

CASTE AND BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

*Continuity of Some Buddhist Arguments
against the Realist Interpretation of
Social Denominations*

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In his commentary to Āryadeva's CŚ XII (廣百論釋論 *Guǎng bǎi lùn shì lùn*, IV), Dharmapāla goes into a long diatribe against the Brahmin and Jain outsiders. He draws a picture of the Brahmin that is free of complacency and perhaps unique in its severity. For him, the Brahmin's path is nothing but an endless recitation of meaningless formula. And if Brahmins are at all venerated, it is because the majority of them try successively to fool others by reciting mantras, by worshipping fire or by purifying themselves through austerities. They in fact earn a living by abusing women and *śūdras*. For Brahmins from the distant past invented the whole of the Veda, according to Dharmapāla, and then claimed that they were natural instead of the creation of human imagination. Brahmins even describe themselves, in those texts, as the most venerable among men and recommend non-Brahmins who wish to acquire incommensurable merits to take care of their needs. Dharmapāla concludes by comparing the Brahmin's behaviour to that of greedy lepers, and holds that they are venerated because of their knowledge and because the Veda is difficult to recite.⁶⁶ According to Dharmapāla, then, the Brahmins created, and continue to keep in place, symbolic instruments of violence and domination. The creation of the Veda simply results from the necessity to make that domination natural.⁶⁷

Like so many other authors and texts, from the VSū to Candrakīrti, Āryadeva maintains, in CŚ XII 22, that birth or caste are

⁶⁶ See Āryadeva's CŚ XII 21, the Chinese and Tibetan versions of which differ. See respectively Tillemans (1990, I, 110) and (1990, I, 132).

⁶⁷ On those matters, see Tillemans (1990, I, 108–111). Candrakīrti is more reserved than his predecessor Dharmapāla in his attack of Brahmins and, contrary to Dharmapāla, he *here* does *not* present any argument to undermine the legitimacy of the glory that falls upon Brahmins because of their birth. For Candrakīrti, Brahmins simply perform the recitation of formulas and fire oblations. And since they seek profit and worldly honours, Brahmins have to be hypocrites. Their doctrine, which is “mostly an outward show” (*phyi 'chos*), fits well in *samsāra*, and is therefore an obstacle to liberation. See Tillemans (1990, I, 130–132).

a purely karmic product that does not lead to liberation.⁶⁸ Dharmapāla offers two arguments against the superiority of the Brahmin's birth in his commentary on that verse. Developing the "biological" arguments found in the canonical literature, and anticipating later philosophers,⁶⁹ he first asserts that the *dharma*s that serve as sense faculties and sensory objects to Brahmins are not different from those that fulfil the same functions among individuals of other castes. The second argument then claims that since Brahmins and *śūdras* live together on the same continent (*dvīpa*), Brahmins cannot claim any superiority over the *śūdras*.⁷⁰ While this second argument may seem over simple, it plays on the pan-Indian cosmological belief that a common set of characteristics is shared by the inhabitants of each of the four continents: average life expectancy, height, physiognomy, etc. And as Dharmapāla is quick to point out, whereas cosmological determinants may justify a qualitative gradation among the inhabitants from one continent to another, no such gradation may be justified within a given continent.

Dharmapāla's refutation of the Brahmanic argumentation is often convincing. But he offers no explanation for the partition of Indian society into castes. His rather fiery remarks on the motivations that led to the composition of the Veda are nonetheless extremely interesting.

2.1.2 Dharmakīrti and the reformulation of the polemic

At this stage we must formulate a hypothesis to explain why it is only with Dharmakīrti that the Buddhist polemic on caste took on a partially new turn; one that would also engage his successors Śākyabuddhi (c. 660–720?, PVT), Śāntarakṣita (c. 725–788, TS), Kamalaśīla (c. 740–795, TSP), Karṇakagomin (c. 800, PVSVT)

⁶⁸ See Tillemans (1990, I, 111).

⁶⁹ See section 1.2, p. 17, above, and sections 2.3.2, p. 107, and 2.5.1, p. 138, below.

⁷⁰ I am not aware of any other instance of that cosmological argument.

and Prajñākara-gupta (c. 800, PVA).⁷¹ I will here present only two possible explanations for this: one internal to the works to be examined, the other external.

2.1.2.1 Internal explanation: the theory of exclusion (*apoha*)

With the philosophers, the problem of caste quickly crystallized into the ontological debate and the problem of universals (*jāti*, *sāmānya*). Whether we look at one or any of the specific positions adopted by every given school or individual thinker, the break is clear between the realism of Brahmanic philosophers and the nominalism/conceptualism of the Buddhist schools. Starting with Dignāga, the core Buddhist arguments on universals are based on the theory of exclusion (*apoha*) or exclusion of others (*anyāpoha*).⁷² Despite some important variations and developments brought by the philosophers discussed below, the theory attempts to explain, in anti-realist terms, the genesis and formation of concepts (classes, genus, universals, etc.). And it does so, in Dharmakīrti at least,⁷³ by appealing to the causal efficiency (*arthakriyāsāmarthyā*) of entities or particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*). In showing that particulars irreducibly distinct from one another can produce identical effects, notably conceptual judgements, the theory of exclusion claims that universals have only a conceptual or notional existence. According to that theory, we come to believe in the extra-mental and extra-linguistic reality of classes and universals because of the superimpositions (*samāropa*) and the unifications (*ekīkaraṇa*) (relayed by beginningless latent impregnations, *vāsanā*) of those conceptual materials with sensory data.

⁷¹ On those authors and their works, see Steinkellner and Much (1995).

⁷² On Dignāga's theory of exclusion, first refer to Hayes (1985) and Pind (forthcoming). On the form that the theory took in the work of Dharmakīrti, see Frauwallner (1932, 1933a and 1933b) and Dunne (2004, 113–144).

⁷³ On the important differences between the theories of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, see Katsura (1991).

In so far as Brahmanic philosophers took both meanings of the word *jāti* (class, universal; caste, [social] class, birth) to belong to the same realist ontology, and therefore accepted that all Brahmins are instantiations of the class “brahmanity” (*brāhmaṇatva*) in the same way that all cows are instantiations of the class “cowhood” (*gotva*), the Buddhist epistemologists were justified to test the social valorization of class against the exclusion approach, just as they did with its epistemological valorization.⁷⁴ With the theory of exclusion, they possessed a new instrument to reject a separation of the social and epistemological arguments; an instrument that proved to be very powerful in their critique of the realist legitimizations of caste. Śākyabuddhi, Karṇakagomini and Śāntarakṣita clearly understood this. For prior to going into a discussion of class in the social sense, they will all say that it has already been the object of detailed refutations in the sections of their works dealing with the theory of exclusion. Their subsequent discussions of the naturalization of caste are then reducible to an argumentation against the pride that Brahmins take in their caste.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This is especially true if we adopt Dumont’s structural interpretation of caste, which includes strong *apoha* elements. That interpretation indeed “de-substantializes” caste as much as possible, so that in the end it only has a relative existence within a system of “distinctive oppositions” (Dumont 1972, 79[62]). Under that interpretation, caste essentially seems to be the sum of everything that it is not and does not allow. See Dumont (1972, §§ 23–26, 76–103[59–90]).

⁷⁵ PVT P *ñe* 27a3–4 ≈ PVSVT 558.3–4: *sāmānyaniṣedhān niṣiddhaiva jātiḥ / kevalam abhyupagamyocyate* /. “Although [Dharmakīrti] already refuted the class by refuting the universal, he simply accepts [it provisionally] and says [what follows].” TS 3575ab: *śataśaḥ pratiṣiddhāyāṃ jātāu jātimadaś ca kim* /. “And why [show such] a pride in caste when the class has [already] been refuted hundreds of times?” See also PVT P *ñe* 85a3–4 = PVSVT 618.27 on PV I 340: *vastubhūtasāmānyaniṣedhān na pūrvaḥ pakṣaḥ* /. “[Your] first hypothesis does not [hold], since we have [already] refuted real universals.” On the value of that “first hypothesis,” see section 2.5.1.1, p. 138, below.

2.1.2.2 External explanation: Kumārila and the principle of *veda-mūlatva*

Now the fact that Dharmakīrti's commentators and successors recognized and stressed the strong polemical *potential* of the theory of exclusion does not explain away the fact that none of the chapters or sections dealing with exclusion in the works of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita (PS[V], chap. V, PV[SV], chap. I and TS, chap. XIII, *sāmānyaparīkṣā*, and XVI, *śabdārthaparīkṣā*) include a discussion of the problems related to the social aspect of class. A first hypothetical explanation only begins to take form when we consider that *all* the critiques formulated by Buddhist epistemologists against the Brahmanic realist thematizations of caste appear in chapters or sections *directed against the Mīmāṃsā*. As I shall argue, starting with Dharmakīrti, the Buddhist polemical efforts against the naturalization of caste are closely linked to the critique of Mīmāṃsaka positions. More precisely, Dharmakīrti and his successors bring back all the canonical arguments previously directed at Brahmins in general in their polemic against the Mīmāṃsā.

Compared to Dignāga, Bhāvivēka/Bhavya and Dharmapāla,⁷⁶ Dharmakīrti in fact entirely rewrites the Buddhist critique of the

⁷⁶ As far as I know, Dignāga does not discuss the authorlessness of the Veda, nor the "social" valorization of classes. And Bhāvivēka/Bhavya, while he dedicates a chapter to the Mīmāṃsaka positions, does not say a word about caste despite the objector's opening position presented in MHK IX 11 (Kawasaki 1992a, 410): *devarsijustaśiṣteṣaṃ purāṇaṃ vartma śobhanam / vedārthabāhyaīḥ strīśūdrāir yuktam yat tyajyate trayī //*. (Translated in English in Kawasaki 1976, 11, together with T] *ad loc.*, note 10). More than that: according to de Jong's (1988, 429–430) interpretation of Avalokitavrata on *Prajñāpradīpa* I, the great Mādhyamika doctor would even have favoured the first two classes. Kawasaki (1992b, 10; other elements in Eltschinger 1998, note 22) was able to show, however, that the Mīmāṃsā criticized by Bhāvivēka/Bhavya looks like a non-systematic collection of ideas and doctrines probably current in his days and, for the last two thirds of the text, often having nothing to do with the Mīmāṃsā of Śābara and Kumārila. As for Dharmapāla, we have seen that he does not so much attack the Mīmāṃsā as

Mīmāṃsā. For once, only 6 verses (= PV I 218–223) go to an examination of the Naiyāyika and perhaps also the Jain legitimizations of scriptural authority, while no less than 115 verses (= PV I 224–338) go to his critique of the authorlessness of the Veda as a logical reason for its authority (*vedaprāmāṇya*). The Naiyāyika's and the Jain's acceptance of the principle of a trustworthy person (*āpta*) capable of perceiving supersensible things (*atīndriyadarśipuruṣa*) may have stopped Dharmakīrti from going into a more thorough critique of their positions, for their criteria of authority may have seemed sufficiently close to his own. But this probably does not fully account for his decision. I believe that a more satisfactory explanation is to be found elsewhere, more specifically in Kumārila.

Three of Wilhelm Halbfass' publications⁷⁷ have contributed to build an image of Kumārila as a champion of Brahmanic orthodoxy.⁷⁸ The whole Mīmāṃsā tradition centres on the notion of dharma, a term which is first understood to refer, in the normative literature, to "the dharma of (social) classes and the stages of life" (*varṇāśramadharmā*). But the Mīmāṃsā is more an orthopraxy than an orthodoxy.⁷⁹ For its intent, stated in its open-

the Brahmins, whom he accuses of having confiscated the symbolic power by creating the whole of the Veda.

⁷⁷ Halbfass (1976; 1983, 1–26 = chap. I, "Kumārila on Ahimsā and Dharma"; and 1990, 310–333 = chap. 17, "Dharma in the Self-Understanding of Traditional Hinduism").

⁷⁸ On many occasions, Halbfass describes the Mīmāṃsā, and more specifically that of Kumārila, as a restoration (Halbfass 1990, 321, 329 and 331). For him (1990, 325), "orthodox' Hinduism found [in the Mīmāṃsā] its most uncompromising expression." Verpoorten (1987, 23) also describes the Mīmāṃsā as the "ambassador of Brahmanic orthodoxy in its most rigorous form" (English translation of Verpoorten).

⁷⁹ For example, Śabara's comments on the *codanāsūtra* support this claim (ŚBh I 1.2/I 20.5–21): *yo hi yāgam anutiṣṭhati taṁ dhārmikaṁ iti samācaksate* /. "Is called 'dhārmika' the [man] who performs the sacrifices." See also ŚV, *codanāsūtra*, 192: *anyat sādhyam adṛṣṭvaiva yāgādīn anutiṣṭhataḥ / dhārmikatvasamākhyānam tadyogād iti gamyate* //.

ing sutra, is to materialize the "desire to know the dharma"⁸⁰ (*dharmajijñāsā*). The definition of dharma proposed in Jaimini's second sutra in fact makes it the object (*artha*) of Vedic injunctions (*codanā*).⁸¹ Already in its foundational text, the Mīmāṃsā thus finds in the Veda the exclusive source of knowledge of dharma, which is now intimately linked to the practice of sacrifice. In his radicalization of the Mīmāṃsā position, Kumārila tries to undermine all attempts to establish the norms of dharma on commonly accepted empirical criteria, even the conduct of learned men (*śiṣṭācāra*) or eminent ones (*mahājana*).⁸² And in so doing, he rejects all identifications of dharma with harmlessness (*ahiṃsā*) or with benefitting others (*parānugraha*), as well as all identifications of unrighteousness (*adharma*) with hurting others (*parapīḍā*).⁸³ In other words, Kumārila equally objects to the relativization of Vedic prescriptions, to the universalization of one or more specific norms, and to the empiricalness of the norms of dharma. For him, dharma and unrighteousness are ultimately and exclusively related to Vedic injunctions (*vidhi*) and prohibitions (*ni°/pratiṣedha*).⁸⁴ His approach, which is already clearly expressed in the ŚV, finds its full expression in the TV on MĪSū I 3.1–29, where he describes in details the criteria for the "vedicity" of the Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic *Smṛtis*. His position culminates in the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda (*dharmasya vedamūlatvam*). And on that principle, he remains strictly intransigent.

Kumārila will vehemently reject a juxtaposition of relative dharmas. Because only the Veda is authoritative when it comes to dharma, only Vedic prescriptions guarantee that people's socio-

⁸⁰ MĪSū I 1.1: *athāto dharmajijñāsā* /.

⁸¹ MĪSū I 1.2: *sa hi niḥśreyasena puruṣaṃ saṃyunaktīti pratijānīmahe / tad abhidhiyate codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah* /.

⁸² On those different matters, see ŚV, *codanāsūtra*, 195–196ab and 243–247; *autpattikasūtra*, 1–6; TV on MĪSū I 3.7.

⁸³ In addition to the references given above, see primarily Halbfass (1983).

⁸⁴ See ŚV, *codanāsūtra*, 242 and 248.

religious conduct meets the norms. In fact, as a treatise on epistemology and linguistic theory, the *Tarkapāda* is nothing but an apology of the Veda and, as such, a propaedeutic to founding the norms that logically follow from the Veda.⁸⁵ It is in that sense that we must establish a closer connection than we have so far between the authorlessness of the Veda as a criterion of their authority, and the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda as a criterion of dharma.

Everyone will agree that Kumārila's thought, more than Śabara's, is mainly directed at Buddhism. As Halbfass has very acutely pointed out: "The orthodox efforts to exclude Buddhism from the domain of the true and real dharma were predominant and ultimately prevailed, and the restorative philosophy of dharma contained in the Mīmāṃsā is to a large degree an answer to the Buddhist challenge."⁸⁶ It is therefore not surprising to find Kumārila add a series of very severe critiques of the Buddha and Buddhism to his long examination, in MīSū I 3.4, of the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda.

Dharmakīrti, I believe, was very aware of the possible consequences, for Buddhism, of the "radicalization of the *vedamūlatva* principle"⁸⁷ operated by Kumārila. He was also aware of the profoundly apologetic nature of the commentary to the *Tarkapāda*. I have noted above the continuity between the authority of the Veda and the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda. As clearly stated in PV I 224, when Dharmakīrti criticizes the authorlessness of the Veda, he criticizes one of the logical reasons put forward by the Mīmāṃsaka to establish the Veda's authority. For the Veda's authority on unempirical (*adr̥ṣṭa*) matters pro-

⁸⁵ This is confirmed by the opening sentences of TV on MīSū I 2.1/II 1.14–18: *siddhapramāṇabhāvasya dharme vedasya sarvaśaḥ / vidhyarthavādamantrāṇām upayogo 'dhunocyate // sāmānyataḥ prāmāṇye siddhe 'dhunā vibhājya viniyogaḥ pratipādyate / avadhrtaprāmānyasya vā vedasyedānīm samastasya vidhyarthavādamantranām adheyātmakasya yatā vibhāgaḥ dharmam praty upayogaḥ pratipādyate /*.

⁸⁶ Halbfass (1990, 321).

⁸⁷ Halbfass (1990, 328).

vides its full legitimacy to the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda, and that it is because the Veda is authoritative that Kumārila can both refute any relativization of the norms of dharma with more intransigence than his predecessors, and justify his strict exclusion of Buddhism. In other words, ruining the notion of the authorlessness of the Veda is for Dharmakīrti to weaken the whole of Kumārila's "restorative" enterprise.

These points shall enable us to explain why, starting with Dharmakīrti and after a long period of silence on the issue, the Buddhist efforts to fight the naturalization of caste were uniformly directed against the Mīmāṃsā, even though Bhartṛhari and the Naiyāyikas,⁸⁸ for example, had made some vigorous attempts to naturalize and ontologize the class. If Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita and Prajñākaragupta reintegrate the canonical positions and arguments against caste in their polemic against the Mīmāṃsā, it is because the Mīmāṃsā, starting with Kumārila, is perceived by everyone as the philosophical expression *par excellence* of Brahmanic orthodoxy. The Mīmāṃsā, by conferring their full vedicity, and therefore also their full authority, to the juridical *Smṛtis*, *ipso facto* guarantees their normativity. For our purpose, it is moreover especially important to note that we also owe it to Kumārila to have developed, beginning with the TV, a specific argumentation in favour of the reality and direct perceptibility of class. Later Naiyāyikas will themselves often repeat that argumentation without any substantial modification.⁸⁹ Kumārila is therefore the first to support with strong philosophical arguments the social norms set by the juridical literature and that he wants to restore. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the late Buddhists integrate their arguments against the naturalization of caste to their general polemic against the Mīmāṃsā.

Dharmakīrti both formally systematizes the meta-religious evaluations of his predecessors and proposes, in the *Pramāṇa-*

⁸⁸ On this point, see Halbfass (1976) and, for Bhartṛhari, (1976, 300[28] and note 95).

⁸⁹ See section 2.4.1, p. 116, below.

siddhipariccheda, a Buddhism that is unified and reduced to its minimal axioms, i.e., to axioms that most Buddhists will accept.⁹⁰ In PVI and PV II, he first proposes (= PVI 213–217) a formal method to evaluate the different scriptures. He then (= PVI 218–340) goes into a critical examination of the criteria considered to grant their reliability to scriptures. And finally (= PV II), he offers a systematic and argued presentation of the inherent authority of the Buddha's teachings on soteriological matters. Those two chapters, I believe, first reflect a strong preoccupation with the multiplication of schools and movements that come in competition with Buddhism as such, and also a strong proselyte concern to build a unified Buddhist doctrinal identity. This had become necessary to counteract the growing institutional precarity that was certainly underway in Dharmakīrti's time.

A long transition occurs however between those two sections of PV. It consists in an analysis in 115 verses of the authorlessness of the Veda. I have sketched above a hypothesis to account for that third and final part of the *Svārthānumānapariccheda*. Its size and systematic character show alone how important it was for Dharmakīrti to provide a critique of the Mīmāṃsā's dogmatic pillar. But Dharmakīrti's intent was not limited to attacking Kumārila and the authorlessness of the Veda. Even more so, he wanted to undermine the epistemological foundation it pro-

⁹⁰ Hayes (1984, 662–663): "... Dharmakīrti ends up offering an elaborately argued apology of the central core of Buddhist doctrine, that set of doctrines accepted by nearly all Buddhist *āgamas*, whether Śrāvakāyāna, Bodhisattvayāna or Tantrayāna in orientation. It was this apologetic quality of Dharmakīrti's work, along with his attempts to justify the teachings of Buddhist scripture without explicitly citing scriptures as his authority, that provided the model for many of the subsequent generations of Buddhist intellectuals." I now (2009) consider Hayes' statement a bit too radical. Considered in detail, Dharmakīrti's buddhology is unambiguously mahāyānist. There are, moreover, reasons to believe that Dharmakīrti showed reluctance with regard to certain doctrines (natural efficacy of mantras, soteriological relevance of initiation) of the contemporaneously developing (Buddhist) esotericism (see Eltschinger 2001, 121–123 and 2008, 286).

vided to the Veda's unconditioned validity and credibility as the exclusive authority on dharma for the different social classes and stages of life (*varṇāśramadharmā*). On that hypothesis, then, Dharmakīrti primarily intends to neutralize the threat—one of many, perhaps—to the very existence and tolerability of the Buddhist community that would result from a radicalization of the principle that dharma is rooted in the Veda. Having said that, Dharmakīrti's text validates in no way that hypothesis since he focuses on the technical and theoretical aspects of the debate without ever turning to its practical implications. Is there then no justification, in Dharmakīrti, for the connexion proposed between the principles of the authorlessness of the Veda and the necessary Vedic origin of dharma? To answer that question, it is necessary to look at one of Śākyabuddhi's brief comments on PVSV 126.4–5. That comment is capital in so far as it very clearly indicates that Śākyabuddhi, for one, understood that the epistemological aspect of the Veda's authorlessness could serve to legitimize the restoration or perpetuation of a dharma of social classes (*varṇadharmā*). Let us consider that passage. The italics correspond to Śākyabuddhi's comment: "Even though the authorlessness is accepted [by the Mīmāṃsakas] because it is reliable, [*but not because it secures the Law of the (social) classes*], that [authorlessness] applies also to some belying (*visaṃvādaka*) [mundane practices] since [the latter also] are beginningless.⁹¹ Why, therefore, [speak of this] authorlessness?"⁹² Despite its neg-

⁹¹ In PV I 243 and below, Dharmakīrti rejects the claim that "every Vedic recitation is preceded by [one's] guru's Vedic recitation" (*vedasyādhyāyanaṃ sarvaṃ gurvādhyāyanapūrvakam*). ŚV, *vākyādhikaraṇa*, 366 is a justification for the authorlessness of the Veda. PV I 244–246ab are a sub-section of that critique, one which questions more specifically the claim that having no beginning (*anāditva*) is a reason for the authorlessness of the Veda. (read I 264–5)

⁹² PVSV 126.4–5: *kāmam avisaṃvādakam ity apauruṣeyatvam iṣṭam / tad visaṃvādakānām api keṣāmcid anāditvād aṣṭīti kim apauruṣeyatvena /* PVT P je 346b4–5: *de ltar na rnam pa gang gis mi slu ba'i phyir skyes bus ma byas pa nyid du 'dod kyi rigs kyi chos bsrung ba'i phyir ni ma yin na /*. There is no equivalent for this comment in Karṇakagomin.

ative formulation, the comment is fairly clear: the Mīmāṃsakas are trying to hide their social conservatism behind their epistemology. Behind the theoretical effort, Śākyabuddhi unmasks a practical interest, a socio-political motivation.⁹³ In other words, Śākyabuddhi here uncovers an effort to naturalize the hierarchical social order that the Mīmāṃsaka Brahmins believe they can derive from some non-human Veda that they take to be the sole authority on dharma and are the only ones capable of interpreting.

That important comment, it is true, only engages Śākyabuddhi. But it has the merit of exposing an explicit awareness of the presuppositions and motivations attributable to the Mīmāṃsā. A few words by Śākyabuddhi are of course not sufficient to validate a schematic hypothesis on Dharmakīrti's 107 verses and his difficult auto-commentary. They nonetheless show that the general explanation here developed is not illegitimate, for it finds its confirmation in at least one part of the tradition.

2.2 Context and problematic of Dharmakīrti's discussion

Dharmakīrti's brief discussion of the unreality of class comes in the general context of his critique of the authorlessness of the Veda propounded by the Mīmāṃsā. Its immediate context consists in an argument for the conventionality of Vedic mantras.⁹⁴ For Dharmakīrti, as we shall see, the efficiency of Vedic mantras

⁹³ The properly political dimension of the dharma of social classes is even clearer when we consider that in the normative literature, the king is responsible for enforcing the Law of classes and the stages of life. It is not therefore surprising to find that dimension in Kumārila, ŚV, *va-navāda*, 29cd: *kvacid ācārataś ca samyag rājānupālītāt* /. "Moreover, in some [places, brahmanity] can also [be determined] by the rule of conduct since it is well protected by the king."

⁹⁴ On the general question of mantras, see Gonda (1975), Alper (1989) and Padoux (1989).

comes in contradiction with the authorlessness of the Veda.⁹⁵ For him, to claim that mantras have a natural efficiency⁹⁶ (*bhā-*

⁹⁵ Dharmakīrti's discussion is problematic from the very beginning. Indeed, while it falls very well in the general context of a critique of the Mīmāṃsā, it shows a lack of understanding of the Mīmāṃsā position on mantras. In PVSV 123.15–17, Dharmakīrti presents his own definition of a mantra: *na mantrō nāmānyad eva kiṃcid / kiṃ tarhi / satyata-paḥprabhāvavatām samīhitārthasādhanaṃ vacanam /*. Now, everything tends to indicate that in the passage with which we are concerned here (= PVSV 155.18–157.28), Dharmakīrti does not in any way adjust that very general conception to the quite specific conception of the Mīmāṃsā. The latter, indeed, never isolates the mantra from the context provided by a given ritual sequence. And while for the Mīmāṃsā one will use a mantra for a precise purpose, that purpose remains strictly subordinated to the prescribed ritual act. The mantra, by itself, has no purpose or result. The realization of its purpose depends on the correct performance of a given ritual which *does* have a purpose or result. The Mīmāṃsā subdivides the Vedic corpus into mantras and *brāhmaṇas*, then into mantras on one side and religious injunctions (*vidhī*), descriptive statements (*arthavāda*) and names (*nāmadheya*) on the other. Whether they are recited, chanted or whispered, the mantras are, in theory, a verse or passage from the Ṛgveda (*ṛc*), Sāmaveda (*sāman*) or Yajurveda (*yajus*), and their choice vary with the adopted procedure (*itikartavyatā*). On this point, see Keith (1978, 79–82). In MiSū I 2.32, Śābara says of the mantras that they are indicative (*abhidhānasamartha*; Taber 1989, 149): “Indeed, the Mīmāṃsā, in its formal definition of mantra, MiSū I 2.32, is careful to specify that a mantra is what *expresses* (literally, activates) an indication of a ritual element (*abhidhānasya codaka*); it is not the indication itself. That is to say, mantras imply references to ritual details” (Taber 1989, 150). Spoken by the officiant simultaneously with the different elements constituting the ritual sequence, the mantras indicate to him, or remind him what he is doing or remains to be done in the procedure. On the mnemonic function of mantras, see Taber 1989, 161–162 note 14. Mantras, as Taber writes (1989, 149), “provide a running narrative of the rite.”

Dharmakīrti, in PVSV, devotes two passages of unequal length to mantras (PVSV 123.14–124.26 and 155.18–164.24; translated in Japanese in Omae 1989, 62–65, and Wakahara 1988, 2–21). Both passages appear in the context of the polemic against the Mīmāṃsā. Since I have discussed elsewhere (Eltschinger 2001 and 2008) the function and content of those passages, I here only give an outline of Dharmakīrti's position. As we saw above, a mantra consists in an expression (*vacana*,

vaśaktī) is to accept that mantras bestow results (*phalada*) on all their users (*prayoktr*), Brahmins and *śūdras* alike. For when the mantra's efficiency is considered to be permanent and "natural" (i.e., depending on the mantra's intrinsic nature), it cannot be limited to the three classes (*varṇa*) of the twice-born or the authorized sponsors of a sacrifice (*vajamāna*), at the exclusion of *śūdras*. Moreover, even if we abandoned the premise that the mantra is permanent and yet accepted that it is a real entity (*bhāva*), that entity will be exposed to the same law of causality as any other real entity. In order for a mantra to acquire the additional property (*atiśaya*, *viśeṣa*) of being efficient exclusively with Brahmins and their kin, its cause, here its users, will have to *really* differ from those who are excluded, and not only differ *conventionally*. In other words, the real entity called "mantra"

etc.), i.e., in a succession of phonemes (*varṇa*), revealed by a person possessing power (*prabhāvatpuruṣa*) or by a cognitively superior person (*puruṣātiśaya*). There is little doubt that for Dharmakīrti that person is identical with the author of scriptures. It is therefore a person capable of perceiving supersensible things (*atīndriyārthadarśipuruṣa*), whom Kamalaśīla identifies with the Buddha (see TSP 904.7–8 and 904.11–13 on TS 3487). That person is the author of tantras or treatises in which are formulated the ritual and/or moral prescriptions, as well as the religious observances (*vidhi*, *vidhāna*, *vrata*, etc.) to be followed by anyone who hopes to use a mantra successfully. The man who meets the conditions described therein *ipso facto* meets the conditions of the convention (*samaya*) or promise (*pratijñā*) formulated by the author of the ritual treatise. As long as the prescriptions are observed by the user (*mantraprayoktr*), the mantra is empowered (*adhiṣṭhāna*) by the person who composed the mantra (*mantrapraṇetr*). It should finally be noted that (1) some karmic considerations are present in Dharmakīrti's discussion and that, capital to an understanding of the general structure of PV I 224ff, (2) the two passages constitute proofs of the existence of cognitively superior persons, i.e., in the final analysis, of the strictly human character of the scripture (*āgamapauruṣeyatā*).

⁹⁶ I freely translate *bhāvaśakti* as "natural efficiency." PVT P 23b3 = PVSVT 553.27 glosses: *bhāvaśaktiḥ śabdavabhāvasyaiva... śaktiḥ*. "*bhāvaśakti* refers to the efficiency belonging to the nature of [verbal] sounds [that constitute the mantra]." *bhāvaśakti* is therefore the essential or intrinsic capacity of the mantra.

will only acquire differentiated properties if Brahmins and *śūdras*, like cows and horses, belong to different classes.⁹⁷ If, on the other hand, the difference of class (*jātibheda*) is only due to worldly usage and social conventions (*lokavyavahāra*), Brahmins and *śūdras* will equally benefit from the mantra's efficiency (as long as the mantra's efficiency depends on the entity itself and not, as Dharmakīrti holds, on a wish or convention established by the author of the mantra).

The underlying context of this argument is to be found in the absolute prohibition for *śūdras* to use mantras or have access to the Veda. That prohibition, like the exclusion of *śūdras* from the initiation (*upanayana*) sacrament (*saṃskāra*) and, therefore, from the condition of the twice-born (*dvija*), is repeated in all the dharma literature, including of course the Mīmāṃsā. However liberal the different legislators may have been in allowing *śūdras* to access Vedic rituals and sacraments other than the initiation sacrament, all were equally intransigent about the Veda itself, i.e., about the memorization, recitation, muttering (*japa*) or hearing of mantras.

In MS X 126, for example, *śūdras* are precluded from accessing sacraments and disqualified from dharma.⁹⁸ *Laghuviṣṇu* I 15 says of the fourth class, the class of the *śūdras*, that it is "excluded from all sacraments"⁹⁹ (*sarvasaṃskāravārjita*). Śaṅkha, Vedavyāsa and Haradatta allow *śūdras* to access some sacraments, but under the significant condition that no Vedic mantra be used.¹⁰⁰ So even if some authors are more liberal than others, *śūdras* remain excluded from the initiation. According to Śabara commenting on MiSū VI 1.33, the Veda only speaks of the initiation of the three superior classes: Brahmins receive the initia-

⁹⁷ As we noted above, Dharmakīrti does not accept the reality of classes. Here he only provisionally does so. See section 2.1.2.1, p. 85, above and section 2.3.2, p. 107, below.

⁹⁸ See Kane (1974, 158). For nuances based on MS IV 80, see Kane (1974, 159).

⁹⁹ See Kane (1974, 159 and note 372).

¹⁰⁰ See Kane (1974, 159).

tion in the spring, *kṣatriyas* in the summer and *vaiśyas* in the fall. But in being forbidden from receiving the initiation, *śūdras* are excluded also from studying and from all contact with the Veda, in whatever form. Hence *Vasiṣṭha* XVIII 13 proscribes the recitation or memorization of the Veda near a *śūdra* (*śūdrasamīpe*).¹⁰¹ *Gautama* XII 4 in fact describes several punishments awaiting the *śūdra* according to the degree to which he may come in contact with the Veda. If he intentionally listens to the Veda, the *śūdra* will have his ears filled with tin or lac (*trapujatubhyāṃ śrotrapūraṇam*). If he pronounces a portion of the Veda, his tongue will be cut (*jihvāccheda*). If he learns the Veda, he will be put to death (*śarīrabheda*).¹⁰² In *MiSū* VI 1.35, Śābara also forbids *śūdras* to study the Veda.¹⁰³ In *MiSū* I 3.2, he in fact specifies that contact with the Veda is restricted to the three superior classes.¹⁰⁴ Any contact with the Veda being forbidden to the *śūdra*, he can however listen to the narrative literature (*itihāsa*) such as the *Mahābhārata*, as well as to the *Purāṇas*. A passage from the *Mahābhārata* in fact seems to allow the four classes to access the epic, which will nonetheless preferably be recited by a Brahmin.¹⁰⁵ Along those lines, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* declares that the Veda (*trayī*) cannot be heard by women, *śūdras* and those who pretend to be Brahmins (*dvijabandhu*), and explains that this is the reason why the sage Vyāsa, out of compassion, composed the *Mahābhārata*.

¹⁰¹ See Kane (1974, 154 and note 358). The prohibition is found in the ŚBh on *MiSū* VI 1.38.

¹⁰² See Kane (1974, 155 and note 361).

¹⁰³ ŚBh VI 1.35/V 213.3–5: *tasmād vedādhyayane brāhmaṇādayaḥ śrutāḥ / śūdrasya na śrutam vedādhyayanam / ato 'vedatvād asamarthaḥ śūdro nādhikriyata iti* /. See Verpoorten (1987, 25).

¹⁰⁴ ŚBh I 3.2/II 77.4–5: *tenopapanno vedasamyogas traivarnikānām* /. See also *Praśastapādabhāṣya* §311: *brāhmaṇakṣatriyavaiśyānām ijjādhyayanadānāni* /.

¹⁰⁵ *Mahābhārata* XII 328.49; see Kane (1974, 155 and note 362).

It is easy to understand, under such conditions, that the *śūdra* is prohibited from any contact with Vedic mantras.¹⁰⁶ According to MS X 127, any rite performed for a *śūdra* is done without Vedic mantras, except for the mantra *namaḥ*, the only authorized exception. While the *śūdra* is allowed to think about the divinity, about Agni for example, and to pronounce that mantra, he is not allowed to say: “May a blessing rest on Agni” (*agnaye svāhā*).¹⁰⁷ According to Aparārka commenting on MS IV 80, the *śūdras* may perform religious observances (*vrata*), but exclusively through a Brahmin, and so long as no muttering prayers are used and no oblations (*homa*) are offered to the gods. *Atri* XIX 137 even lists the practice of mantras among the six mortal sins for women and *śūdras*, and requires their execution by the king in case of a violation of the interdict.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, *śūdras* are authorized to recite some non-Vedic mantras, the Purāṇic mantras, for example.¹⁰⁹

When we turn to Dharmakīrti, we find that the argument developed at PVSV 155.18–157.28 may be divided in three parts.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ See Gonda (1975, 261). The *Praśastapādabhāṣya* §311 authorizes the *śūdra* to involve in ritual activities devoid of mantras (*śūdrasya... amantrikāś ca kriyāḥ*).

¹⁰⁷ See Kane (1974, 158 and note 371).

¹⁰⁸ See Kane (1974, 119 and note 258).

¹⁰⁹ See Kane (1974, 156) and Gonda (1975, 264–265).

¹¹⁰ According to Śākyabuddhi (PVT P *ñe* 23a3) and Kaṇvakagomin (PVSVT 553.12), the position here defended by Dharmakīrti follows from the proposition that if, or because, some Vedic expressions are mantras, (then) they have a human origin, i.e., they depend on the convention or promise established by a person possessing power. In other words, mantras will be productive as long as they are conventional. In PVSV 155.26–156.22, Dharmakīrti elaborates a twofold argumentative strategy to show that authorless expressions could never be mantras. Each of those two strategies is in turn composed of two parts.

As he had done in his critique of the permanence of sound (*śabdanityatā*), Dharmakīrti plays in his first series of arguments (= PVSV 155.26–156.10) on the Mīmāṃsaka dialectic stating that words are phonemes (*varṇa*) in a specific order (*krama*). For his opponent (= PVSV 155.27–28), the fact that the mantra bears results is due solely to the intrinsic

nature of the entity (*bhāvasvabhāva*), i.e., solely to the mantra's phonemes according to Śākyabuddhi and Kaṇvakagomin. Dharmakīrti's answer (= PVSV 155.28–156.2) follows from the principle that enables him to assert on various occasions, in the footsteps of Dharmapāla, that if words are only phonemes, then the words *rasaḥ* (taste) and *saraḥ* (lake, pool), since they are made of the same phonetic components, will refer to the same object. But this is obviously false (see *Guāng bǎi lùn shì lùn*, chap. V (223b6), on CŚ XIII; Tillemans (1990, I, 140–141) and (1990, I, 250 note 230); PVSV 119.14–16 on PV I 238, where, in addition to PV I 301 and according to Śākyabuddhi and Kaṇvakagomin, the issue is implicit). Furthermore, if mantras are nothing but phonemes and if their productivity is due solely to their nature, they will bear results independently of the prescriptions on how to use them, regardless of the order in which the atomic phonemes that constitute the nature of mantras are produced. And this is also obviously false. In his critique of the second objection (= PVSV 156.2–3), according to which the mantra consists in phonemes that follow a determined order and not in phonemes only, Dharmakīrti arrives at the same conclusion (PV I 293ab and PVSV 156.5–7) since, referring once again to some of his prior arguments (notably to PV I 259), he rejects the claim that the phonemes' order is something different (*arthāntara*) from the phonemes.

In the second strategy (= PVSV 156.10–22), Dharmakīrti moves the discussion to the area of causality, his favourite subject against the eternalist Mīmāṃsā, where the problematic of caste will also reappear. Here again, Dharmakīrti adopts the structure and conclusion of the previous discussions against the word's semantic capacity (*śabdaśakti*), the permanence of sound (*śabdānityatā*) and the *sphoṭa* (the non-phonetic element that, according to Sanskrit grammarians, functions as the meaning bearer of a word or sentence). If one holds that it is part of a mantra's nature to be the *cause* of a benefit (*arthahetu*) for the person using it, then productivity is a defining characteristic of the mantra. But if the mantra is permanent (*nitya*) because it has not been produced (*akṛtaka*), it will follow from the fact that it exists permanently, that the mantra will bear its results (*arthasiddhi*) permanently (*nityam*).

Against an opponent arguing (= PVSV 156.16–17) that the productivity of a mantra depends on rules (*vidhānāpekṣa*) and that the mere fact of using a mantra (*mantraprayoga*) cannot be its only cause, Dharmakīrti (= PV I 293d and PVSV 156.19–22) reiterates the principle according to which a permanent entity cannot be provided with an additional property (*anādheyātīśaya*) by a cooperating cause (*sahakārin*) that is

And in the last part, PVSV 156.23–157.28, he demonstrates that the Mīmāṃsaka postulate about the Veda having no human author, and therefore also the postulate about the natural efficiency of Vedic mantras, have for their necessary consequence that Vedic mantras must bestow results on *all* humans without exception, including *sūdras*.

In so doing, Dharmakīrti may be developing two ancient Buddhist literary themes, one belonging to the *Bhūridattajātaka*, the other to the *Assalāyana Sutta*. For already in the *Bhūridattajātaka*, we find an interrogation as to why non-Brahmins are excluded from the recitation of Vedic mantras. According to that *Jātaka*, Brahmins believe that Brahma (here: *vasin*) created this world in such a way that Brahmins (*ariya*) would dedicate their lives to study (*ajjhena*), *kṣatriyas* (here: *jan'inda*) to control of the land (*paṭhavi*), *vaiśyas* to agriculture (*kaśi*) and *sūdras* to serving (*pāricariya*).¹¹¹ Subhoga's interlocutor is first worried that, if this were the case, no non-Brahmin (*abrāhmaṇa*) could learn the mantras' verses (*mantapada*).¹¹² Later on, however, he affirms that a *caṇḍāla* (*caṇḍālaputta*) could also speak the mantras after having learned the Veda (*adhicca vede*), as long of

part of a causal process, since it does not depend on anything (*anapekṣa*). If the entity were to receive an additional property by the cooperating cause that is here the rules, that entity would depend on that cause and would *ipso facto* lose its permanence. Dharmakīrti can therefore conclude (PVSV 156.21–22): ... *ity anapekṣāḥ sadā kuryur na vā kadācid anatiśayāt* /. "It follows from this that [since they] depend on nothing, [mantras] should either produce [their effect] permanently [if they are efficient by nature], or [they should] never [produce it] since, [if they are inefficient by nature, they can] not, [in so far as they are permanent, receive] the additional property [that would enable them to produce their effect]."

¹¹¹ *Bhūridattajātaka*, verse 150: *ajjhenam ariyā, paṭhaviṃ jan'indā, vessā kaṣiṃ pāricariyaṃ ca suddā upāgu paccekā yathāpadesaṃ: katāhu ete vasinā ti āhu*. Translated in Alsdorf (1977, 51).

¹¹² *Bhūridattajātaka*, verse 151: *etaṃ ca saccaṃ vacanaṃ bhaveyya yathā idaṃ bhāsitaṃ brāhmaṇehi, nākhattiyo jātu labhetha rajjaṃ, nābrāhmaṇo mantapadāni sikkhe, nāññatra vessehi kaṣiṃ kareyya, suddo na muñce parapessitāya*. Translated in Alsdorf (1977, 51).

course as his intelligence would allow him to do so. And his head would not split in seven parts as a result.... The text finally questions why the recitation of Vedic mantras by non-Brahmins should lead them to commit suicide (*attavadha*).¹¹³

Now while the content of the *Bhūridattajātaka* offers a precedent to Dharmakīrti's argument, the *Assalāyana Sutta* is one of its distant ancestors in terms of its *structure* and conclusion. The Buddha there tells the following story. A king assembles one hundred men of various social origins and first asks those among them who are of higher extraction (i.e., of *kṣatriya*, Brahmin and royal extractions) to light a fire using noble woods in order to produce heat. The king then also asks those among them who are of low extraction (*caṇḍālakula*, *nesādakula*, *veṇakula*, *rathakāra-kula*, *pukkusakula*) to light a fire to produce heat, but this time using vile materials.¹¹⁴ The Buddha then asks Assalāyana if one of the two fires will be more radiant and have more flames than the other, and if one fire will better fulfil the function of fire (*aggi-karaṇīya*).¹¹⁵ To both questions, Assalāyana gives a negative answer.¹¹⁶ The conclusion to this argument therefore goes as follows: whatever difference of appearance there may be between the two causes (men and fuel) of each fire, none of the fires are different in their nature, nor in their function.

¹¹³ *Bhūridattajātaka*, verse 177: *caṇḍālaputto pi adhicca vede bhāseyya mante kusalo mutimā, na tassa muddhā pi phaleyya sattadhā – mantā ime attavadhāya katto?* Translated in Alsdorf (1977, 54).

¹¹⁴ AgS, M.N. II 151–152. Translated in Rhys Davids (1969, 344).

¹¹⁵ AgS, M.N. II 152. Translated in Rhys Davids (1969, 344–345).

¹¹⁶ AgS, M.N. II 152–153. Translated in Rhys Davids (1969, 345).

2.3 Dharmakīrti against the class (*jāti*)

2.3.1 Immediate context

As I have already indicated, Dharmakīrti's treatment of caste appears in the immediate context (= PVSV 156.23–157.28, including PVI 294–296ac) of a discussion that essentially deals with problems of causality. Straightaway, Dharmakīrti asserts, in PVI 294ab, that "if the natural efficiency [of mantras] were as [you describe], those [mantras] would be for everyone a means of attaining (*sādhana*) [a desired result]."¹¹⁷ Dharmakīrti therefore begins his critique of caste by attacking the prohibitive use of Vedic mantras affecting *śūdras*. Central to his argument is the opponent's notion of a natural efficiency that would be permanent and, consequently, immune from the intervention of man as a cooperating cause of the mantra's efficiency. At this stage, Dharmakīrti thus reproduces the schema according to which no additional property may be added to permanent mantras to account for their productivity. In so far as they are permanent and independent, mantras cannot, therefore, be subjected to any human conditioning (*saṃskāra*) that would result in their being effective for the authorized sponsors of sacrifices (*yajamāna*), but ineffective for *śūdras* or *caṇḍālas*. Dharmakīrti very clearly asserts that the mantra's productive essence does not disappear with the *śūdra* anymore than it increases with the Brahmin or the authorized sponsors of sacrifices,¹¹⁸ "for the causality [of mantras] is not [in any way] linked to a certain [person at the expense of another]."¹¹⁹ In other words, in so far as no coopera-

¹¹⁷ PVI 294ab: *sarvasya sādhanam te syur bhāvaśaktir yadidrśī* /. Commentators disagree in their explanations of the word *idrśī*. PVT P 11e 25b2: *gal te dngos nus te 'dra na zhes bya ba skyes bu'i byed pa la bltos pa med pa'i rang bzhin nyid rang gi 'bras bu sgrub par nus pa yin na*; PVSVT 556.12: *saṃayanirapekṣā yadidrśī*; PVV 396.20: *idrśī kāryaviśeṣasādhikā*.

¹¹⁸ PVSV 156.27–157.1: *tasya tenānapakarṣaṇād anyena cānutkarṣaṇāt* /.

¹¹⁹ PVSV 157.1: *kenacit saha kāryakāraṇabhāvāyogāt* /.

tion is possible in the form of a human conditioning, the permanent character of a mantra's natural efficiency cannot be modified to introduce a differentiation in its productivity. As Dharmakīrti will later say, such a differentiation can only be justified under the strict condition that the mantra be a human convention with restrictions as to its usage and field of application.¹²⁰

In the remaining part of his argument, Dharmakīrti abandons the premise that the mantra is permanent and addresses the problem from the perspective of the causality of real entities (*bhāva*). This is the approach used in his terse verse I 295: "[But since] even for an entity that can be conditioned, [such as an impermanent mantra, only] a [real] difference in the causes¹²¹ is differentiating, [the purely conventional¹²²] difference among [Brahmin and *sūdra*] users [can]not restrict the [mantra's] efficiency.

¹²⁰ See PVSV 157.20–22: *yadā tu samayād ebhyaḥ phalaṃ tadāyam adoṣaḥ / samayakārasya ruceḥ phalotpattiniyamāt /*. This is also what Kāṇakagomin is saying (PVSVT 557.11–13) when commenting on PV I 295d: *samaye bhavet / yadā samayo mantras tadā samayasya kartā vastusva-bhāvānapekṣaḥ samayaṃ karoti / yathā loke ye brāhmaṇāḥ prasiddhās tebhya eva prayoktrbhyaḥ phalaṃ dāsyāmi nānyebhya iti syāt samayaḥ /*. Compare with PVT P 126a7–8. On this kind of *samaya*, see Eltschinger (2001, 22–27) and Eltschinger (2008, 275–276).

¹²¹ PVT P 126a5 = PVSVT 556.26: *vastubhedo hi kāraṇabhedaḥ*. On the use of the word *vastu* in the sense of "cause," see AK II 286–287, where the fourth sense of *vastu* is *hetu*.

¹²² According to PVSVT 556.27–28: *na ca brāhmaṇasūdrādīnāṃ svabhāva-bhedah paramārthatō 'sti / kevalaṃ lokavyavahārakṛto viprasūdrādī-bhedah / tena lokavyavahārabhinnānāṃ prayoktṛtṇāṃ bhedaḥ... Compare with Śākyabuddhi's introduction to PV I 295 (PVT P 126a3–5): gzhan yang 'di ni bram ze yin la 'di ni dmangs rigs yin no zhes bya ba'i khyad par 'di ni 'jig rten gyi tha snyad tsam du byas pa yin gyi / bram ze la sogs pa'i blo'i dbang po la sogs pa la bram ze nyid la sogs par byas pa don dam pa'i khyad par ni yod pa ma yin no // de bas na brda tsam du byas pa yin pa'i phyir / bram ze la sogs pa sbyor ba po'i khyad par 'bras bu'i dngos po'i khyad par yang rigs pa ma yin no //*

[But such a restriction] might occur in a convention [i.e., in a promise on the part of the one who reveals the mantra]."¹²³

Since real entities acquire additional properties through their causes, they will only behave differently if there is a difference in the nature of their causes. The discussion that follows verse I 295 is therefore based on the principle that no difference in the effect is justified without a difference in the cause. For our purpose, a differentiation in the productivity of a mantra will only be justified if, as persons who may benefit from using a mantra, the authorized sponsors of sacrifices and the *śūdras* have distinct modes of being. In other words, both in Dharmakīrti and in the argument about fire that occurs in the AgS, the problem of caste is reduced to the question of determining whether the effects—the functions of fire or the results of mantras—vary if their causes are Brahmins or *śūdras*. And let it be clear that those effects will vary only if there is a *real* difference in their causes, but will remain strictly identical if that difference is merely *nominal* or conventional.

Now, Dharmakīrti's position is clear on this point: "Consequently, even as products (*kārya*), those mantras that bestow the [expected] results due to an additional property of their nature (*svabhāvātīśaya*) should [never act] differently even when they are used by *śūdras*, etc., because there is no difference, [whether in thought, sense faculties or body],¹²⁴ in the nature of the two men named [respectively] '*śūdra*' and '*Brahmin*.'"¹²⁵ An opponent may argue that in addition to making a nominal distinction between the *śūdra* and the Brahmin, people also have different attitudes toward those two alleged types of humans,

¹²³ PV I 295: *saṃskāryasya hi bhāvasya vastubhedo hi bhedakah / prayok-
tr̥bhedaṇ niyamaḥ śaktau na samaye bhavet //*.

¹²⁴ PVT P ñe 26b6 = PVSVT 557.22–23: *puruṣayos taylor buddhīndriyade-
heṣu svabhāvabhedābhāvāt /*.

¹²⁵ PVSV 157.9–11: *tad ime mantrāḥ svabhāvātīśayāt phaladāyinaḥ kāryā
api na śūdrādiprayoge 'py anyathā syuḥ / śūdraviprābhīdhānayoḥ puru-
ṣayoḥ svabhāvābhedāt /*.

respectively disdain and respect.¹²⁶ To this, Dharmakīrti replies: "[Real] things, which [only] comply with differences in nature, are indeed not [made to behave] differently by nominal or conventional differences that [merely] conform to human arbitrariness."¹²⁷ In referring to the prevalent antinomy between intrinsic nature and human arbitrariness, Dharmakīrti here anticipates on the distinction that he will later make in his argument between the domain of direct perception and the domain of conventions. That opposition is at the core of his philosophy, which is marked by the constant conceptual interplay between perception (*pratyakṣa*), the particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the real thing (*vastu*) on one side, and conventions (*saṅketa*, *samaya*), instruction (*upadeśa*) and the speaker's intention (*vivakṣā*) on the other. Involved in this opposition are concepts close to those of necessity and contingency. But it also embraces the classical Buddhist antinomies between substantially real (*dravyasat*) and nominally real (*prajñaptisat*), or between ultimately real (*paramārthasat*) and conventionally real (*saṃvṛtisat*). I will say more on those oppositions below.

We know at this point that for Dharmakīrti, nothing in their intrinsic nature distinguishes those people that are called "Brahmins" from those that are called "*sūdras*," and that those designations ultimately issue from social conventions and human arbitrariness. As was the case in the "canonical" literature, Dharmakīrti's task is now to develop an argumentation that will both address the naturalization of those statutory divisions and account for their existence as a social fact. Dharmakīrti meets that double obligation in a short passage¹²⁸ (= PVSV 157.13–18) intended to answer the following objection: "Between those two,

¹²⁶ PVT P ñe 26b7–8 ≈ PVSVT 557.25–26: *nanv ayaṃ brāhmaṇo 'yaṃ sūdra iti loke nāmabhedo 'sti / tathā sammānādivyavahārabhedaś ca / tataḥ svabhāvabhedo 'vasīyata iti cet /*

¹²⁷ PVSV 157.11–13: *na hi puruṣecchānūvidhāyino nānavyavahārabhedāt svabhāvabhedānubandhinām arthānām anyathātvam asti /*

¹²⁸ That passage has been translated by Ono (1993, 45 note 317).

[the Brahmin and the *śūdra*], there exists a [real] difference of class (*jātibheda*)."¹²⁹

2.3.2 The argument

We have seen already that Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin immediately correlate Dharmakīrti's position (at PVSV 157.13–16) with the refutation of universals (*sāmānyaniṣedha*), as it occurs in the section of PV dealing with conceptual exclusion. For them, despite the fact that the class has already been refuted, its principle is here provisionally admitted in order to show to the opponent that even if the reality of classes and universals were accepted, the social distinctions associated with denominations would have no ontological basis.¹³⁰ If a class existed, says Dharmakīrti, it would share with its individual instantiations three differentiating characteristics: "Indeed, this [difference of class] is observed when, as in the case of cows and horses, [there is in each individual of each class] a [shared] difference [pertaining to] specific form, property and function (*ākṛtiguṇaśaktibheda*)."¹³¹ Let us recall that the expression "specific form" (*ākṛti*) appeared in the arguments of the VSū, the ŚKA and the KDAM, together with "configuration" (*saṃsthāna*) and "external physical aspect" (*ākāra*), where it corresponded to one of the class discriminants (*liṅga, viśeṣaṇa*) examined and rejected by those texts.¹³² It is therefore not surprising to find Karṇakagomin gloss "specific form" by "configuration," an identification that had been very vigorously criticized by Kumārila in his ŚV and TV.¹³³ But ac-

¹²⁹ PVSV 157.13: *tayor jātibheda iti cet /*.

¹³⁰ PVT P *ñe* 27a3–4 ≈ PVSVT 558.3–5: *sāmānyaniṣedhān niṣiddhaiva jātiḥ / kevalam abhyupagamyocyate / sa khalu bhavann api jātibhedas tri-dheṣṭaḥ [dṛṣṭaḥ PVT] / ākṛtiguṇaśaktibhede sati /*.

¹³¹ PVSV 157.13–14: *sa khalv ākṛtiguṇaśaktibhede dṛṣṭo gavāśvavat*.

¹³² See section 1.2, p. 17, above. See also Halbfass (1976, 294[22]–295[23] and 295[23] note 71).

¹³³ See ŚV, *vanavāda*, 16ff together with NRĀ 438.1–3; TV on MiSū I 3.30/ II 237.8ff together with *Nyāyasudhā* on TV on MiSū I 3.30/I 645.23–24.

according to Śākyabuddhi and Kaṇvakagomin, a shared difference pertaining to specific form occurs in every individual cow while it is absent from all individual horses.¹³⁴ And the shared difference pertaining to property occurs also in all individuals instantiating a given class (*saṁānajātīyāsu vyaktiṣv anugāmī*), for example the difference pertaining to the (strength of) taste and degree of cooking of their milk or flesh (PVT *māṃsa*).¹³⁵ The shared difference pertaining to function is finally defined by Kaṇvakagomin as the capacity to produce an effect that corre-

Someśvara attributes to Akṣapādādi the position according to which the word *ākṛti* refers to the configuration. Śāntarakṣita, in his *Vipañcī-tārthā* on the *Vādanyāya* (reference in Halbfass 1992, 112), seems to know and criticize that Naiyāyika position. In his *Mahābhāṣyadīpikā* (IV 3.7–9), Bhartṛhari also criticizes that identification when he writes: *ākṛtir iti na tat saṁsthānam*. On the Naiyāyika (Uddyotakara, Aviddhakarṇa, Śrīdhara, Vyomaśiva, etc.) version of substance (*dravya*) as mere configuration (*saṁsthānamātra*), see Halbfass (1992, 103–105). On the Buddhist side, the Vaibhāṣikas hold that visibles (*rūpa* = *cakṣurindriya-viṣaya*) consist in colour (*varṇa*) and configuration (*saṁsthāna*). See the Sautrāntika critique of that position in AK I 10 and IV 3, as well as Matilal (1986, 250–254). On specific form as a sign of class (*jātiliṅga*), see Biardeau (1964, 176 notes 1–2). On the definition of specific form as a sign of class in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*, see Oberhammer (1991) s.v. *ākṛti*.

¹³⁴ PVT P ñe 27a5: *de la dbyibs kyi khyad par ste de ni gsal ba po'i khyad par dang ldan pa'i ba lang dag la rjes su 'gro ba yod kyi rta'i gsal ba dag la ni ma yin no* //. PVSVT 558.5–6: *tatrākṛtibhedah saṁsthānaviśeṣaḥ sa prativyakti bhedavatiṣv api goṣv anugāmī vidyate / nāsvavyaktiṣu* /. Śākyabuddhi says: **vyañjakaviśeṣayukteṣu goṣu*. Kumārila, in ŚV, *vanavāda*, 4–5, declares: *na caite vyañjakās tasya guṇavad vā viśeṣaṇam / tathā hi nāgrhiteṣu teṣu syād gotvabodhanam* // *teṣāṃ ca vyañjakaiḥ svaiḥ syāt punar grahaṇakalpanā / tathā saty anavasthā syān na syād gotvādvadhāraṇam* //. According to Pārthasārathimīśra, the position criticized by Kumārila is that of the Kāśyapīyas, i.e., the Vaiśeṣikas.

¹³⁵ PVT P ñe 27a5–6 ≈ PVSVT 558.7–8: *guṇabhedah kṣīrādīnām rasavīrya-vipākādibhedena / sa ca saṁānajātīyāsu vyaktiṣv anugāmī drṣṭo na vijā-tīyāsu* /. PVT with no equivalent for *vīrya*.

sponds to each of them. Thus cows share the capacity of being milked, contrary to horses.¹³⁶

Already at this stage of the argument, Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin are quick to draw the following conclusion: "Consequently, since in this way [shared] differences pertaining to specific form, etc., are observed to co-occur in the individuals belonging to the same class, we may accept a class difference between cows and horses. On the contrary, no [shared] difference pertaining to specific form, etc., is strictly limited to Brahmins, etc., so that one could posit a difference of class [between them]."¹³⁷ Dharmakīrti's initial approach is therefore similar to that of the biological arguments on animal and vegetal species developed in the texts analyzed previously. Contrary to animal, vegetal or mineral species, no differentiating feature or class discriminant can justify the division of human individuals into classes, so that all individual Brahmins would instantiate the universal "brahmanity" and all individual *śūdras* would instantiate the universal "śūdrahood" (*śūdratva*).

Dharmakīrti's argumentation does not stop here, however, for he goes into a critique of the position that was only apparent in the texts examined in the first chapter, namely, the position defended by the Mīmāṃsā, the Vaiśeṣika and the Nyāya on the perceptibility of classes and universals. He writes: "Moreover, people recognize (*prati√PAD*) the [difference of class] independently of [all] teaching (*anupadeśam*)."¹³⁸ According to Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin,¹³⁹ this must be interpreted to mean that

¹³⁶ PVSVT 558.9–10: *śaktibhedo 'nurūpakāryasāmarthyalakṣaṇaḥ / yathā gavāṃ dohādisāmarthyam nāśvānām /* PVT P *ñe* 27a6–7 with no equivalent for *anurūpa*.

¹³⁷ PVT P *ñe* 27a7–27b1 ≈ PVSVT 558.9–11: *tad evaṃ samānajātīyavyakty-anugāminām ākrtyādibhedānām upalambhāt kāmaṃ gavāśvādiṣv astu jātibhedo naivaṃ brāhmaṇādiṣu pratiniyata ākrtyādibhedo 'sti yena jātibhedāḥ kalpyeta /*

¹³⁸ PVSV 157.14: *anupadeśaṃ cainaṃ lokaḥ pratipadyate /*

¹³⁹ PVT P *ñe* 27b1–2 ≈ PVSVT 558.11–13: *sakṛc ca gavādiṣu (gavāśvādiṣu PVT) vyutpanno deśakālādibhede 'py anupadeśam ity upadeśam antare-*

any human, *regardless of the place and time in which he lives*, can *immediately* (*sakṛt*) distinguish a cow from a horse, and express that distinction. A foreigner, however, *unless he is first instructed in the matter*, cannot *immediately* recognize a Brahmin or a *śūdra* and say: "this man is a Brahmin" or "this man is a *śūdra*."

Dharmakīrti then draws his conclusion: "We do not see any property that is strictly limited (*vinīyata*) to those two as is the case for [cows and horses]. And [since] we do not see it, how could we recognize that difference?"¹⁴⁰ We have seen already that many of the VSū's arguments concluded with a comment to the effect that brahmanity is uncertain (*aniścita/aniyata*). Before reaching that conclusion, its author had shown that factors such as the Veda, knowledge (*jñāna*), conduct (*ācāra*) or activity (*karman*) were not the exclusive signs or discriminants of brahmanity since they were shared, for example, by Rāvaṇa the demon, *śūdras*, fishermen and *vaiśyas* respectively.¹⁴¹ When we follow Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin's presentation,¹⁴² we find that Dharmakīrti's approach was the same. According to them, we must understand by a "property strictly limited to those two," a property that belongs or is constantly present only among the individuals of a same class. For them, moreover, when Dharmakīrti rejects the existence of all properties that would be strictly limited to the individuals instantiating a given class, he means to say that all criteria are fallacious (*vyabhicārin*). And this means that no property alleged to characterize the Brahmins or other similar instances, is not also found among the *śūdras* or other

ñainam jātibhedam lokāḥ pratipadyate / ayam gaur ayam aśva iti / nainam brāhmaṇādibhedam anupadeśam pratipadyate /

¹⁴⁰ PVSV 157.15–16: *na tadvad anayoḥ kaṃcid api guṇam viniyatam paśyāmaḥ / apaśyantaś ca katham bhedam pratipadyemahi /*

¹⁴¹ See note 76, p. 30, above.

¹⁴² PVT P ñe 27b3–5 = PVSVT 558.14–17: *na... anayor brāhmaṇaśūdrayoḥ kaṃcid api guṇam viniyatam samānajātīyāsv eva vyaktiṣu sthitam paśyāmaḥ / guṇagrahaṇam upalakṣaṇam / evam ākṛtibhedam śaktibhedam ca viniyatam na paśyāmaḥ / apaśyantaś cākṛtyādibhedam katham śūdraviprayor jātibhedam pratipadyemahi / naiveti yāvat /*

dissimilar instances. Dharmakīrti's argument may in fact be reformulated in logical terms: no concomitance (*niyama* or *vyāpti*) is found between the proposed specifying criteria and the instances that they should specify. That approach clearly parallels the one that guided and inspired the VSū, ŚKA and KDAM. For in order to accept, even provisionally, the reality of a class like brahmanity, Dharmakīrti required that a threefold difference of specific form, property and function be observed. Although he did not give any example of what those terms could refer to, this enabled Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin to argue,¹⁴³ based on several elements of a discussion found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*,¹⁴⁴ that neither the recitation of the Veda, nor the daily purificatory rites (*śaucācāra*),¹⁴⁵ which I take to be examples of functions and properties, are present in all Brahmins without ever being present in the *śūdras*. As for the difference of form, the "early" literature had already spoken of specific form, configuration and external physical aspect, and Karṇakagomin had glossed "specific form" by "configuration." In looking for an example of a specific form, both commentators thus assert that there is not, among Brahmins, any shared difference pertaining to their external physical aspect,¹⁴⁶ such as all having

¹⁴³ PVT P ñe 27b5–6 = PVSVT 558.17–19: *tathā hy adhyayanaśaucācārādi-viśeṣaḥ sarvo vyabhicārī / yaś ca gaurapiṅgalakeśatvādilakṣaṇa ākāra-bhedaḥ kalpyate sa brāhmaṇeṣv api keṣucin nāsti / śūdreṣu ca vidyate keṣucit /*.

¹⁴⁴ *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini II 2.6 (*nañ*), vol. 1, p. 411: *tapāḥ śrutam ca yonīś cety etad brāhmaṇakārakam / tapaḥśrutābhyām yo hīno jātibrahmaṇa eva saḥ // tathā gaurāḥ śucyācārāḥ piṅgalāḥ kapilakeśa ity etān apy abhyantarān brāhmaṇye guṇān kurvanti /*. On that passage, see the discussion in Halbfass (1976, 281[9]–282[10]).

¹⁴⁵ Note that in a different context, Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin define purity (*śauca*) as follows (PVT P ñe 45b1–2 = PVSVT 578.21–22): *śaucam dvividham / bāhyam āntaram ca / bāhyam snānādi / āntaram steyādinivṛttiḥ /*. "Purity is of two kinds, external and internal. External, it consists in the ablutions, etc; internal, it consists in abstaining from theft, etc."

¹⁴⁶ Again in a different context, Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin give to the physical aspect (*ākāra*) the Abhidharmic definition of the visible

a clear complexion (*gaura*) and reddish-brown hair (*piṅgalakeśa*). For those physical features can be found in some *śūdras*, while they are absent in some Brahmins.¹⁴⁷

Let us summarize those four lines from Dharmakīrti in light of Śākyabuddhi's and Kaṇvakagomin's comments. Dharmakīrti subordinates the acceptance of a difference of class to the observation of a threefold shared difference pertaining to specific form, property and function in the individuals alleged to instantiate each class. That condition, however, is necessary but not sufficient, for according to Dharmakīrti, it entails a corollary condition requiring that this difference be known independently of any instruction. The first necessary condition is not met, however, since no discriminating factor is indeed strictly limited to all individuals of a given class at the exclusion of all those of another class. Each factor is therefore fallacious. Since that condition is not met, Dharmakīrti does not seem to consider it useful, in that context, to criticize the thesis of the direct perceptibility of classes as it is implied by the problem of education. We will see below¹⁴⁸ that this task was taken up mainly by Prajñākaragupta, in the context of a discussion of caste. We will also see¹⁴⁹ that for Dharmakīrti, to negate that the class can be apprehended without instruction is to assert its strict conventionality.

2.3.3 Explanation

After developing his argumentation against a realist ontology of classes and class differences (*jātibheda*), Dharmakīrti needed to describe and explain the empirical social situation that caused

(*rūpa*); PVT P je 471b1–2 = PVSVT 580.20–21: *ākāro varṇasamsthānādīḥ* /. "[By] external physical aspect [we mean] the colour, configuration, etc."

¹⁴⁷ The argument is reminiscent of a long modern debate based on contradictory anthropological data, an interesting example of which is found in Bouglé (1993, 106–114).

¹⁴⁸ See section 2.4.3, p. 127, below.

¹⁴⁹ See section 2.4.2, p. 123, below.

disagreement. And on this point, his position is in perfect continuity with the classical Buddhist explanations. For him, as well as for Śākyabuddhi and Kaṇvakagomin, the question is to be formulated in those terms: once the realist hypothesis has been rejected, how can we explain the fact that the words "Brahmin" and "*śūdra*" give rise to distinct cognitions?¹⁵⁰ Dharmakīrti's answer holds in one sentence: "Although there is no class difference [between the Brahmin and the *śūdra*], the difference in cognitions¹⁵¹ (*pratītibheda*) that, in society, follows from the difference in denominations ['Brahmin' and '*śūdra*'] may [very well] come from their practising particular occupations (*vyāpāraviśeṣa*) [such as muttering prayers and sacrifices],¹⁵² and from [the fact that they are born in a] family (*anvaya*) [traditionally involved in such occupations],¹⁵³ as is the case with denominations like 'healer,'¹⁵⁴ 'merchant,' etc. (*vaidyavanigvyapadeśa*)." ¹⁵⁵

According to Dharmakīrti, then, no appeal to ontology is necessary to account for the fact that different denominations give rise to different cognitions. As in the earlier Buddhist literature, from the VāS to the AgS and the VSū to the KDAM, Dharmakīrti holds that social denominations refer to professional activities and to means of livelihood, to the needs of a given social group that have become fixed over several generations, yet without depending on any hereditary determinism, as in the Brahmanic

¹⁵⁰ PVT P *ñe* 27b6–7 ≈ PVSVT 558.20–21: *yadi na jātibhedo viprasūdrayoh katham tarhy ayaṃ brāhmaṇādīśabdasravaṇād bhinnā pratītir bhavātīti* /.

¹⁵¹ PVSVT 558.23 glosses: *buddhibhedo 'yaṃ brāhmaṇo 'yaṃ śūdra iti pratītibhedaḥ*.

¹⁵² PVT P *ñe* 27b8–28a1 = PVSVT 558.24: *vyāpāraviśeṣānuṣṭhānāj japa-homādikriyāviśeṣānuṣṭhānāt*.

¹⁵³ PVT P *ñe* 28a1 = PVSVT 558.25: *tathābhūtavyāpārānuṣṭhāyinaḥ kulād utpatteḥ*.

¹⁵⁴ On healers (*vejja*), see Fick (1972, 237[153–54]); modern Baidyas in Bouglé (1993, 14 and note 5).

¹⁵⁵ PVSV 157.16–18: *yo 'py ayaṃ nāmabhedānvayo loke pratītibhedaḥ so 'saty api jātibhede vyāpāraviśeṣānuṣṭhānād anvayāc ca syād vaidyavanigvyapadeśādivat* /.

theory of mixed classes. The only determinism of which one may speak is thus a social determinism, not a biological determinism. And it is only due to repetition. Dharmakīrti's examples of the healer and the merchant are here quite significant, for both of them, while considered *śūdras*, are nonetheless included among the mixed. The situation thus leads to an absurdity that is well depicted by Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin: "For example, among the *śūdras* who, [as *śūdras*], belong to the same class (*tulyajātīya*), denominations such as 'healer' are used because [those *śūdras*] practise such and such particular occupations and because of [the fact that they were born in] a family [traditionally involved in those occupations. But] still there is not, [among those *śūdras*], any difference of class. It must be for the Brahmins, [*kṣatriyas*], etc., as it is for the [*śūdras*, who bear different denominations although they are all *śūdras*]." ¹⁵⁶

Dharmakīrti insisted above that the distinctions between Brahmins and *śūdras*, or between healers and merchants, are not due to their intrinsic nature, for example to their birth or other criteria, but to the fact that the world knows a multitude of occupations. The lexicographic conventions that come to be associated with those occupations do not tell us anything, however, about the mode of being of the individual to which they are associated. Accordingly, as Śākyabuddhi and Karṇakagomin insisted in their introduction or commentary to PV I 295, ¹⁵⁷ the difference is not one of intrinsic nature, but is due to worldly conventions. It is therefore not ultimately true (*pāramārthika*), but merely conventional (*sāṅketika*), which is to say that it is not apprehended through direct perception, but through learning.

¹⁵⁶ PVṬ P 11e 28a2-3 = PVSVT 558.26-28: *yathā tulyajātīyeṣu śūdreṣu tasya tasya vyāpāraviśeṣasyānuṣṭhānād anvayāc ca vaidyādivyapadeśāḥ pravarante / na tāvatā jātibhedah / tadvad brāhmaṇādiṣv api syāt /*.

¹⁵⁷ See note 122, p. 104, above.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Just as fire remains fire and its consuming power does not increase or decrease whether it is lit by a Brahmin, a *kṣatriya*, a *vaiśya* or a *śūdra*, the contribution of a Brahmin or a *śūdra* as a cooperating cause to the efficiency of Vedic mantras will be exactly the same since the difference between them is not real, but conventional. Dharmakīrti can therefore conclude his argument as follows: "Consequently, [since] they are used by an [ontologically undifferentiated person, Brahmin or *śūdra*], those mantras receive from this [person] an undifferentiated intrinsic nature. It is therefore in an undifferentiated manner that they must yield results."¹⁵⁸ *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

¹⁵⁸ PVSV 157.19–20: *tad ime 'viśiṣṭena prayujyamānā mantrās tato 'viśiṣṭam eva svabhāvam āsādayanti / tenāviśeṣeṇaiva phaladāḥ syuḥ //*. PVT P ñe 28a3–4 = PVSVT 559.10–11 gloss *aviśiṣṭena* as *brāhmaṇaśūdrādinā* and *tataḥ* as *brāhmaṇādeḥ*.