must be a simple, unitary entity. If a relation is hypostasized in such a fashion, the mereological style of analysis applies because the relation must now be conceived much as a whole: a single thing that, while existent in itself, is somehow distributed over its parts.

At various points in the *Sambandhaparīkṣā*, Dharmakīrti relies on a “neither-one-nor-many” argument to make his point, and his argument moves back and forth across a central question: if a relation is a real thing, then is it one with its relata, or is it different from them? Noting that a relation presupposes the presence of at least two relata, Dharmakīrti dismisses the notion that the relation could be a real thing that is one with (i.e., identical to) the relata over which it is distributed. In other words, if the relation and the relata are *one*, then how can we intelligently speak of *two* relata?⁶⁰ And in response to the claim that the relation could be different from its relata, he offers a verse that is particularly helpful for understanding Dharmakīrti's ontology:

If two things are related by virtue of their connection to one relation, then one may ask, “What relates those two relata to the relation?” The result is an infinite regress, and the notion of a relation is thus not correct.⁶¹

Dharmakīrti's point is that, if a relation is different from the relata, then it must still somehow be distributed over them in order to serve its function as a relation. Hence, one may ask whether, by virtue of being distributed over the relata, the relation is thereby one with the relata, or different from them. If it is one, then there can be no relation, since relations presuppose multiplicity or plurality. And if it is different from the relata, then we must argue that there is some second-order relation that connects the relation to its relata. We can thus again ask: is this second-order relation one with its

60 Dharmakīrti makes this argument at various points in text, but perhaps the most obvious is in the second verse: “You may think that a relation is a commingling of natures. But if the relata are two, then how can that be?” (*rūpasleṣo hi sambandho dūtvā sa ca katham bhavet*). In his commentary, Dharmakīrti notes: “If the relata were to be one, then since there would not be two relata, what relation would there be? We ask this because a relation presupposes [at least] two relata” (256a: *gcig pu gyur na yang 'brel pa can gnyis med pa'i phyir 'brel pa gang zhiḡ yin te 'di ni gnyis las gnas pa'i phyir ro*).

61 *Sambandhaparīkṣā* k.4: *dvayor ekābhisambandhāt sambandho yadi taddvayor / kaḥ sambandho anavasthā ca na sambandhamatis tathā*.

relata, or different from them? The infinite regress from this point should be obvious.

I have cited Dharmakīrti's argument by infinite regress because it so clearly points to a theme within his ontology, namely, the rejection of the notion that an entity could be at once one (and thus a simple real) and yet participate in what is many. Such alleged entities include: a whole participating in its parts; a universal participating in its particulars; a perdurant entity participating in its temporal instances; and a relation participating in its relata. Whatever motives we might attribute to him,⁶² it is clear that Dharmakīrti utterly rejects any possibility of unity within plurality, and as a result, all such entities must be ultimately unreal for him because they all can be reduced to the entities over which they are allegedly distributed.

The argument by infinite regress is also particularly helpful for understanding Dharmakīrti's ontology in its wider context. In part, the argument is helpful because it presupposes a fundamental area of agreement, namely, that a real thing is simple or one. At the same time, however, the argument by infinite regress also points to an especially crucial point of disagreement. That point becomes clear when we recognize that the regress succeeds only under a certain condition. As Stephen Phillips notes:

The regress is set up by treating the relation as a term, as the same sort of thing, logically, as the relata. Without an argument that a relation is a different sort of critter, it seems that if a third thing is required to relate two things, then the third thing requires equally a fourth and a fifth to tie it up with the first two, *ad infinitum*.⁶³

Phillips points out that Dharmakīrti's critique of relations succeeds by treating the relation as the same kind of "critter" as the relata. Without this assumption, the critique might easily be evaded. We know that if the relation and the relata are real, then each must be one or simple (*eka*). Suppose,

62 One likely motivation is Dharmakīrti's need to defend the Buddhist notion of selflessness (*anātman* or *nairātmya*), which is central to his soteriological project. Especially after Nāgārjuna, Buddhist arguments against the self (*ātman*) focus not on the impossibility of a self *per se*, but rather the impossibility of a whole class of entities, the self being within that class. Although Dharmakīrti himself offers no clear critique of the self, it seems likely that he too would see the self as akin to a whole class of entities, namely, those that are distributed. For an interpretation along these lines, see Franco (2001).

63 Phillips (1995:23).

however, that number does not apply in the same way to these entities; that is, we can point to and count the relata, but we cannot count the relation in that fashion. This means that, although real, the relation and the relata exist in different ways: a real relatum cannot remain "one" and be distributed over another relatum, but the relation can remain "one" and be distributed over its relata. And not only *can* a relation be distributed over its relata, it is precisely the kind of thing that *is* distributed over its relata. Indeed, this is part of what we mean we say that it is "real" (*sat*) and an instrumental object (*prameya*).

If we respond to Dharmakīrti's argument against hypostasized relations in this fashion, we come to a question over which he and his opponents fundamentally disagree: can we use the unqualified term "real" (*sat*) to refer to things that are not real in the same way? That is, if an entity is "real," must it be real in the same way as all other real entities? Dharmakīrti's main opponents will inevitably answer this question by affirming the diversity of ways in which an entity might exist and still be *sat* or real. Indeed, in some cases that affirmative answer leads to a plethora of terms for different ways of being real.⁶⁴ Dharmakīrti, however, utterly rejects any such possibility. In the next chapter, we will see that, on his view, only spatiotemporally irreducible particulars are "real," and on the most accurate account, they alone are instrumental objects (*prameya*). Everything else can be called real only in a conventional or spurious (*saṃvṛti*) sense.

1.3 Purpose as Context

Beyond the ontological assumption of simplicity, Pramāṇa Theorists from all traditions share another area of considerable agreement: the notion of *prayojana* or "purpose" as forming the context within which an instrumental object is known. The first Pramāṇa Theorist to establish the place of purpose as a *necessary* component in the process of knowing was probably Gautama. Citing purpose at the outset of his *Nyāyasūtra* (NS1.1.1) as a

64 I am referring here to the use of the terms *sattā*, *astitva*, and *bhāva* by various Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers. See Potter (1977:140–142) for an excellent overview of this issue. For Dharmakīrti, things must be real (*sat*) "in the same way" in that any real entity must meet the same criterion of "telic efficacy" (*arthakriyā*). Many of his opponents, however, are willing to apply diverse criteria: some things are real in that they are directly contacted by the senses, others are real because, for example, they are the objects of linguistic or conceptual cognitions. For a detailed discussion of related issues, see Dunne (1999:62–70).

central topic of his work, he later defines it: "the purpose is the *artha* aiming at which one acts."⁶⁵ In other words, it is with some purpose in mind that one seeks to act in a manner informed by the indubitable knowledge that an instrument of knowledge provides. In this sense, purpose is a crucial context within which such knowledge occurs. Gautama's definition, however, is somewhat difficult to understand, for it employs the ambiguous term *artha*, whose many meanings include "goal," "thing," and "object." This ambiguity often causes confusion, but it also allows one to make a point: when a "thing" is being taken as an "object," one does so because that "thing" will serve some "goal." We see this in the commentary offered by the earliest Naiyāyika commentator Vātsyāyana:

Having apprehended that an *artha* is something to be obtained or eliminated, one then implements the means for obtaining or eliminating it. One should know that that *artha* is the purpose because it causes one to act. That is, one thinks "I will obtain this *artha*" or "I will avoid this *artha*"—this kind of apprehension of the *artha* is what is meant by "aiming at" the *artha*.⁶⁶

Uddyotakara, one of Dharmakīrti's main opponents, clarifies exactly what one is apprehending:

What is one apprehending? One is apprehending the causes (*sādhana*) of happiness and suffering. That is, having understood, "This is a cause of happiness," one then strives so as to obtain happiness. And having understood, "This is the cause of suffering," one acts so as to eliminate suffering. People are motivated (*prayujyate*) by the attainment of happiness and the elimination of suffering. Hence, their purpose is the attainment of happiness and the elimination of suffering.⁶⁷

65 NS1.1.24: *yam artham adbhikṛtya pravartate tat prayojanam.*

66 NBh (256) *ad* NS1.1.24:

yam artham āptavyam hātavyam vā vyavasāya tadāptihānopāyam anuṣṭhāti prayojanam tad veditavyam, pravṛttilhetutvād / imam artham āpsyāmi hāsyāmi veti vyavasāyo 'rthasādhikārah.

67 NV (256–257) *ad* NS1.1.24:

vyavasāyo 'dhikārah / kasya vyavasāyah sukhaduḥkhasāadhanānām / idam sukhasāadhanam iti jñātvā sukhāptaye prayatate, idam duḥkhasāadhanam iti cādhiḡamya duḥkhabhānāyati /

In short, one's purpose is to obtain happiness and eliminate suffering: to do so, one implements the causes of the former and eliminates the causes of the latter. It is within this context that one employs the instruments of knowledge, and one does so in order to gain knowledge of those instrumental objects (*prameya*) that will enable one to obtain happiness and avoid suffering. An important corollary of this claim is that if an instrument of knowledge is necessarily used within the context of a purpose, then an instrument of knowledge must result in a *determinate* cognition—i.e., one in a propositional form, such as “This is a cause of happiness.” Without such determinate content, the cognition could not motivate and guide action, as Uddyotakara would have it do.

But is purpose truly a *necessary* factor in this process—can one not simply employ some means of knowledge—such as a formal logic—that is not tied to any purpose? In this regard, Uddyotakara remarks:

Also, it is incorrect to claim that purpose is not a contributing factor in reasoning (*nyāyāṅga*). Indeed, thought divorced from purpose is not a contributing factor in reasoning. In contrast, purpose is the *primary* contributing factor (*pradhānāṅga*) for the process of investigation (*parikṣāvidhi*), because the process of investigation is rooted in the purpose that it serves.⁶⁸

By claiming that the “process of investigation” (i.e., the application of instruments of knowledge) is rooted in the purpose toward which one strives, Uddyotakara points to the psychologism within discourse on *pramāṇa*. If a person has no purpose in gaining knowledge of some object, then even if that object is available to some instrument of knowledge, she will not cognize it precisely because she has no reason to do so: she lacks the purpose or motivation that is a necessary factor in the knowing process.

Although Uddyotakara and his fellow Naiyāyikas are perhaps the clearest in their analysis of purpose, the same principle appears to be shared by most of Dharmakīrti's fellow Pramāṇa Theorists. Prasastapāda, for exam-

sukhaduḥkḥayor evāptihānābhyāṃ lokāḥ prayujyata iti sukhaduḥkhāptihāni prayojanam iti.

68 NV (257) ad NS1.1.24:

yad api prayojanam nyāyasyāṅgam na bhavati tad ayuktam, yā khalu nisprayojanā cintā sā na nyāyāṅgam iti / parikṣāvidhes tu pradhānāṅgam prayojanam eva, tanmūlatvāt parikṣāvidher iti.

ple, does not offer anything approaching Uddyotakara's analysis of purpose;⁶⁹ but at the very outset of his text he makes it clear that the knowledge of reality that one obtains through a means of knowledge does indeed serve a specific purpose: it enables one to obtain spiritual liberation.⁷⁰

In Kumāṛila's philosophy as well, purpose figures prominently as a requirement of knowledge. It is true, of course, that Kumāṛila's main concern is with the purpose that a treatise embodies, but this is merely a reflection of the fact that, for him, the only true means of obtaining spiritually relevant knowledge are "texts": namely, the *Vedas* themselves.⁷¹ This point of view, however, does not prevent him from commenting frequently on the importance of purpose, as when he remarks:

Even a fool does not act without being directed toward a purpose. If he were to act in that fashion, what would he need his intellect for?⁷²

As with Naiyāyikas, Kumāṛila ties purpose with action. One acts so as to obtain a purpose, and the role of knowledge is to enable one to determine both the purpose and the means to obtaining it. We find much the same sentiment in Dharmakīrti's philosophy, but in his case, purpose takes on a distinctive role in the determination of what constitutes an instrument of knowledge. That distinctive role is indicated by his use of the term *arthakriyā*. Below, we will have an opportunity to examine this term and its meaning in Dharmakīrti's philosophy, but here we can note that one of its meanings is simply the "accomplishment" (*kriyā*) of a "goal" (*artha*), or what I call "telic function." Of course, for Dharmakīrti to speak in these terms is nothing new. The comments cited above clearly suggest that Uddyotakara also saw efficacy as a crucial component of knowledge.⁷³ In

69 His two uses of the term *prayojana* in PDS (254 and 316) are far from helpful.

70 Cf. PDS2: *dravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyānām śaṅṇām padārthānām sādharṃyavaidharṃyatattvajñānam niḥśreyasahetuḥ*. Although the means of obtaining this knowledge comes from the "Dharma manifested through the injunctions of the Lord" (*īśvaracodanābhivyaktā dharma eva*), on Praśastapāda's system that *Dharma* (or, more properly speaking, the means one uses to obtain knowledge through that *Dharma*), is itself a *pramāṇa*.

71 Cf. ŚV (*codanā*:13–14).

72 ŚV, *sambandhākṣepaparihāra* 55: *prayojanam anuddiśya na mando 'pi pravartate / evam eva pravṛttiś cec caitanyenāśya kim bhavet //*.

73 Indeed, as Halbfass has noted (1992:70), Uddyotakara and his fellow Naiyāyikas also used

Dharmakīrti's philosophy, however, *arthakriyā* is not merely an aspect of knowledge: it is, from at least one perspective, the principal criterion in the determination of some cognition as an instance of knowledge. This may give some readers visions of a precocious pragmatism predating Peirce by more than a millennium, but this interpretation would be overstating the case. Instead, we need only note that, while most Pramāṇa Theorists recognized the importance of purposes and goals in the process of knowing, Dharmakīrti is willing to place a much stronger emphasis on goals than any of his contemporaries or principal opponents.

1.4 *Points of Divergence: The Action and Agent*

Up to this point, we have examined certain common assumptions and concepts shared by most Pramāṇa Theorists in relation to the instruments of knowledge and the instrumental objects known thereby. When we examine the remaining two aspects of the knowing process—i.e., *pramiti* (the action of knowing through an instrument of knowledge) and *pramātṛ* (the agent of that action)—we find much less agreement among these thinkers.

In regard to *pramiti*, the “action of knowing” or knowledge-event that results from employing an instrument of knowledge, there is considerable disagreement between Dharmakīrti and his opponents. This disagreement focuses on two key issues: first, is the action (*kriyā*) of knowing distinct from its other aspects, especially the instrument (*karana*)? Second, if action and instrument are distinct, do they stand in a causal relation, such that the instrument is the cause and the action is the effect? The Brahmanical thinkers to whom Dharmakīrti appears to allude—the unknown Sāṃkhya author of the *Yuktidīpikā*, the Vaiśeṣika Praśastapāda, the Naiyāyika Uddyotakara, and the Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila—generally claim that action and instrument are distinct,⁷⁴ although Uddyotakara does allow for their convergence in certain cases.⁷⁵ These philosophers also generally claim that the relation between the action and instrument is causal; they do not, however, agree on how that causal process operates. Nevertheless, since the action of

the term *arthakriyā*. Franco (1997:66) makes the same observation.

74 See YD (152–153), PDS (243–245), NV (18–22 *ad* NS1.1.1), and ŚV (*jñānavāda*:147–151; *pratyakṣa*:74–76).

75 See, for example, NV (89).

knowing is in most cases considered the result of the instrument, it is known as the *pramāṇaphala*—the “effect of the instrument” or “instrumental effect.” Thus, for these philosophers, *pramiti* comes to mean the knowledge that results from the functioning of an instrument of knowledge.

In contrast to this position, Dharmakīrti follows the lead of his predecessor Dignāga and rejects any actual difference between the instrument and the effect; hence, he also denies any causal relation between them. This comes to be one of the hallmarks of Buddhist Pramāṇa Theory: that the alleged “effect” of the instrument’s function is nothing but the instrument itself.⁷⁶

As for *pramāṭṛ*, the “agent” of knowing, the Brahmanical thinkers to whom Dharmakīrti alludes identify it with a self (*ātman*) or, in the case of the Sāṃkhya author of *Yuktidīpikā*, with the Person (*puruṣa*).⁷⁷ This issue receives varying degrees of attention from Dharmakīrti’s closest interlocutors, Uddyotakara being the most extensive in his remarks.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, although all these Brahmanical philosophers discuss the agent as *ātman* (or *puruṣa*), they disagree considerably on their interpretations.

The diversity of opinion concerning the *ātman* or *puruṣa* as the agent may help explain the fact that Dharmakīrti does not assay any direct refutation of this notion. But even without a direct refutation of an *ātman* or *puruṣa* as the agent, it is clear that Dharmakīrti collapses the grammatical category of agent (*pramāṭṛ*) in the process of knowing into the category of the action (*pramiti*), the “resultant” knowledge. This follows from the ultimate identity that he asserts of the action/instrument (*kriyā/karaṇa*) relation in all cases: if the categories of action and instrument are unreal, the reality of the agent also becomes untenable. For Dharmakīrti, this also means that, at the highest level of analysis, the reality of even the instrumental object is ultimately reducible to the instrument itself.⁷⁹

76 In Dignāga’s work, the ultimate identity of *pramāṇa* and *pramiti* / *pramāṇaphala* is discussed at in PSV *ad* PS1.1.8cd–10 (Hattori 1968:28–29; cf. Hattori’s notes, 1.55–67, pp.97–107). Dharmakīrti discusses the same issue at several points, the most salient being PV3.311–319 and PV3.334–339. See chapter 4 (268ff).

77 See, for example, PDS (242–245), ŚV (*ātmavāda*.7) and YD (152–153).

78 See NV (697–753 *ad* NS3.1.1–27). Uddyotakara’s lengthy discussion on *ātman* actually extends beyond NS1.1.27, but the portion referred to here forms the core of the discussion.

79 For levels of analysis, see chapter 2 (53ff). The most important sources for the reduction of the instrumental object to the instrument are PV3.213–215 and PV3.306–320. I discuss this in chapter 4 (268ff).

1.5 Summary

Since the main purpose of this chapter is to sketch some of the more salient aspects of Dharmakīrti's conceptual context, let us conclude by reiterating some of the notions widely shared by Pramāṇa Theorists. Refreshing our memory here will aid us in our endeavors below.

- The main concern of Pramāṇa Theory is the investigation of the proper means or instruments (*pramāṇa*) of obtaining knowledge. The act (*kriyā*) of having such knowledge may be divided into four components: *pramāṇa* (the instrument or means), *prameya* (the object), *pramātṛ* (the agent), and *pramiti* (the action or knowledge-event itself).
- In terms of the instruments of knowledge, nearly all Pramāṇa Theorists accept *at least* two kinds—perceptual awareness (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*).
- Pramāṇa Theorists share several notions about perceptual awareness, including: the central role of sensory contact (*indriyasannikarṣa*); the vividness of perception; and the varieties of error, especially those caused by physical defects.
- In regard to inference, these theorists share a large number of theories, including the basic structure of an inference ("S is P because E") and the types of relations among these terms (Subject, Predicate, and Evidence) that must pertain in order for an inferential knowledge-event to occur.
- In terms of ontology, one central point of agreement is that any real (*sat*) thing is a knowable thing (*jñeya*), and that every knowable thing is (or can be) an instrumental object (*prameya*).
- Ontologically, a "real" thing must also be simple (*eka*): it is a singular, partless unit. The affirmation of singularity also leads to an important issue that distinguishes Dharmakīrti's thought, namely, his insistence that a simple entity cannot be distributed over other simple entities.
- For all Pramāṇa Theorists, purpose (*prayojana*) forms a central context for all acts of knowing.

Finally, to close this chapter, we should note that by seeing Dharmakīrti's work within the context of the concepts and assumptions that he shared with Brahmanical Pramāṇa Theorists, we can more clearly understand some of his philosophical choices. Our understanding is especially enhanced if we

interpret Dharmakīrti as standing in two traditions: on the one hand, he is a Buddhist philosopher, but on the other, he is engaged in intertextual, intertraditional discourse on *pramāṇa*. As a Buddhist, Dharmakīrti's soteriology commits him to a form of antirealism, but as a Pramāṇa Theorist, Dharmakīrti must uphold some basic claims, including the assertion that at least perception and inference give us accurate knowledge of the world. These two commitments—the commitment to critique realism and the commitment to defend the usefulness of perception and inference as trustworthy sources of knowledge—are often in tension. We have noted, for example, that Dharmakīrti's brand of antirealism requires a rejection of distributed entities, while the prevailing South Asian Pramāṇa Theories of his time presumed commonsense, distributed entities as the objects of perception and inference. These issues point to the topic of the following chapter, namely, the ontology that we find in Dharmakīrti's works.