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BUDDHAHOOD AND PHILOSOPHY OF MIND:

RATNĀKARAŚĀNTI, JÑĀNAŚRĪMITRA, AND THE DEBATE OVER MENTAL CONTENT

(ĀKĀRA)

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To my parents
Lucy Kerman and Gary Tomlinson

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Introduction: Buddhist Philosophy and its Presuppositions

[T]he imaginative world of *Theravāda* Buddhism, and *a fortiori* of the Indian culture of which it is essentially a part, are of great depth and complexity, and their speculative thought derives from concerns and presuppositions radically different from those of western philosophy. Such an alien tradition, however, is important for us not *in spite of* but precisely *because of* these differences, and the difficulty we have in understanding them.

—Steve Collins, *Selfless Persons*, 1

But, then, what is philosophy today—philosophical activity, I mean—if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?

—Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 9

i. Buddhist Philosophy

It is my goal in this dissertation to show the important implications of this basic observation: that Buddhist philosophy is Buddhist. We will consider what will at first seem a rarefied debate in eleventh-century Buddhist idealism, a debate concerning the nature of mental content and its place in a full description of consciousness, but we will see that this debate is inextricably bound-up not only with issues in logic and philosophy of mind, but also with buddhology and soteriology. A philosopher's understanding of what buddhahood is and what the most effective means to attaining it are, in other words, will have profound influences on (and will be profoundly influenced by) what that philosopher has to say about consciousness and content.

Our concern here will be an episode in the history of Indian Buddhist philosophy: the presentation of a novel systematic view of consciousness and buddhahood by Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 970–1045), and its refutation by his younger colleague Jñānaśrīmitra (ca. 980–1030). To understand the positions of these philosophers, we will have to keep in mind a number of different factors. Jan Westerhoff, in his recent *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, has isolated three factors of particular relevance to the study of Buddhist philosophy: arguments, sacred texts, and meditative practice.¹ Arguments are, of course, central to Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s respective philosophical projects. Ratnākaraśānti utilizes arguments he inherits from the Buddhist tradition, subtly altering them in ways we will consider in detail in order to support his view. Jñānaśrīmitra’s rebuttal of Ratnākaraśānti’s view develops these arguments further, limits their scope, and even questions their foundations. Each of these philosophers grounds his view on tradition as well. Sometimes it is philosophical tradition that is at issue, other times “sacred texts,” or *āgama*, scripture: words attributed to the Buddha or to a particularly high-level bodhisattva, the Buddha in waiting, Maitreya. We will see, however, that their scriptural sources sometimes diverge in meaningful ways.

When we come to Westerhoff’s “meditative practice,” we might augment his account. The role of meditative experience in the development of Buddhist philosophy has been debated in Buddhist studies for some time. Lambert Schmithausen, for instance, has argued that insights into the nature of meditative objects as “mind-only” led to the development of the idealist

¹ See *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4–9.

Yogācāra tradition of philosophy, while others have criticized as overly simplistic the idea that metaphysics has its origin in meditation.² For his part, Westerhoff reminds us that Buddhist texts,

constitute a set of instructions to bring about a gradual (or perhaps sudden) cognitive shift that is indicative of the mind changing from the unenlightened to the enlightened state. [...] As the set of meditative techniques Buddhist practitioners employed was elaborated and enlarged during the development of Buddhism, the philosophical frameworks employed to account for these kept developing too.³

Buddhist philosophy, it has sometimes been said following the historian of ancient western philosophy Pierre Hadot, is a way of life, “a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way.”⁴ Some Buddhist philosophical texts are explicitly meant to be used at different points of cultivation on the Buddhist path, while others concern themselves with categorizing meditative experiences or grounding those experiences on solid metaphysical or epistemic foundations. In both these ways, it is crucial to keep meditative practice in mind when considering Buddhist philosophy.

I concur with Westerhoff here, as well as those who would look to Hadot in order to expand our notion of Buddhist philosophy to include the practical, though we will see something slightly different develop in our consideration of Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra. Here, it is competing conceptions of what buddhahood is that have especially profound ramifications for

² For a brief summary of these issues, see Eviatar Shulman, *Rethinking the Buddha: Early Buddhist Philosophy as Meditative Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45–50, as well as the works cited there by Robert Sharf, Janet Gyatso, Lambert Schmithausen, and Eli Franco in particular. See too Schmithausen’s more recent response to critics of his view in *The Genesis of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2014), and Franco’s further response, “On the Arising of Philosophical Theories from Spiritual Practice,” in *Saddharmāmṛtam: Festschrift für Jens-Uwe Hartmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Oliver von Kriegern, Gudrun Melzer, and Johannes Schneider (Vienna: ATBS, 2018), as well as Matthew Kapstein’s reflections on the role of religious experience in Buddhist studies (and religious studies more generally), “Rethinking Religious Experience: Seeing the Light in the History of Religions,” in *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³ *The Golden Age*, 8.

⁴ See the citation of Hadot in Kapstein’s “Introduction,” *Reason’s Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Thought* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 7. For recent work on Hadot and Buddhist philosophy, see the essays in David Fiordalis, ed., *Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking with Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy, and the Path* (Berkeley, CA: Mangalam, 2018), and the sources cited therein.

their philosophical dispute. These concerns with the nature, properties, and phenomenology of buddhahood are, we will say, buddhological issues. How exactly this plays out will be a topic we discuss in detail throughout this dissertation, but some cursory remarks are worth presenting here. Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra have different intuitions about what buddhahood is. These different intuitions are inextricable from different interpretations of scripture: it is in scripture—whether in sūtras of the Buddha, the treatises of the bodhisattva Maitreya, or the esoteric teachings of Buddhist tantra—that buddhahood is described, and so it is inescapably with reference to this milieu that debates concerning buddhahood will be settled. Argument plays an important role too when considering buddhahood, just as it does in scholastic Christian theological debates concerning the nature of God; still, some amount of scriptural interpretation is unavoidable.

Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra bring their respective understandings of buddhahood, grounded on scripture and logic, to bear on their philosophical work in different ways. We can say that each has certain presuppositions regarding buddhahood, but these drive Ratnākaraśānti's philosophizing in ways that they do not in Jñānaśrīmitra's case. Each is a *Buddhist* philosopher: for each, what buddhahood is and how it can be attained are kept in view throughout their philosophical inquiry into the nature of consciousness and its relation to its content. But they are Buddhist philosophers in different ways.

This leads us to another component of our story that augments Westerhoff's schematism. In addition to arguments, scripture, and their respective views of buddhahood and soteriology, we will also be attuned to Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's respective personalities and styles as philosophers. Westerhoff notes the importance of "historical background" for an

understanding of Buddhist philosophy, but admits that he will mention this only occasionally, largely for want of sufficient social, political, and economic evidence.⁵ This is no doubt justified. But there is another component of context we can bring to bear on our work on Indian philosophy, one that is difficult to pin down but nevertheless, I think, important. When we devote years to the study of a certain philosopher's work, we all, I submit, develop ideas about who our authors are. We find playfulness and a sense of humor in a certain author's prose, or stodgy logical precision in another's. We find a pious religious traditionalist, or an eccentric skeptical gadfly. We slowly develop a sense of who our authors are, the sorts of things they might and might not say, the sorts of things that are and are not in character.

This contributes to our understanding of a philosopher's view. If we see the foundational Buddhist epistemologist Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660), for instance, as an inspired logician who nevertheless wrote turgid, enigmatic Sanskrit, we will approach his work differently than if we see him first and foremost as a lively and pious defender of Buddhist dogma in the face of non-Buddhist heresy. This is not a matter of mere subjective opinion: our authors tell us who they are in their writing, sometimes explicitly where they lay out their intentions, other times implicitly in the style they adopt, the allusions they make, the sense of humor they do or do not deploy. While perfection is no doubt impossible in this regard, there are better and worse senses of a given author's character: it can be debated on the basis of textual evidence. As I introduce Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's positions in detail in chapter 1, I will also argue that they

⁵ As he rightly observes, "Even for times and places where we have plenty of information about social, political, and economic factors (say, post-Enlightenment Europe), writing the history of philosophical ideas of this period in terms of these factors seems hardly straightforward and possibly of limited importance for illuminating their contents. In the case of ancient India our knowledge of these matters is extremely limited and fragmentary, and while it would be foolish to deny that society, economics, and politics did influence the history of philosophy in India to *some* extent, it is hard to establish potential correlations with a high degree of certainty." *The Golden Age*, 5–6.

present different personalities, each exemplifying different ways of being Buddhist philosophers writing in Sanskrit at the turn of the millennium. Then, as we narrativize their dispute in the following chapters, their respective characters will come out even more clearly.

These various factors—argument, scripture, buddhology, and finally personality and style—will be behind our account of Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s positions on consciousness and its appearances. Sometimes, as in chapters 2 and 5, scripture and buddhology will be at the forefront; other times, as in chapters 3 and 4, argument. Throughout, the whole nexus of factors should be kept in mind.

ii. Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s Positions, In Brief

What will emerge from attention to these various factors will be two opposed systematic positions on the nature of consciousness and buddhahood. Ratnākaraśānti’s view, which we will most often refer to as the Nirākāravāda, is that consciousness exists independently of appearances or mental content (*ākāra*): at least one conscious state exists, buddhahood, that is devoid of appearances. This is because appearances can be shown to be metaphysically incoherent by argument. They are unreal (*alīka*). Hence, buddhahood, an attainment of consciousness that is totally real, is devoid of content: it is *nirākāra*.⁶

There has been some debate about how best to characterize Ratnākaraśānti’s view, both from a doxographical perspective and in terms of the stakes of denying the reality of

⁶ Nirākāravāda, then, is here understood as a variety of Buddhist idealism, not in the sometimes noted pan-Indian philosophical sense of a sort of direct realism, wherein our cognition of external objects is not mediated by a representation (*ākāra*). On these different senses of Nirākāravāda, see our discussion below in this Introduction, section vi.

appearances. Yuichi Kajiyama’s influential work characterized Ratnākaraśānti’s as a *nirākāra-vijñānavāda*, an idealist Yogācāra view; David Seyfort Rugg, as a “Vijñapti-Madhyamaka (*rnam rig dbu ma*).”⁷ These and other doxographical issues are dealt with in fine detail in Gregory Seton’s recent dissertation on Ratnākaraśānti’s work on the perfection of wisdom, *Defining Wisdom: Ratnākaraśānti’s Sāratamā*. We will see that Ratnākaraśānti’s view is squarely a Yogācāra idealist one, interpreted as the “middle way” (the *madhyamaka*, or perhaps better *madhyamāpratipad*) in the sense defined in canonical Yogācāra texts like Maitreya’s *Madhyāntavibhāga*. Adherents of the Madhyamaka tradition like Śāntaraṣita or Candrakīrti, who for different reasons call into question the ultimate reality of consciousness, are among Ratnākaraśānti’s principal opponents.

One of the central stakes of denying the reality of appearances is the establishment of a *difference* between consciousness and its content. Ratnākaraśānti argues that, insofar as idealism is true, there is a sense in which the content of cognition is no different from cognition: there is no insentient external object, there is only the moment-to-moment arising of consciousness with different appearances, and so appearances have the same nature as cognition itself. To this extent, consciousness and its content are identical. But because content can be shown to be unreal whereas the manifestation of consciousness itself is indubitably real, they are in fact different.

This difference between consciousness and its content was of central importance to Ratnākaraśānti’s Nirākāravāda for reasons we will explore below—and it was one of the principal targets of Jñānaśrīmitra’s critique. In Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, the Sākāravāda,

⁷ See Rugg’s “Appendix II: Ratnākaraśānti’s ‘Vijñapti-Madhyamaka,’” in his *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981). For Kajiyama’s influential remarks on the *sākāra-* and *nirākāra-vijñānavāda*, see his “Appendix II” to *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy: An Annotated Translation of the Tarkabhāṣā of Mokṣākaragupta, Reprint with Corrections in the Authors Hand* (Vienna: ATBS, 1998).

consciousness is in every instance *sākāra*, contentful or endowed with an appearance, and the notion of consciousness that does *not* manifest with some particular appearance is absurd. The identity between consciousness and its appearance is total: there is no appearance without consciousness of that appearance, and there is no consciousness without an appearance. He thus aims to refute Ratnākaraśānti’s view that there is a difference between them.

But further, Jñānaśrīmitra refutes *every* notion of difference. His is a philosophy of non-duality, of wondrous non-duality (*citrādvaita*) as he sometimes says. While Ratnākaraśānti might also profess a non-dualism, in Jñānaśrīmitra’s view his insistence on a difference between consciousness and content betrays his tacit dualism. For Jñānaśrīmitra, even our cognition of variegated appearances (*citrākāra*) is really non-dual (another sense of *citrādvaita*).⁸ He synthesizes this view with a novel take on canonical Yogācāra buddhology as well, developing a view of buddhahood that accords with his non-dualist Sākāravāda.

iii. Phenomenology and Other Presuppositions in Philosophy of Mind

A philosopher’s system will always be based on certain presuppositions: Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra are not unique in this regard. This is especially true when that system is to account for perennially difficult problems such as the nature of consciousness, experience, or subjectivity. There are a number of ways we might characterize what makes consciousness such a hard problem: there is David Chalmers’ way of putting the point, that “human beings have subjective

⁸ We will discuss Jñānaśrīmitra’s explicit use of this pun on *citra*, which can mean both “wondrous” and “variegated,” in chapter 5, section iii.

experience: there is something it is like to be them”⁹; there is the apparent asymmetry between first-person and third-person knowledge: I know what I believe, for instance, in a way that is different from how I know what other people believe; there is the unique certainty of the *cogito*: I know that *I think*, whatever else in my experience may be doubted; there is the peculiar unity of consciousness, both synchronically and, we might suspect, diachronically over an individual’s life: an individual moment of cognition is *mine*, as are different moments in the stream of consciousness that constitutes my life. This constellation of problems is not approached by philosophers in a vacuum, whether those philosophers are at NYU today or at Vikramaśīla a millennium ago. Different presuppositions are brought to bear on these problems, and these presuppositions support certain lines of inquiry while keeping others out of sight.

As an example of this in philosophy today, we might consider Richard Moran’s work on self-knowledge in *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge*. Moran offers here a striking defense of the unique immediacy of the first person—a unique immediacy defended by many Buddhists in the Dharmakīrtian tradition as well. In Moran’s account, I know my own beliefs not as I might know another person’s beliefs, but rather in an immediate, non-observational, and authoritative way. His account of this immediacy strikes against a Cartesian picture of a privileged “inward glance,” an infallibility unique to a supposed mode of internal perception.¹⁰ Opposed to this, Moran seeks to understand the peculiarity of first-person awareness in terms of *rational agency*, the fact that human beings are agents who act intentionally. It is my responsiveness to reasons, and indeed my *responsibility* for the beliefs I

⁹ “Consciousness and its Place in Nature,” in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 274.

¹⁰ *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

myself enact, that is essential to the first-person.¹¹ Central to his account then are the notions of commitment and avowal, the unique ways we express our own beliefs in action. For Moran, as he writes in a later paper on the topic, “Traditionally, the discussion of self-knowledge and self-consciousness in philosophy has given a place central to the understanding of rationality and agency themselves.”¹² Moran’s work continues this tradition, building on work as disparate as that of Jean-Paul Sartre, G.E.M. Anscombe, and Sydney Shoemaker in presuming the relevance of rational agency to a discussion of the first-person. Compare this with Buddhists, who certainly do not lack a philosophical concern with intentional action.¹³ Still, in the Dharmakīrtian tradition, self-knowledge and self-consciousness are not tied up with issues of rational agency as these concepts are in Moran’s work and the tradition with which he aligns himself.

Another assumption in philosophy of mind, more widely shared than the relevance of agency, is the relevance of phenomenology. Here, rather than referring only to the tradition of philosophy stemming from Husserl (that is, Phenomenology), we mean by phenomenology simply the description of conscious states, a description of what those states are like: what is it like to view a tapestry in an art gallery? What is it like to watch a dancer’s performance? What is it like, most simply, to experience? As Michelle Montague describes this phenomenological method, both as practiced in contemporary philosophy and in relation to Phenomenology,

Phenomenology can be characterized in a familiar way as the phenomenon of there being ‘something it is like,’ experientially, to be in a mental state, something it is like, experientially, for the creature who is in the state. [...] Phenomenologists [such as

¹¹ *Authority and Estrangement*, 27–33.

¹² “Self-Knowledge, ‘Transparency,’ and the Forms of Activity,” in *Introspection and Consciousness*, ed. Declan Smithies and Daniel Stoljar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 211.

¹³ For examples of lucid discussions of this issue, see Amber Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2014), 93–136; Maria Heim, *The Forerunner of All Things* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Karin Meyers, *Freedom and Self-Control: Free Will in South Asian Buddhism* (University of Chicago Dissertation, 2010).

Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre] attempted to give accurate descriptions of the way conscious experience seems to us from the first-person. One can easily see the connection between the two uses of the term: [P]henomenology (used in the original way) is concerned principally with describing the phenomenology (used in the new way) of experience. I take phenomenological descriptions to be an ineliminable source of evidence for theorizing about consciousness.¹⁴

Considering different aspects of conscious experience—its phenomenal character, its peculiar certainty, its unity, etc.—we must consider conscious experience itself, the thinking goes, inquiring into what it is like to be conscious. When we do so, philosophers might disagree about what precisely we are attending to: Michael Tye’s representationalism, for instance, posits that “attending to the phenomenology of a perceptual experience, to its felt character, is a matter of attending [...] to qualities that are not qualities of experiences.”¹⁵ What it is like to experience, say, a tapestry in an art gallery is determined solely with reference to the way *the tapestry itself* looks. In Tye’s view, there is no reference to qualities *of the experience*; such are mere philosophical chimeras. Others, Charles Siewert for instance, maintain that phenomenal features are aspects of consciousness that must be differentiated from representational content, and when we seek to understand phenomenal character, it is to these phenomenal features that we must refer.¹⁶ But views as different as these are nevertheless each committed to the relevance of phenomenological inquiry in discussions of conscious experience.

The arguments we will consider in Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s work do not often appeal explicitly to phenomenological data. They are rather epistemological and

¹⁴ “What Kind of Awareness is Awareness of Awareness,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 94 (2017): 360. Montague names Uriah Kriegel, Charles Siewert, David Woodruff Smith, Amie Thomasson, and Dan Zahavi as exemplars of the phenomenological method today; to this list, we might add Christian Coseru, whose work engages with these figures in the context of Indian Buddhist philosophy.

¹⁵ Michael Tye, *Consciousness and Persons: Unity and Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 166.

¹⁶ See his rich account of phenomenal character in Charles Siewert, *The Significance of Consciousness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), especially chapters 3 and 7.

metaphysical arguments, arguments that concern either the possibility of knowledge or topics in metaphysics, especially mereology. But everyday phenomenology does sometimes rear its head. Consider for instance an argument Dharmakīrti makes for the unity of cognition, one we will come to in detail in chapter 4. He writes, as we might most readily understand his enigmatic verse, “Consciousness is experienced in precisely the way it appears. For this reason, indeed, a mental state that has a variegated appearance should be a unity.”¹⁷ Cognition simply *appears as a unity*, he tells us here, and so *that is how it is experienced*; variegated content such as a peacock’s feather or a butterfly’s wing, then, despite consisting of different colors, is a unity. One might disagree with this account of the phenomenology of this experience: we will see that Ratnākaraśānti takes issue with this line of reasoning, claiming that a multicolored image does *not* in fact *appear* as a unity but rather as a manifold, and so the claim that it *is* a unity on the basis of this falls apart. While the argument may not hinge only on phenomenological data, these are nevertheless relevant. We might also note an example discussed by Christian Coseru: Śāntarakṣita’s and Kamalaśīla’s appeal to the experience of watching a dancer’s performance when discussing the synchronic unity of consciousness.¹⁸ Further examples—such as the experience of hearing a sentence uttered, watching a spinning fire-brand, holding the hands over the ears to block out auditory sensation, and so on—could also be given.

When considering phenomenology in relation to Buddhist philosophy, however, we must be careful. Dan Zahavi, ardent defender of the phenomenological method, notes a certain danger of applying it in the realm of Buddhist thought. He writes, “when appraising Buddhist views of

¹⁷ PV 3.221: *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāt citrākārasya cetasaḥ //* We will discuss the textual problems surrounding this verse, as well as its interpretation by Jñānaśrīmitra and Prajñākaragupta, in chapter 4; see, too, the appendix for a full translation of Jñānaśrīmitra’s discussion of this verse.

¹⁸ See Coseru’s *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 172–178.

the nature and status of self, one should not overlook that they were also driven and motivated by strong metaphysical and soteriological concerns, and that this occasionally leads to claims and conclusions that are quite far removed from phenomenology.”¹⁹ Buddhist philosophy is fundamentally *revisionary*: rather than seeking only to *describe* phenomena like consciousness, the goal is in fact the transformation of the individual on the basis of philosophical insight.²⁰ This leads to the development of ideas and analyses that are very often counterintuitive, conflicting with our commonsense view of the world and our everyday phenomenology. This is basic to Buddhism: the Buddha’s teaching that there is no self is insightful precisely because it runs counter to everyday experience. The fact that Buddhist thought is driven by revisionary concerns tends to devalue phenomenology: our everyday experience is relevant to an argument when the description of that experience can lead to the transformation of that experience itself, or else an insight that leads to the greater transformation of the individual. If everyday experience is left to stand unaffected by the work of philosophy, or if the individual’s experience of the world is otherwise unaffected, philosophy has, we might say, failed in its revisionary project.

This leads us to one of the distinctive factors for the study of Buddhist philosophy outlined above: the relevance of meditative experience. If everyday phenomenology is to an extent devalued in Buddhist theorizing about consciousness, *extraordinary* phenomenology is sometimes given new value. Extraordinary phenomenology is often appealed to in contemporary

¹⁹ Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 50.

²⁰ I adapt this distinction from P.F. Strawson’s distinction between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics in the introduction to his *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1959). He begins this essay by observing: “Metaphysics has been often revisionary, and less often descriptive. Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure,” 9. He continues, signaling what I believe would be a Buddhist critique: “The idea of a descriptive metaphysics might be assailed from another direction. For it might be held that metaphysics was essentially an instrument of conceptual change, a means of furthering or registering new directions or styles of thought,” 10.

philosophy of mind: blindsight, dissociative identity disorder, split brains, phantom limbs, and other unfamiliar experiences are taken as valuable data-points. Arguments can be structured around descriptions of these experiences found in psychological studies, while these experiences themselves remain inaccessible to the philosopher who nevertheless keeps them in view.²¹ Rather than to the reports of psychologists, Buddhist philosophers have sometimes appealed to the reports of meditators. This is done in subtle ways. It is rare, for instance, that an Indian Buddhist would appeal to an experience achieved on the Buddhist path or the perception of specialist meditators (*yogipratyakṣa*) as evidence in a formal inference.²² But, as Zahavi rightly notes, Buddhist philosophical inquiry is driven by soteriological concerns that lead away from everyday phenomenology, and this is in part because the *possibility* of the experiences realized in high-levels of meditation is kept in view. That is, for instance, an attainment such as the cessation of cognition (*nirodhasamāpatti*) is held to be possible, and so cognition must be such that this is so.²³ Buddhist epistemology, it has been said, is *optimistic*: “it allows that the direct cognition of ultimates *is* possible for beings,” for this direct cognition leads to enlightenment, and so it is at the very least a normative ideal even if it is not commonly accessible.²⁴ The experience itself is not used explicitly as evidence; nevertheless, its possibility is accounted for by the Buddhist philosopher’s system.

²¹ See again, for instance, Tye’s *Consciousness and Persons*, chapter 5, and the many sources cited therein. My thinking in this regard was inspired by Georges Dreyfus’ “What Happens When the Self Goes? An inquiry into the experience of no-self and its pathologies,” a draft of which was presented at the NEH Summer Institute on Self-Knowledge in Eastern and Western Philosophies at the College of Charleston, 2018.

²² On the topic of *yogipratyakṣa*, see the essays collected in Eli Franco, ed., *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009).

²³ On this topic, see Paul Griffiths, *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986) and Lambert Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987).

²⁴ See Roger Jackson’s comments on epistemic optimism, discussed in Coseru’s *Perceiving Reality*, 297–303.

We might say then that Buddhists move between two phenomenological poles: the everyday and the extraordinary. Appeals to everyday phenomenological description are sometimes found in the course of arguments in Buddhist philosophy of mind, as is a general epistemic optimism wherein extraordinary phenomenology is assumed as a possibility that must be maintained even though it may be inaccessible to the author and the reader alike. However, a further aspect of extraordinary phenomenology comes into view in Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's work: not only are the achievements of high-level meditators kept in view, the phenomenology of buddhahood itself is relevant for their philosophies.

That buddhahood is possible is of course a basic commitment of any Buddhist philosopher. Any view of consciousness, of knowledge, of language, and so on, must account for this possibility, however tangentially: the mind must be such that the Buddha's attainment is possible; knowledge must be such that the Buddha's special knowledges are possible; language must be such that the Buddha's teaching can be accounted for; and so on. Intra-Buddhist arguments that fault coreligionists for not being able to account for the Buddha's enlightenment go back at least to Nāgārjuna, who famously argues that it is only on the basis of his understanding of emptiness that enlightenment is possible.²⁵ But there is a significant difference between characterizing buddhahood in metaphysical terms and characterizing it in phenomenological terms: a third-person description of buddhahood in the buddhological terms used in scriptures and philosophical treatises is one thing, but appeal to the first-person experience of buddhahood (what buddhahood is like *for Buddha*), whether as evidence for a

²⁵ See Mark Siderits and Shōryū Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013), chapters 24 and 25. We will refer to these arguments as *buddhological* arguments in our conclusion to chapter 3, having seen them put to work by Ratnākaraśānti.

particular view or as a normative ideal, is quite another. This difference is worth some sustained consideration here.

iv. **Problematizing the Phenomenology of Buddhahood**
a) In Yogācāra and in Pali Sources

In *On Being Buddha*, Paul Griffiths argues that, according to mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine in third- to ninth-century India (the corpus of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, of the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, etc., or Griffiths’ “digests”), *there is nothing it’s like to be Buddha*.²⁶ “The account of the subjective character of Buddha’s experience most easily held together with the buddhological doctrine of the digests,” he says, “is one that claims Buddha’s experience to have no phenomenal properties, no subjective character.”²⁷ Given the tradition’s strong emphasis on non-conceptual awareness and non-dualism, buddhahood cannot possibly have a phenomenology; it can only be described third-personally by expounding the qualities and characteristics that make Buddha Buddha.

Griffiths makes this argument by expounding those types of experience that might have subjective character and noting that Buddha is denied each. Take, for instance, perceptual experience. For perceptual experience to have some subjective character, for there to be something it’s like to perceive, say, a blue pot, we might think that “the phenomenal properties of perceptual experience are constituted for some subject by the flavor of the way in which its

²⁶ See Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), chapter 7, especially 190–193.

²⁷ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 190. Note that Griffiths’ argument depends on thinking contentfulness and subjective character are inseparable (the conflation implied here of phenomenal properties and subjective character). While this is no doubt the majority position (as we will discuss), it is not Ratnākaraśānti’s view, as we will detail in chapter 2.

physical context is made available to it through its perceptual equipment.”²⁸ What it’s like for me to experience a blue pot depends on my finite perspective, what angle I’m seeing it from, the light in the room, etc.: all these differences would change the phenomenal flavor of my experience. This experience, it might be added, is inevitably accompanied by the judgment, “That’s a blue pot.” But the omniscient Buddha lacks such finitude and rather knows all content directly and wholly, in all its facets;²⁹ his knowing, further, is spontaneous and non-conceptual. “The important distinction between Buddha’s blue-pot-awareness and mine,” Griffiths says, “is that Buddha neither does nor can judge that it [viz. Buddha] is being appeared to blue-pot-ly”—insofar as Buddha’s cognition is totally non-conceptual—“whereas I, other things being equal, inevitably do.”³⁰ Further, as Griffiths notes, the digests themselves stipulate that “the perceptual experience of Buddha has no phenomenal flavor; instead, it occurs in just the same way as does the representation of the objects that constitute a physical environment in a mirror or in the undisturbed smooth waters of a lake.”³¹ This reasoning may be repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, with other forms of experience we might think are subjective—experiences of making judgments or choices, being affected or remembering—and in each case, Griffiths argues, a buddha definitionally lacks the capacity to have any first-person perspective on these experiences. They are, then, not really *conscious experiences* at all, for,

denying that it is like something to be Buddha is precisely the same as denying that Buddhas have conscious mental states, since having such states is just what it means for there to be something it is like to be a particular being. This denial is the same, in turn, as denying any subjective character to the indubitable behavioral and functional states in

²⁸ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 193.

²⁹ See Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 186–187, both propositions (3) and (5).

³⁰ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 158. The insightful discussion of epistemic predicates of Buddha is essential to the conclusions Griffiths reaches that we’re interested in here; see 151–173.

³¹ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 193; cf. 151 ff.

terms of which the digests characterize Buddha in its bodies of magical transformation and communal enjoyment.³²

Griffiths' conclusion, then, would seem warranted: if buddhahood definitionally lacks conceptuality and the finitude required to experience particular phenomenal content as limited by perspective, etc., and if these are constitutive of subjective character as we understand it, then it would seem that Buddha lacks subjective character.

All this is not necessarily as problematic for the Buddhist tradition as Griffiths seems to think. Many might not think it so bad that, as Griffiths says, "should I be fortunate enough to enter into Buddha's presence and have Buddha speak to me or touch me, a complete account of those events can be given in terms of how they seem to me: no appeal to the phenomenal properties of Buddha's experience is either necessary or possible."³³ It may be thought that seeking an account of the internal mental life of Buddha is to construe Buddha's mental life as like ours, something of which a discursive account can be given, whereas it is really radically different, indeed ineffable and unthinkable to our concept-ridden minds. Buddha's embodiments manifest in the world not due to some subjectively felt volition (as Griffiths makes clear), but on the basis of his previous meritorious deeds undertaken out of Buddha's compassion. So insofar as Buddha's compassion for us unenlightened beings is central to the notion of buddhahood, and insofar as Buddha's embodiments in our world are only for our sake in any case, then it should not worry us that, as Griffiths again puts it, "we non-Buddhas are in much better epistemic condition in regard to what it's like to be Buddha [...]. We know all that there is to know about what it's like to be Buddha precisely because there is nothing to know, and we can know that

³² Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 193. We will come to these so-called bodies or embodiments of Buddha in later chapters.

³³ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 196.

formal fact.”³⁴ That there is nothing it’s like to be Buddha is essential to what buddhahood is. So long as we unenlightened beings can come to know third-personally the properties of Buddha that will lead to liberation (and in particular the properties of his form-bodies), buddhahood fulfills its purpose and the notion of buddhahood is perfectly consistent.

Others will be unsatisfied by such a response. In his *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, Steven Collins raises an issue similar to the one raised by Griffiths. A more general Buddhist way we might put Griffiths’ point is this: a buddha has reached nirvāṇa, and this, insofar as it is by definition the cessation of the aggregates, means that consciousness (*viññāna*), feeling (*vedanā*), and determinate perception (*saṃjñā*) (three of the five aggregates, in other words) have ceased. But by considering a wide range of Pali sources rather than the limited scope of doctrinal Yogācāra texts (Griffiths is fully aware his scope is so limited), Collins draws a different conclusion from Griffiths. An essential part of Collins’ scope is not just systematic texts akin to the digests Griffiths analyzes, but also narrative texts. This is at the heart of Collins’ argument: the world of Pali Buddhism, he maintains, cannot be limited to systematic texts alone. Narrative texts are essential to it—and they make important contributions when systematic texts fail. Take the cessation of feeling and determinate perception, for instance.³⁵ In nirvāṇa, as systematic texts would have it, there should be no feelings of happiness or bliss (*sukha*) and no conscious experience of, say, a blue pot *as* a blue pot (the perception of a blue pot accompanied by the determinate judgment, “That’s a blue pot”). So far, we would seem to have reached a conclusion similar to Griffiths’: if the aggregates all cease in final nirvāṇa, buddhahood must be devoid of feeling and determinate conscious experience; insofar as these would seem to be

³⁴ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 192.

³⁵ Here, compare now Shulman’s *Rethinking the Buddha*, 32–40, with Collins’ analysis.

constitutive of subjective character as we understand it, subjective character must be lacking, too, and so there is nothing it's like to be a buddha.

But Collins refuses this conclusion. In many places, the Buddha spoke of his *nirvāṇa* as the highest happiness (*paramaṃ sukhaṃ*), and he is said to enjoy, immediately after his enlightenment, “the happiness of release” (*vimuttisukha*). Indeed, it is said that “the happiness of the senses and of the gods are not worth one sixteenth part of the happiness which comes through the destruction of Craving.”³⁶ But how could this be so if all feeling is supposed to cease at the level of buddhahood? While a contradiction for systematic thought, Collins suggests that narrative thought, or perhaps what we could call imagistic thought,³⁷ happily abides by the contradiction. As Collins formulates the aporias at stake, “nirvana is without the Aggregate of consciousness and without any *feeling* of happiness, but to attain it is not to become non-existent, and to accede to the highest bliss.”³⁸ However, Collins continues,

the meaning of nirvana can be carried by, expressed in, constituted through images just as well as, indeed often better than through concepts. Is there consciousness and/or happiness in nirvana? Well, just as a blazing fire might go out... This is not an answer on the level of systematic thought: but it is a discursive moment which brings into being the Unsaid, the Unconditioned, and preserves nirvana as a contradiction-stilling enigma.³⁹

In other words, all the images used to speak of *nirvāṇa*, however lacking the philosopher might take them to be when systematizing, are an essential part of its meaning. *Nirvāṇa* is indeed the cessation of consciousness and of feeling, but it is also a conscious state more pleasurable than

³⁶ Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities: Utopias of the Pali imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 207.

³⁷ I make this suggestion because here, we are concerned less with the peculiar temporality of narrative that leads Collins to read *nirvāṇa* as closure in “the sense of an ending” than we are with imagery in particular, and it is with respect to poetic imagery that Collins cites Eric Griffiths (*Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*, xii–xiii, 212): “contradictions, which bedevil thinking on the matter of immortality ... may be stilled by poetry though they prove an endless riddle for philosophical argument, ‘stilled’ in the sense of ‘calmed’ and also ‘preserved.’” Note, too, Collins’ further discussion of imagery as a bridge between systematic and narrative thought, 282–285.

³⁸ Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*, 212.

³⁹ Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*, 213; see 213–230 for Collins’ discussion of these images.

any pleasure in our world or the worlds of the gods. Part of the point, I think, is that the full meaning of nirvāṇa must contain something that makes its *attainability* make sense: nirvāṇa is the goal of practice, and so leaving it as an incomprehensible state of cessation makes it hard to know how (or for that matter why) it might be attained. Saying it is a pleasure unlike any other, like a candle going out, unfathomable like the ocean, like a utopic city, etc.—all these images explicate the full meaning of nirvāṇa and express what systematic thought cannot.⁴⁰ They allow the enigma of nirvāṇa to remain, however contradictory the philosopher might find the concept to be, as something that is attainable in practice. To Griffiths, then, it might be responded that the impossibility of subjective character, or the impossibility of Buddha’s first-person experience, is but a limitation of systematic thought: when we consider Buddhist thought more broadly, particularly narratives and descriptions of Buddha’s practical attainments, we see that imagery does in fact leave room for its enigmatic existence. Narrative suggests that there might be something it’s like to be Buddha after all.

iv. Problematizing the Phenomenology of Buddhahood
b) In Tantric Buddhism

No doubt a similar story could be told regarding Mahāyāna sūtra literature, with attention to both its narratives and its rich imagery. For our purposes here, however, we will consider the ways

⁴⁰ For further images used in the Pali tradition to speak of the pleasure of nirvāṇa (e.g. that it is like a tired, thirsty man struggling out of the desert to find a cool, shady pool to drink from, dive into, and relax beside), see Isabelle Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics, Or Antinomianism as a Norm* (Oxford: D.Phil. Dissertation, 2002), 42–59.

Buddhist tantric discourse further problematizes the phenomenology of buddhahood.⁴¹ Tantra, which can refer either to a genre of esoteric scriptures accepted by tradition as taught by Buddha or to particular texts in this genre (e.g. the *Hevajra Tantra*), is of many very different sorts.⁴² Many tantras are uninterested in the sorts of practices that will be our focus here, concerning themselves instead with all manner of ritual means—movements, incense, flowers, utterances, gestures, postures, powders, diagrams, visualizations, ablutions, and more—to attain ends that may be either worldly or soteriological. In the tantras that will be our focus here, the so-called highest yoga or yoginī tantras (*niruttarayoga-* or *yoginī-tantras*), these kinds of rituals are utilized for the accrual of power, supernatural abilities, bringing others under one’s will, and other world-directed achievements, as well as for the rapid attainment of enlightenment.⁴³ Our primary concern, however, will be a peculiar part of this latter soteriological aspect of tantric practice. At a certain point in the history of its development,⁴⁴ tantric texts were composed that would come to make the experience of buddhahood, what it is like for Buddha to be Buddha, an object of concern for Buddhist philosophers. That is, philosophers like Ratnākaraśānti came to grapple with the tantric teaching that the experience of buddhahood is innate in such a way that it

⁴¹ On this notion of problematization, see Michel Foucault’s *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Volume 2* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 14–24, as well as his 1983 seminar at the University of California Berkeley on “Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of *Parrhesia*,” in *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semoitext(e), 2001), 71–74, 171–173, though compare this edition of the seminar with the more recent and improved *Discours et vérité: Précédé de La parrésia*, ed. H.-P. Fruchaud and D. Lorenzini (Paris: Vrin, 2016).

⁴² See our discussions below in chapters 1 and 2 for more details on the particular tantras and tantric practices that will be our focus.

⁴³ On these classifications of tantra, see below, chapter 2, section iv.

⁴⁴ *When* exactly is a topic of much dispute. Certain of the practices we will discuss here, especially those utilizing the first sort of transgressive experience we will come to in a moment, began developing in tantric works like the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, which was composed possibly in the eighth century. Influential works utilizing the experience of sexual bliss more explicitly than the *Guhyasamāja* were composed later: the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* in perhaps the ninth century, the *Hevajra Tantra* in the ninth or tenth. See Harunaga Isaacson and Francesco Sferra’s entry “Tantric Literature: Overview South Asia,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume 1: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), as well as the sources cited therein.

can be *glimpsed from this side of enlightenment* at various high stages of practice, and then it can be utilized for the attainment of that very goal quickly and efficiently.

While the traditional Mahāyāna Buddhism of the way of perfections (*pāramitānaya*) leads to enlightenment after eons of practice over countless rebirths, tantra or the way of mantras (*mantranaya* or *mantranīti*, aka *vajrayāna*, the “Adamantine Vehicle”) was thought to have the power to lead a practitioner to buddhahood in a single lifetime. It is able to do so through the cultivation of certain experiences. These are not *necessarily* the experience of buddhahood, our primary interest here, it is important to note. We may say that the experiences cultivated in tantric practice, to speak schematically about a rich and complex topic, are of two different kinds.

First, there is transgression. The ingestion of substances the practitioner will have been cultured to think impure—the five meats (beef, dog, elephant, horse, and human flesh) and the five so-called ambrosias (feces, urine, blood, semen, and marrow)—is meant to bring the practitioner beyond duality by transgressing the basic and visceral binary of purity and impurity. One who is raised to be disgusted at these substances, but who can, in high-level ritual contexts and with practice, ingest them and think them pure has gone a long way to overcoming duality.⁴⁵ By play-acting and practicing this transcendence of duality, the thinking goes, it is accomplished more quickly than by other means.

The infamous utilization of ritual sex in tantric practice may well have been connected to transgression in its origins. For brahmanical Indian men broadly speaking, and for monastics especially, engaging in various sexual activities with women of lower caste (as tantras often

⁴⁵ See Christian Wedemeyer’s analysis of these practices in *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chapters 4 and 5. Wedemeyer makes clear the culturally specific nature of these lists of impure substances and discusses their ritual function in elucidating detail. Wedemeyer lists the two lists of five ambrosias at 106; note, too, his fn. 4, 235–236.

specify) would have been another way to transcend the culturally imposed purity-impurity binary. But further, certain of the impure substances the practitioner is to ingest are produced in this sort of union (whether the practitioner's own union or the guru's), and so coital rituals are in some instances (perhaps even their earliest instances) a means to acquire transgressive sexual fluids. In such cases, relatively common in early tantric sources, transgression comes not only in the sexual act itself, but in the subsequent ingestion of the substances it produces.⁴⁶ Gradually, however, over the course of a development whose history remains to be written, the experience of sexual bliss took on another significance for tantric authors. By the time of Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, a second sort of experience had become paramount in tantra. No longer primarily about transgression or the production of sexual fluids, in certain contexts sexual bliss came to be understood as a glimpse of the experience of buddhahood itself.⁴⁷

We may schematically differentiate two different kinds of advanced sexual tantric practice in the highest yoga tantras that will be our focus here: (1) practices wherein transgression is central, and (2) practices wherein the cultivation and experience of bliss is

⁴⁶ See especially in this regard David Gordon White's *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ For a consideration of the distinctive nature of this experience, see Janet Gyatso, "Healing Burns with Fire: The Facilitations of Experience in Tibetan Buddhism," *Journal of the Academy of Religion* (1999) 67:1, 113–147.

central.⁴⁸ While there is no doubt much grey area between these two poles (and countless unedited and unstudied texts that could upend this heuristic schematism), this dichotomy is useful for our purposes here, isolating more clearly what will be important for us below. (1) The transgression of purity norms, as well as of social mores more generally, forms an early strata of antinomian tantric practice. Sexual rites were incorporated into these transgressions in two ways: first, and most explicitly in the texts themselves, for the purpose of acquiring certain impure substances to ingest; secondarily, but no doubt obviously for the intended audience of brahmins and monks, as the transgression of normal social behavior. (2) With perhaps the influential *Hevajra Tantra* (HT),⁴⁹ or with texts in its orbit, the phenomenology of sexual bliss itself became paramount and transgression was to an extent sidelined. This bliss was understood by the practitioner not as ordinary pleasure but as the transcendent bliss (*ānanda*, *mahāsukha*) of buddhahood. Here, with the delimitation of and debates surrounding the types of bliss, their

⁴⁸ A better understanding of the history of these practices would put this heuristic schematism on more solid ground. However, while our understanding of tantric sex has greatly improved in recent years—since Janet Gyatso, for instance, rightly wrote of “our continuing ignorance about most things tantric” when putting this issue to one side in her 2005 essay, “Sex” (in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005], 275)—there is still much work to be done. For the recent exemplary work on the emergence and significance of sex in Buddhist and Śaiva tantra that has informed my discussion, see: Isabelle Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics, Or Antinomianism as a Norm* (Oxford: D.Phil. Dissertation, 2002); David Gray, *The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka) (Śrīherukābhīdhāna): A Study and Annotated Translation* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2007); Alexis Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009), 41–350; Harunaga Isaacson, “Observations on the Development of the Ritual of Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) in the Higher Buddhist Tantric Systems” in *Hindu and Buddhist Initiations in India and Nepal*, ed. Astrid Zotter and Christof Zotter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 261–280; Harunaga Isaacson and Francesco Sferra, *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyanātha (Advayavajra) With the Sekanirdeśapañjikā of Rāmapāla. Critical Edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, English translation, and Facsimiles* (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale,” 2014); Csaba Kiss, *The Brahmāyāmālatantra or Picumata, Volume II: The Religious Observances and Sexual Rituals of the Tantric Practitioner: Chapters 3, 21, and 45* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry / École française d’Extrême-Orient / Asien-Afrika-Institute, Universität Hamburg, 2015); Shaman Hatley, “Erotic Asceticism: The Knife’s Edge Observance (*asidhārāvratā*) and the Early History of Tantric Coital Ritual,” *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, 2 (2016): 329–45; and Shaman Hatley, *The Brahmāyāmālatantra or Picumata, Volume I: Chapters 1–2, 39–40 & 83: Revelation, Ritual, and Material Culture in an Early Śaiva Tantra* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry / École française d’Extrême-Orient / Asien-Afrika-Institute, Universität Hamburg, 2018).

⁴⁹ Péter-Dániel Szántó, in his article, “Hevajratāntra,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism: Volume I: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 334–340, notes that the doctrine of the four blisses is one of the most important innovations of the *Hevajra*, over and above other antinomian traditions like that of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.

order, and their corresponding moments (*kṣaṇa*) and seals (*mudrā*), we come to the problematization of the experience of buddhahood itself.⁵⁰ It is this second sort of sexual tantric practice and its ramifications for philosophy that will be one of our principal concerns here, especially in our consideration of Ratnākaraśānti’s work.

In this respect, there is an unlikely resemblance between certain tantric practices and the narratives of the Pali tradition analyzed by Collins. Both preserve the phenomenology of buddhahood despite the fact that certain conclusions of systematic philosophy call its possibility into question. The *Hevajra Tantra*, Ratnākaraśānti’s interpretation of which we will discuss in some detail in chapters 1 and 2, even uses expressions that echo far older Pali formulations in doing this. Take for instance HT I.viii.48: just as the happiness of the gods is not worth one sixteenth part of the happiness of nirvāṇa, so too (according to Ratnākaraśānti’s interpretation) “all the Tathāgatas are not worth one sixteenth part of that lovely state of great bliss to be realized for oneself, or Vajradhara [viz. the essence of enlightenment].”⁵¹ We have seen that in Pali texts nirvāṇa was called the highest happiness (*paramaṃ sukhaṃ*). No doubt the Pali tradition’s understanding of happiness or bliss (*sukha*) was a far cry from the great bliss (*mahāsukha*) of the tantras—a fascinating comparison of the two traditions is made by Isabelle Onians in the introduction to *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics, Or Antinomianism as the Norm* (32–59)—but for both traditions there remains the possibility of a feeling of bliss after all feeling is supposed to have ceased.

⁵⁰ On these debates, see especially Isaacson and Sferra’s introduction to *The Sekanirdeśapañjikā of Rāmapāla*, 94–111. See our discussion of this below, chapter 2, section iv.

⁵¹ See HT I.viii.48cd: *sarve te tatpade rāmye kalāṃ nārghanti ṣoḍaśīm*. Note Ratnākaraśānti’s comment, where he makes clear that *sarve te* refers to all the Tathāgatas, and *tatpade rāmye* refers to *mahāsukha* that is *svasaṃvedya*, that is, “great bliss that is to be realized for oneself,” which is to say *mahāvajradhara*.

By Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's generation in early eleventh-century India, this changed the field of possibilities for Buddhist scholastic authors, whether or not they sought to explicitly synthesize tantra and non-tantric Buddhism. What buddhahood is like, the experience of the goal, could be glimpsed from this side of enlightenment. It thus became relevant to philosophical discourse: not only the third-person metaphysical descriptions of the nature of buddhahood, and not only the phenomenology of high-level meditative achievements, but now the phenomenology of buddhahood itself was an object of concern. Authors responded to this in different ways. Some, like Ratnākaraśānti, sought to synthesize the non-tantric Mahāyāna path with the tantric view of innate bliss. These offered two different paths to what he seems to have conceived of as a single goal: buddhahood is the experience of bliss glimpsed in tantric initiation and cultivated in post-initiatory practice; however, this experience can be reached by the way of perfections as well, by those who are inclined to this lengthier, more arduous, but less risky path.⁵² Others, including perhaps Jñānaśrīmitra, thought it better to keep tantric and non-tantric Buddhism separate.⁵³ (Some even thought the tantric goal was different from and superior to the goal of non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism.) But despite this, even in a non-tantric philosophical register, for Jñānaśrīmitra too what buddhahood is like first-personally, and not just what buddhahood is third-personally, is an issue: certain features of the phenomenology of buddhahood that Jñānaśrīmitra thinks are essential cannot be accounted for on Ratnākaraśānti's view, and this is registered as a serious fault. Others, certain Mādhyamikas for instance, as well as certain tantric authors, upheld the traditional view of systematic thought, decrying any attempt

⁵² See our discussion in chapters 1 and 2. Compare, too, Gregory Seton's unpublished paper presented at the International Association of Buddhist Studies Conference, 2017, "Integrating Non-Tantric and Tantric Doctrines through *Prajñāpāramitā* at Vikramaśīla during the Mid-Eleventh Century."

⁵³ See chapter 5, section v, for some discussion of Jñānaśrīmitra's tantric affiliation—an affiliation only hinted at but nevertheless, I will suggest, present in his work.

to preserve conscious experience at the level of buddhahood and urging that we accept nirvāṇa to be the radical cessation of all forms of feeling.

One of Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s famous colleagues, Vāgīśvarakīrti, documented these different views of the goal (*sādhyā*) of Buddhist practice in his *Tattvaratnāvaloka* (TRA) and its auto-commentary (*vivaraṇa*) (TRAV). This work presents four different ways to view the goal according to the way of perfections (vv.5–7), and seven ways according to the way of mantras (vv.8–14). Consider for instance two views of the goal according to the way of perfections:

Those who abide on the path of the six perfections (that is, giving and so on) speak of a goal that accomplishes the aims of beings, one that is blissful (*sānanda*), with a body adorned by the auspicious marks [of the Buddha’s embodiment in enjoyment (*sambhogakāya*)] enjoyed by those who abide on the tenth bodhisattva stage. // TRA 6 //

Having fulfilled all the enumerated [perfections of] giving and so on, having accomplished enlightenment and having done all its duties [for other sentient beings], that too is [conceived of as] the goal, which is the cause of making evident the Reality-Limit (*bhūtakṣṇi*), the form of which is cessation. // TRA 7 //⁵⁴

In the first of these positions, the goal is blissful, the experience of the magnificent embodiment of buddhahood that manifests to high-level bodhisattvas in heaven, known as the Sambhogakāya, and which leads other sentient beings to enlightenment out of compassion; on the other view, the goal is utter cessation—“the cessation of mind and mental factors” (*cittacaittanirodha*),

⁵⁴ TRA 6–7: *sānandasallakṣanamaṇḍitāṅgaṃ sambhujyamānaṃ daśabhūmisamsthaiḥ / sattvārthakāri pravādanti sādhyam dānādiṣaṭpāramitānāyasthāḥ // 6 // sampūrya dānādiguṇān aśeṣān saṃbuddhakṛtyaṃ sakalam ca kṛtvā / yad bhūtakṣṇeḥ karaṇam ca sāksāt sādhyam tad apy asti nirodharūpam // 7 //ⁱ saṃbuddhakṛtyam em.] sambuddhya kṛtyam, TRA. Note that one of the two Tibetan translations of this work preserved in the Peking and sNar thang editions of the bsTan ’gyur (Öta. 4793; 46—843–870), which gives no translator’s name, introduces this latter view by saying it is that of the Mādhyamika (*dbu ma pa’i gzhung*, 46—849). The anonymous translator gives these introductory notes at various points, and they are often helpful. We will refer to a few others below.*

Vāgīśvarakīrti specifies in his comment—which is accomplished after the deeds of the Buddha (his attainment of the perfections, his teaching, and so forth) have all been fulfilled. On the former view, buddhahood has a phenomenology, while on the latter view—the view, perhaps, of the Mādhyamika—Buddha is denied the very possibility of conscious experience.

A similar dynamic plays out in Vāgīśvarakīrti’s presentation of different tantric goals.

There is, for instance, the view that we may attribute to Ratnākaraśānti:

Having made evident one’s chosen deity, of blissful form,
and having abandoned that later,
the result may be bliss alone.

What is pure cannot be made evident.

Therefore, the appearance (*ākāra*) of one’s chosen deity is cultivated. // TRA 10 //⁵⁵

Here, a concise view of the tantric path is presented. First, the practitioner makes himself manifest in the form of his chosen deity. At this stage, the practitioner’s mind has appearances. Later, however, those appearances are abandoned, and all that remains is pure bliss (*sātamātra*). As Vāgīśvarakīrti summarizes the view in his auto-commentary, “Having cultivated bliss that is mixed with the appearance of the deity (*devatākārasaṃvalitam eva*), and the appearance of the deity having been abandoned when it has become evident (*sākṣātbhūte*), mere bliss alone (*sukhamātram eva*) is the goal.”⁵⁶ The goal is thus a peculiar experience: mere bliss alone

⁵⁵ TRA 10: *kṛtvā sākṣāt svādhipaṃ sātārūpaṃ paścāt tyaktvā sātamātraṃ phalaṃ syāt / śuddhaṃ sāksāc chakyate naiva kartuṃ tenākāro bhāvitaḥ svādhipasya // 10 //* The anonymous translator introduces this view by saying it is that of Ratnākaraśānti (or in his transliteration, *rada na a kara shana ti*, 46–850). The commentary on the second half of the verse has guided my translation: “It may be objected, ‘Even though it has been made evident, the appearance of the deity is to be abandoned; then why is there cultivation of the appearance of the deity in the first place? Is not just bliss alone cultivated, as in the second goal we just discussed? What’s the point of this vain effort [at cultivating the appearance of the chosen deity]?’ This is why it says ‘**What is pure**,’ etc. The **pure** alone, i.e. mere bliss totally free of any appearance of the deity, **is not at all able to make anything evident**, because bliss without an *ākāra* is not apprehensible (*anupalambha*). **Therefore**, for that reason, **the appearance of one’s chosen deity is cultivated**. This is the third goal. TRAV ad TRA 10: *nanu sākṣātkṛtvāpi devatākāras tyaktavyaḥ, tarhi prathamam eva kasmād vibhāvitaḥ. sukhamātram eva dvitīyasādhyavat kiṃ na vibhāvitaḥ? kiṃ vṛthāprayāsenetyāha—śuddham ityādi. śuddham kevalam devatākāravirahitaṃ sukhamātram naiva sākṣāt kartuṃ śakyate, ākārarahitasya sukhasya anupalambhāt. tasmāt tena kāraṇenākāro bhāvitaḥ svādhipasyeti trṭīyaḥ.*

⁵⁶ TRAV ad TRA 10: *devatākārasaṃvalitam eva sukhaṃ vibhāvya sākṣādbhūte devatākāraṃ tyaktvā sukhamātram eva sādhyam.*

without appearances. We will detail Ratnākaraśānti’s view of the nature of this sort of experience in chapter 2: for our purposes now, we can simply note the presence of a unique sort of phenomenology. The following verse presents a different view of this experience:

A body like the sky, limbs adorned with the auspicious marks [of the Buddha’s embodiment in enjoyment (*sambhogakāya*)],
full of incomparable bliss and in union with his appropriate consort,
accomplishing the aims of all beings
with immeasurable buddhas surging all around him—
still another speaks of this goal,
which is devoid of annihilation. // TRA 11 //⁵⁷

Here, in a verse perhaps expressing Vāgīśvarakīrti’s own position, we are presented with an experience whose appearances are stressed. It is not the *mere* bliss that remains after all images have been abandoned, but rather the incomparable bliss of a body adorned with specific appearances, in union with a consort with her own specific appearance, with immeasurable buddhas surging all around. Vāgīśvarakīrti’s commentary fills out this rich imagery in detail. Juxtapose these two different views of what buddhahood is like with the view presented in TRA v.13: there, it is again *cessation* that is stressed, a cessation of the very possibility of experience that nevertheless, on the basis of past practice, has the capacity to produce images for the sake of

⁵⁷ TRA 11: *gagaṇasamaśarīraṃ lakṣaṇair bhūṣitāṅgaṃ nirupamasukhapūrṇaṃ svābhayā saṃgataṃ ca / sphurad amitamunīndraiḥⁱ sarvasatvārthakāri pravadaṭi punar anyah sādhyam ucchedaśūnyam // 11 //ⁱ amitamunīndraiḥ]* em.; *amitamunīndraḥ*, TRA. The anonymous Tibetan translator suggests this is the author’s own view (*rang gi ’dod pa*, 46–851). This attribution seems correct. First, at a purely formal level, this verse is in the elegant *mālinī*-meter, like the first and last dedicatory verses (in addition, it would seem that the last verse echoes some of its language); that is a special distinction that Vāgīśvarakīrti might save for his own position. Second, and again at a formal level, this verse has by far the longest commentary of any of the different goals Vāgīśvarakīrti lays out, consisting of many long compounds that stand out for their showiness. Lastly, with a view to content, this verse represents the only goal that is *not* refuted later in the TRAV, pp.143–146. There, Vāgīśvarakīrti is asked by an opponent which goal is best; he tells us that all the other goals are *not* the best, leaving us to conclude that this verse represents the best view of the goal.

other sentient beings.⁵⁸ The phenomenology of buddhahood is denied here, while the possibility of ordinary beings' experience of Buddha is maintained.

All this is to show in brief a few different views of what buddhahood is like. After the phenomenology of buddhahood became a concern for philosophers, not all accepted its possibility. Certain authors continued to deny it, maintaining that the third-person experience of Buddha is what matters and that the first-person experience should be denied given nirvāṇa's nature as total cessation. But other views of the blissful nature of buddhahood were on offer, among which there was some disparity: buddhahood may be the blissful enjoyment of the Buddha's embodiment in heaven; it may be mere bliss, devoid of all appearances; it may be a blissful enjoyment embodiment in heaven, attained now in union with the consort; or it may be one of the other differently nuanced views Vāgīśvarakīrti presents. In this dissertation, we will explore this constellation of views: Ratnākaraśānti holds the experience of buddhahood to be devoid of appearances; Jñānaśrīmitra holds it to be the enjoyment of the Buddha's embodiment in heaven; and certain Mādhyamikas, principal foils for Ratnākaraśānti, hold buddhahood to be the total cessation of mind.

iv. Problematizing the Phenomenology of Buddhahood
c) Its Relation to Philosophy of Mind

⁵⁸ TRA 13: *kṛtvā sāṅśāt maṅḍalaṃ sātārūpaṃ paścāt tasya svecchayā nirvṛtiṃ ca / sattvārthasyāpy asty abhāvo na vāsmiṃ prādurbhāvo nirvṛtād asti yasmat // 13 //* “Having made vivid the maṅḍala that has the form of bliss, later it is ceased at will. Depending on whether or not there are aims of beings [to be accomplished], a visible manifestation is produced again from that which has been ceased.”

Since Kajiyama’s pioneering work on Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s philosophical positions, the relevance of soteriology to their controversy has been recognized. For these philosophers, “a problem,” Kajiyama tells us, “appears in regard to an emancipated person”—that is, their difference in opinion concerns principally the nature of the cognition attained at the end of the Buddhist path.⁵⁹ We will explore the implications of this in detail below, considering the ways Ratnākaraśānti’s tantric work comes to bear on his philosophy and how buddhology fits in to Jñānaśrīmitra’s project. The implications are far-reaching: nearly every aspect of their respective positions has some relation to their buddhological views. Understanding the precise nature of these relations—their directionality, their dependency—will be difficult. Still, our goal here is to make sense of their controversy in its buddhological context. In doing so, we will exemplify the importance of understanding Buddhist philosophy more generally in its Buddhist context. To understand Ratnākaraśānti’s arguments against intentionality as the criterion of consciousness, we will have to appreciate the buddhology he presupposes and that gives meaning to some of his more radical claims. To understand Jñānaśrīmitra’s view of error, of intentionality, or of the wondrous non-duality of variegated appearances (*citrādvaita*), we will have to appreciate the buddhology he suggests is implied by these positions, without which he would view himself as having failed in the systematic presentation of a Buddhist philosophical view.

There is a simple but important way we might make sense of this relation between philosophy of mind and buddhology, both generally among Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers and particularly with respect to Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra. For buddhahood to be

⁵⁹ See Kajiyama’s discussion at the beginning of his “Appendix II” in *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, 154–155, as well as his “Controversy between the Sākāra- and Nirākāra-vādins of the Yogācāra School—Some Materials.” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1965): 26–37.

possible, two things must be the case: first, our deluded cognition now must be such that it can transform into, or such that it already contains innately within itself, the cognition of Buddha (note our comments above regarding Buddhism’s characteristic “epistemic optimism”); second, the cognition of Buddha must be such that, regardless of its transcendence, it is nevertheless immanent in our world in the form of the Buddhist teachings, the dharma. This is true for any Mahāyāna Buddhist: regardless of your view of the nature of buddhahood, whether or not it is a conscious state, etc., some account of these two points must be compatible with your philosophical view.

When we introduce the phenomenology of buddhahood into the equation, things become problematic in further ways. For instance, in Ratnākaraśānti’s view, as we will see in chapter 2, *before buddhahood is attained* the experience of buddhahood can be glimpsed in tantric initiation and post-initiatory practice; this means that some aspect of our consciousness here and now, the phenomenology of which is accessible in tantric practice, is akin to Buddha’s consciousness. The experience of buddhahood is innate: it requires dedicated practice to uncover and to manifest properly, but nevertheless the experience is a natural part of cognition. Jñānaśrīmitra accounts for the continuity between buddhahood and our ordinary cognition as well, though his characterization stresses not the innate character of buddhahood but rather Buddha’s marvelous display in the world as a teacher of the dharma. As we will see in chapter 5, Jñānaśrīmitra believes that not only is Buddha’s manifest and illustrious embodiment in purified characteristics primary—this being the embodiment that enjoys the dharma and through which others can enjoy the dharma—but any other notion of Buddha’s own experience of buddhahood is nonsensical. Buddha’s marvelous display as a teacher of high-level bodhisattvas in heaven is not a mere

illusion: this manifestation of Buddha in its shared enjoyment of the dharma in fact exhibits the reality of awareness. *This* is what Buddha is, he will argue, because *this* is what *any experience* really is: the wondrous manifestation of the non-duality of manifold appearances.

The relationship between consciousness and buddhahood is essential to both Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, and, to differing extents, so is the phenomenology of buddhahood itself. All this makes for a tradition of philosophy rather different from our own. Familiar philosophical problems—here concerning especially self-awareness, the relationship between content and cognition, and the unity of consciousness—will be worked out in relation to unfamiliar presuppositions. But, to bring together our epigraphs from Collins and Foucault, it is precisely *because of* these differences that we can explore the extent to which it might be possible to think differently about important topics in philosophy of mind.

v. An Outline

We begin by considering the authorial voices, styles, and positions of Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra generally in chapter 1. I argue, primarily on the basis of the ornate verses they each use to introduce their respective works, that they present different personalities, each exemplifying different ways of being Buddhist philosophers writing in Sanskrit at the turn of the millennium: Ratnākaraśānti, the syncretic teacher; Jñānaśrīmitra, the ostentatious philosopher's philosopher.

In chapter 2, I unpack the implications of Ratnākaraśānti's understanding of tantra for a systematic view of consciousness and buddhahood. I study a number of his tantric commentaries,

focusing in particular on his *String of Pearls (Muktāvalī)*, his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*. In his discussion of post-initiatory practice (or more precisely, the *utpannakrama*), he makes clear that it is the nature of consciousness experienced as innate bliss that is glimpsed here. I show that the peculiar nature of this experience—one I unpack in terms of a non-intentional first-person acquaintance with the intrinsic subjective character of consciousness—is central to his philosophical view.

In chapter 3, I turn to the logical arguments Ratnākaraśānti uses in defense of this position. Using a mereological argument with a long history in the Buddhist tradition (the so-called neither-one-nor-many argument), he claims that consciousness exists independently of appearances or mental content (*ākāra*). Appearances can be shown to be metaphysically incoherent by this argument. They are unreal (*alīka*). Hence, buddhahood, an attainment of consciousness that is totally real, is devoid of content: it is *nirākāra*. Ratnākaraśānti develops this view principally in reliance upon Yogācāra sources. Adherents of the Madhyamaka tradition like Śāntarakṣita or Candrakīrti, who for different reasons call into question the ultimate reality of consciousness, are among Ratnākaraśānti's chief opponents. I show that Ratnākaraśānti's view can best be understood in the context of his criticism of these Mādhyamikas.

One of the central stakes of Ratnākaraśānti's denial of the reality of appearances is the establishment of a difference between consciousness and its content. Ratnākaraśānti concedes to the Dharmakīrtian tradition that, insofar as idealism is true, there is a sense in which the content of cognition is not different from cognition. There is no insentient external object; rather, there is only the moment-to-moment arising of consciousness with different appearances. Appearances thus have the same nature as cognition itself. To this extent, Ratnākaraśānti admits,

consciousness and its content are identical. But—and here he makes his more controversial claim—because content can be shown to be unreal whereas the manifestation of consciousness itself is indubitably real, they are ultimately different.

This difference between consciousness and its content is one of the principal objects of Jñānaśrīmitra's critique, to which I turn in chapter 4. For Jñānaśrīmitra, consciousness is by nature *sākāra*, contentful or endowed with an appearance, and he argues that it is absurd to think that consciousness might manifest without an appearance. The identity between consciousness and appearance is total: there is no appearance without consciousness of that appearance, and there is no consciousness without some appearance. He thus aims to refute Ratnākaraśānti's view that there is a difference between them, while at once defending the Dharmakīrtian tradition.

Further, however, Jñānaśrīmitra refutes *every* notion of difference in defense of a radical non-dualism. There is no way to know difference, he contends, for every moment of cognition is aware only of itself; on the ultimate analysis, each cognition is blind to all other cognitions. While Ratnākaraśānti might also profess a non-dualism, in Jñānaśrīmitra's view his insistence on a difference between consciousness and content betrays his tacit dualism. For Jñānaśrīmitra, even our cognition of a variegated appearance (*citrākāra*) is really non-dual (*citrādvaita*) insofar as it is contained in a single moment of self-aware cognition. This makes for the *wondrous* nature of non-dual cognition (another sense of *citra*): appearances are manifold—and yet, insofar as they manifest in a single moment of self-aware cognition, they are an indivisible unity. In the appendix to this dissertation, I provide a provisional translation of the fourth chapter of Jñānaśrīmitra's *A Treatise Proving Sākāravāda*, the *Citrādvaitaparicheda*, wherein he

elucidates this non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition and many other central points of his view.

In chapter 5, I turn to Jñānaśrīmitra's buddhology. He synthesizes his view of wondrous non-dual cognition with a novel take on canonical Yogācāra sources, developing a non-dualist view of buddhahood that prioritizes Buddha's embodiments that manifest and teach the dharma (or primarily the *sambhogakāya*) over Buddha's embodiment as the reality realized in enlightenment (the *dharmakāya*). While his view is not incompatible with tantra—indeed, his colleagues and students would use his work in defense of their own tantric views—Jñānaśrīmitra himself keeps tantra out of his philosophical discussion, relying instead only on non-tantric Yogācāra sources to ground his buddhology. I conclude my discussion of his buddhology with some consideration of why he might have thought this strategy more prudent than Ratnākaraśānti's syncretism.

vi. Terms of Debate
a) Appearance, Content, Structure (*Ākāra*)

I have found it most useful here to translate a central term, *ākāra*, inconsistently. In other literature, the word is sometimes translated *phenomenal content*, as in Griffiths, or else *mental image*, as often in Parimal Patil's work.⁶⁰ Ratnākaraśānti equates it with *pratibhāsa* and *ābhāsa*, both words that mean *appearance*, and Jñānaśrīmitra often uses it interchangeably with these words as well. (Jñānaśrīmitra also avails himself of the synonymous *ākṛti* with some frequency, especially in verse for the sake of meter.) I have often rendered *ākāra* as *appearance* or *mental*

⁶⁰ Note Griffiths' discussion of *ākāra*, *On Being Buddha*, 165–168.

content, though sometimes *structure* is most appropriate: an *ākāra* is an immediate appearance to cognition; it is the intentional content manifest in an instance of consciousness, what one is immediately conscious *of*; it is the structure of a given cognition, as in the common phrase *grāhyagrāhakākāra*, subject-object *structure* (sometimes rendered “appearance of subject and object”). Where Ratnākaraśānti argues cognition is *nirākāra*, then, he means that in its nature it is devoid of appearance, contentless, pure manifestation without the imposition of subject-object structure. Where Jñānaśrīmitra argues cognition is *sākāra*, on the other hand, he means it is contentful or manifests in, with, or through appearances. Note that in either case there is some distance between the *ākāra* and the object: the object, *artha* or *viṣaya*, is mediated, determined (*adhyavasita*) on the basis of the immediate appearance, though the particularities of this distance will be a topic of dispute. Indeed, how exactly *ākāra* should be understood—whether, for instance, *ākāra* might ultimately be equated with *artha*, whether there is a kind of structure that is beyond the duality of subject and object, etc.—is a central problem throughout this dissertation. Still, I have decided to translate the word inconsistently rather than leave it untranslated.

There is a further ambiguity to the term to keep in mind. We will also have need to speak of *ākāras* as the appearances of a particular embodied state, especially where we are speaking of the appearances of the embodiments of Buddha in heaven and the world (cf. Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v.: “external gesture or aspect of the body, the expression of the face [as furnishing a clue to the disposition of mind]”). Buddha’s embodied appearance in the world, then, appears in certain definite ways, with certain *ākāras*, both to Buddha’s own cognition and to other sentient beings who experience the Buddha’s teaching, and so to this

extent Buddha's form-embodiments are *sākāra*. Whether this fact is enough to make the form-embodiments fundamentally unreal given the presence of this apparent structure will be a central topic of debate between Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra.

Debates concerning whether something is *sākāra* or *nirākāra* have a complicated history in Indian philosophy—a history it is not my endeavor here to write. One can consult the special edition of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, edited by Birgit Kellner and Sara McClintock, devoted to the topic. Issues as diverse as whether or not the Four Truths of the Nobles (*āryasatya*) have different aspects (*ākāras*); whether or not our cognition of external objects is mediated by a representation (*ākāra*); whether or not the images (*ākāras*) present in a maṇḍala visualized in tantric practice are real; whether or not cognition is essentially contentful (one of our issues); and whether or not the Buddha's embodiments are essentially endowed with appearances (another of our issues)—all these problems fall under this *sākāra/nirākāra* rubric in one way or another. While there may be some distant genetic relation between the soteriological concern for *ākāras* as aspects of the Four Truths of the Nobles and our authors' buddhological concerns, this is not part of their project in the work we will consider here. Certain of Jñānaśrīmitra's debates with non-Buddhists regarding the possibility of yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) may have more to do with this old, Ābhidharmika understanding of *ākāra*. While they argue for idealism when facing external realists, in the context of their controversy our authors assume its truth, so whether or not our cognition of external objects is mediated by a representation is not their issue here: there is no external object to be represented. Rather, as suggested above, our concern will be most simply whether or not mental content or appearances

are real, and what this implies for the idea that consciousness is by its nature and so in every instance intentional.

vi. Terms of Debate

b) Manifestation (*Prakāśa*) and Self-Awareness (*Svasaṃvedana*)

Another central term, *prakāśa*, has most often been translated as *manifestation*. It is the nature of consciousness to manifest; manifestation is what consciousness inherently does. *Consciousness*, *awareness*, and *cognition* will be used interchangeably to translate terms like *jñāna*, *vijñāna*, *dhī*, *buddhi*, and *citta*.⁶¹ (*Experience* will be reserved for *anubhava*, though there is not a clear distinction between, say, *anubhava* and *jñāna* drawn in this material.) The question will be, then, whether the manifestation that is inherent to consciousness is possible *without* appearances (*nirākāra*) (whether, to use another of Ratnākaraśānti's locutions, *prakāśamātra* or *bare manifestation*, manifestation devoid of content, is possible), or whether it is only ever certain appearances that manifest.⁶² Is there ever *bare* manifestation? Or is there only ever the manifestation *of content*? Because it is the nature of consciousness to manifest one way or the other, these philosophers will also speak of contentless consciousness (*nirākārajñāna*, etc.) without explicit reference to manifestation. Because bare manifestation (*prakāśamātra*) is a

⁶¹ There are of course the nuances of episodes of unconscious awareness. For instance, I might be *aware* of a blue patch in my visual field, but I do not report being *consciously* aware of it when asked despite avoiding the puddle as I walk; I might say, "Yes, I was aware of the puddle, but I was not consciously aware of it, since I was engaged in conversation." Episodes like this will not often concern us here. Where they do, "unconscious awareness" or "unconscious cognition" will be specified.

⁶² While removed from the question of constructivism's role in shaping mystical experience, this issue is akin to what is explored in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, edited by Robert Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). See especially Mark Woodhouse's "On the Possibility of Pure Consciousness" for a philosophical defense of the possibility of contentless consciousness; for another exploration of the issue in Yogācāra sources, see Paul Griffiths' contribution, "Pure Consciousness in Indian Buddhism."

unique conscious experience devoid of content in Ratnākaraśānti's view, it will sometimes be rendered simply *contentless consciousness* in the explication of his system.

Self-awareness or *self-consciousness* (*svasaṃvedana*, *svasaṃvitti*, *svasaṃvit*, *svavit*) is also inherent to consciousness. For both Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, it is taken as given that the manifestation of consciousness is in its nature self-conscious, aware of itself first-personally or from a subjective perspective; this self-consciousness makes it *consciousness* and not insentient matter.⁶³ Misunderstandings may arise immediately when we begin speaking of self-awareness this way in the context of Buddhist thought, so a brief comment is necessary here. Self-consciousness is not at all consciousness *of the self*, as if there were an entity, the self, that consciousness is aware of when it self-conscious. Self-consciousness is rather the inherent reflexivity of consciousness, the fact that consciousness is aware of itself simply in manifesting. As they are both Yogācāra idealists, this fact about consciousness is taken for granted by Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra; they must, however, defend the view from Mādhyamika critique, for certain of their colleagues at Vikramaśīla, Prajñākaramati among them, argued self-consciousness does not ultimately exist—or indeed, that it is conceptually incoherent. We will consider some of these arguments below.⁶⁴

When I speak of a first-personal or subjective perspective, this is not meant to suggest that self-consciousness has a subject-object structure or relation (*grāhyagrāhakākāra* or *-bhāva*).

⁶³ This is a point famously made by Śāntarakṣita in his *Tattvasaṃgraha*, vv.1999–2000, and *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, vv.16–17. See “Is *svasaṃvitti* transcendental? A tentative reconstruction following Śāntarakṣita.” *Asian Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2005): 77–111. Note that Jñānaśrīmitra cites these verses of Śāntarakṣita's at JNĀ 471.7–8.

⁶⁴ We will have opportunity to discuss certain aspects of Ratnākaraśānti's defense of self-consciousness in chapter 3. Because our primary interest is the dispute between Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, we will not here consider the details of Jñānaśrīmitra's defense of the ultimate reality of self-consciousness, which is laid out in SSŚ 5, though it is indeed fascinating and worthy of further study. Note that, as Ikkō Arai has recently shown, Jñānaśrīmitra explicitly takes on Prajñākaramati's interpretation of Śāntideva in that chapter, defending his view from this Mādhyamika critique. We will come to this in chapter 3, section v, b.

Rather, I mean to capture something of the unique peculiarity of consciousness discussed above. We will have the opportunity to discuss this at more length below, but we might note for now that this is meant to capture what William James referred to as the “warmth and intimacy” that my conscious states have through which I know immediately that they belong to me and not to someone else. Dharmakīrti makes a similar claim when he argues that an advanced yogin, though he might know the contents of my thoughts third-personally, does not experience my thoughts with the first-person self-conscious perspective I have on them.⁶⁵

The issue of what exactly the content of self-consciousness is—indeed, whether it *has* content at all—will be a topic of dispute we will consider in detail. Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra agree, however, in availing themselves of an ambiguity that is basic to the Dharmakīrtian tradition. In addition to being the defining characteristic of consciousness, self-consciousness is also spoken of as a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge; indeed, it is the most fundamental means of knowledge for them both. This means that, on the one hand, self-consciousness is the fundamental nature of conscious states, what defines them over and against the insentient; but on the other, it is not only an abstract state of affairs pertaining to conscious states, but also something that might yield epistemic certainty. (*What* exactly it gives us certainty about, however, will be hotly contested: does it yield certainty regarding the nature of manifestation—or even the experience of buddhahood itself—and nothing more? Or does it yield certainty only regarding the manifestation of particular appearances?) Self-consciousness is both a fact about consciousness and a means of knowledge. I have tried to keep this ambiguity in view as I discuss these themes in Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s work.

⁶⁵ See in particular chapter 2, section iii, b.

vii. A Note on Textual Materials

Because Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's texts are in various stages of critical editing—and because I owe a great deal of thanks for my access to certain editions and manuscript materials—a note about our primary texts is worthwhile here. Many of Ratnākaraśānti's texts are available only in Tibetan translation (**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* [VMS], **Madhyamālamkāropadeśa* [MAU], **Madhyamakālamkāravṛtti-Madhyamapratipadsiddhi* [MAV]). For these texts, I have relied upon the dPe bsdur ma or “comparative” edition of the Tibetan canon (*bstan 'gyur*), which collates the differences between the four principal block-print editions. The *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (PPU), which will be one of our primary interests here, is extant in Sanskrit in addition to its Tibetan translation (also to be found in the dPe bsdur ma), but the edition of the Sanskrit text has not yet been published. Thanks to Shōryū Katsura's talk at the “Ratnākara Readings” workshop in Salaya, Thailand, in March 2017, I have been able to study certain passages in Sanskrit, and Professor Katsura has kindly allowed me to cite those passages in my footnotes. Needless to say, I eagerly await the publication of the Sanskrit text under preparation by Luo Hong; I will refer to Katsura's section numbers given in his 1976 “A Synopsis of the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* of Ratnākaraśānti” and his 2017 “A New Synopsis of the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*” below in hopes that this will make reference to the Sanskrit easier when it is published.

Ratnākaraśānti's great commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* (HT), the *Muktāvalī* (MuĀv), is another matter. The Sanskrit of this text was edited and published in 2001 by Tripāṭhī and Negi

in Sarnath's *Biblioteca Indo-Tibetica Series*. This edition, however, has certain peculiarities. The HT was first published by David Snellgrove in 1959, together with Ratnākaraśānti's student Kṛṣṇācārya's commentary, the *Yogaratnamālā* (YRM), on the basis of 19th- and early 20th-century manuscripts. Tripāṭhī and Negi have chosen to print the text of the HT following Snellgrove's edition, even where their centuries-earlier palm-leaf manuscripts and Ratnākaraśānti's commentary itself suggest different readings. I have printed the HT verses we will consider below as it would seem Ratnākaraśānti read them (which is often supported by the palm-leaf manuscripts as well, as per the footnotes to the Sarnath edition). Further, it is with great fortune that I have been able to utilize Harunaga Isaacson's draft edition of MuĀv ad HT I.i and I.viii, which sections will be our primary concern below. Isaacson was kind enough both to read many lengthy passages of these chapters with me and to allow me to print his draft edition in my footnotes. I will, then, refer in my footnotes separately to MuĀv_{Isaacson} and MuĀv_{ed}, or Isaacson's draft and the Sarnath edition of the MuĀv, and I will print Isaacson's text where possible with reference to the Sarnath edition in parentheses for the sake of comparison. I thank Isaacson, too, for making available to me images of the manuscripts of the MuĀv, as well as of two relevant folios of another of Ratnākaraśānti's tantric works we will consider, his commentary on the *Khasama Tantra*, the *Khasamā Tīkā* (KT).

Jñānaśrīmitra's work presents another set of issues. Though preserved in Tibet, his principal philosophical works were not preserved in Tibetan translation.⁶⁶ We have, then, only grainy black-and-white photographs of the single extant palm-leaf manuscript, one set of images

⁶⁶ The manuscript of Jñānaśrīmitra's works does include occasional Tibetan jottings, however, though in the SSŚ, as far as I have seen, they are restricted to translations of chapter titles. Who wrote them when is not clear. See our discussion in chapter 1 of the possibility of a Tibetan translation that did not make it into the Tibetan canon.

taken by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana and another by Giuseppe Tucci.⁶⁷ In 1959, Anantalal Thakur published an edition of this manuscript based on Sāṅkṛtyāyana’s images under the title *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvaliḥ* (JNĀ) as part of the *Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series* from the Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute in Patna. A second edition was published under the same auspices in 1987. Jñānaśrīmitra’s work is exceptionally difficult, there are inevitable scribal errors in the single manuscript, and the black-and-white images of it are blurry at times: at 578 pages of closely-printed Sanskrit (most of it prose), Thakur’s edition is quite a feat. As all editions, though, it is provisional, and it makes no claim to being critical. Texts other than the *Kṣaṇabhaṅgādhyāya*, of which there is a separate manuscript, and the short *Kāryakāraṇa-bhāvasiddhi*, of which there is a Tibetan translation, the have no critical notes marking Thakur’s conjectures, which are rather frequent and most often (but not always) good ones, and there are many places where another look at the manuscript helps to improve the text further.

Bhikṣu Hejung, at the University of Hamburg, is preparing a critical edition and translation of the *Sākārasiddhiśāstra* (SSŚ), which will be our primary concern when we consider Jñānaśrīmitra’s work. To date, he has completed a draft edition of the first four chapters of this magnum opus (assisted by Harunaga Isaacson, Mattia Salvini, and other members of the “Ratnākara Readings” workshop at Mahidol University in Salaya, Thailand), which edition improves upon Thakur’s in many respects: in its readings, tracking down citations and parallels, etc. Hejung was kind enough to share the manuscript photographs with me and to help me in my initial efforts at reading the manuscript with a patience I deeply appreciate. When we consider

⁶⁷ The manuscript, it is worth noting, is very possibly from Jñānaśrīmitra’s home-university, Vikramaśīla, written within a century or two of his life. It is written on palm-leaves and in ca. 12th-century Proto-Bengali (aka Maithila) script that, Martin Delhey has shown, share many characteristics with manuscripts we can trace with relative certainty to the library of Vikramaśīla. See Martin Delhey, “The Library at the East Indian Buddhist Monastery of Vikramaśīla: an Attempt to Identify Its Himalayan Remains” *Manuscript Cultures* 8 (2015): 2–24.

the SSŚ and the closely related *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* (SSSū) below, then, I will refer to Thakur’s text in the JNĀ, but I will make (and note) changes based on the manuscript. When Hejung’s edition of the SSŚ is finished, however, it will no doubt supplant both JNĀ’s edition and what I have attempted to do in my footnotes below. In the appendix, I will refer to Hejung’s edition of SSŚ 4 as H, as noted in the appendix’s brief introduction. Torsten Gerloff, Daisy Cheung, Ryuta Kikuya, and Victor D’Avella also helped me in my fledgling attempts at philological rigor while I was in Hamburg. It is with thanks again to Harunaga Isaacson—who hosted me at the University of Hamburg, read much of this material with me, and kindly provided me with sources and assistance as I learned to read manuscripts—that I include manuscript readings in my footnotes. Correct readings are, directly or indirectly, thanks to Isaacson and Hejung; incorrect readings and other mistakes are my fault alone.

Chapter 1: Style and Tradition in Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's Poetry

i. Introducing Our Protagonists

The two luminaries of the last phase of Buddhist philosophy in India who will be our focus in this dissertation, Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 970–1045) and Jñānaśrīmitra (ca. 980–1030), may have been students of the same teacher. Dharmakīrtiśrī (ca. 10th–11th century), or Dharmakīrti of the Golden Isles (*suvarṇadvīpa*), was a well-known teacher from what is today Indonesia.¹ Another of his famous students, Atiśa (982–1054), travelled to the Golden Isles to study with him; it is from Atiśa's biographies that we learn that Dharmakīrtiśrī also taught Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra, and Jñānaśrīmitra's student Ratnakīrti (ca. 990–1050). Whether Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra in fact studied together, and whether either or both of them traveled along maritime trade-routes to the Golden Isles or instead encountered Dharmakīrtiśrī on a trip to India, remains a matter of speculation. Regardless, it is perhaps just possible to view their dispute over buddhahood and the nature of consciousness and content as, in the apt words of Greg Seton, “a form of sibling rivalry.”²

Whether or not they knew each other in their student days, Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra would become colleagues at the university of Vikramaśīla. Founded by the king

¹ See George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, edited by Walter F. Vella and translated by Sue Brown Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 141–144; Helmut Eimer, “Suvarṇadvīpa's Commentaries on the Bodhicaryāvatāra,” in *Studien Zum Jainismus Und Buddhismus: Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf*, edited by Klaus Bruhn and Albrecht Wezler (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1981), 73–78; Gregory Seton, *Defining Wisdom: Ratnākaraśānti's Sāratamā*, D.Phil Dissertation (University of Oxford, 2015), 39–46. See Seton for a discussion of Dharmakīrtiśrī's relation to Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra, and Ratnakīrti.

² Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 41.

Devapāla (r. ca. 812–850) on the bank of the Ganges in eastern India, this institution was the center for the study of Buddhist tantra and philosophy from its founding to the end of the twelfth century.³ Both Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra were *mahāpaṇḍitas*, “Great Scholars,” a title conferred by the Pāla kings (in their case Mahīpāla I [r. ca. 977–1027] or Nayapāla [r. ca. 1027–1043]); Ratnākaraśānti was further distinguished as one of the four so-called “Gatekeepers” at Vikramaśīla, Jñānaśrīmitra as the university’s second “Central Pillar.” We can imagine that these royal appointments came with handsome stipends.⁴

Ratnākaraśānti, the elder of the two, was also known in colophons as the “Omniscient One of the Kali-Age,” *kalikālasarvajña* (a title later given to the Jaina scholar Hemacandra [1088–1171]).⁵ He certainly earned the title of omniscient: he composed voluminous commentaries on sūtras and tantras; he wrote original practice manuals (*sādhana*s) for various different tantric traditions; he composed philosophical works of subtlety and originality; he

³ Given its importance for Tibetan Buddhism, and relying on Indian sources, Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya (Simla: Indian Institute for Advanced Study, 1970), has a wealth of information about Vikramaśīla. See Alexis Sanderson’s “The Śaiva Age,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009), 87–115, for information regarding Vikramaśīla in relation to the Pāla kings. It is Sanderson who argues that the founding of the university by Dharmapāla, as Tāranātha states, is incorrect. For a fascinating glimpse into Vikramaśīla’s library, see Martin Delhey, “The Library at the East Indian Buddhist Monastery of Vikramaśīla: an Attempt to Identify Its Himalayan Remains” *Manuscript Cultures* 8 (2015): 2–24. For an overview based on archeological evidence, Tibetan histories, and inscriptions, see Radhakrishna Chaudhary, *The University of Vikramaśīla* (Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1975).

⁴ Regarding the title of *mahāpaṇḍita*, see Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age,” 105–106 fn. 222. According to later Tibetan historical and hagiographical accounts, the other scholars in these especially distinguished positions at Vikramaśīla were: the gatekeepers Vāgīśvarakīrti, Prajñākaramati, and Nāropā; and the first central pillar Ratnavajra. In addition to Tāranātha, see Kazuo Kano’s remarks on these characterizations in *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness: rNgog Blo-lan-shes-rab and A Transmission of the Ratnagotravibhāga from India to Tibet* (Vienna: ATBS, 2016), 55 fn. 44. While one often hears reference to “six gatekeeper paṇḍitas,” there is also evidence in the translators’ colophon to Ratnākaraśānti’s MAU, noted by Kano, that there were *four* gatekeepers, where Ratnavajra and Jñānaśrīmitra are presumably left off the list since they were not gatekeepers but central pillars.

⁵ See Isaacson, “Yogācāra and Vajrayāna according to Ratnākaraśānti,” in *The foundation for yoga practitioners: The Buddhist Yogācārabhūmi treatise and its adaptation in India*, ed. Uriah Kragh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1037.

dedicated one work to metrics and another to riddles; and all the while, he taught prolifically.⁶ Given the prominence of some of his students, such as Atiśa or 'Brog mi Lo tsā ba, his influence would be felt within Buddhist circles for centuries to come in Tibet. He was less concerned than some of his colleagues with defending Buddhist philosophy from non-Buddhist attacks, making only the occasional passing reference to non-Buddhist traditions. He concerned himself instead with the proper understanding of Buddhist philosophy, scripture, and practice.

Jñānaśrīmitra was no less accomplished. He composed works of extreme philosophical complexity, dealing with every issue important to Buddhist philosophers in his day and spending a substantial portion of his oeuvre refuting non-Buddhist attacks, especially those of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā philosophers.⁷ We will come to his work on metrics below. His works were not successfully transmitted to Tibet: though dGe 'dun chos 'phel reports having seen at Shalu monastery what he considers to be a draft translation into Tibetan of the JNĀ, aside from a few

⁶ What we can glean of Ratnākaraśānti's life from colophons and Tibetan hagiographies (especially those of his famous disciple, Atiśa) has been considered in detail in Seton's *Defining Wisdom*, 18–61. See, too, Seton's helpful comments regarding Ratnākaraśānti's various works in his annotated bibliography, 288–299. On some of his still lesser-known Indian students in the realm of tantra, see Isaacson, "Yogācāra and Vajrayāna," 1048.

⁷ For what little we know about Jñānaśrīmitra's life, see McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2–3, and Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 54–55. For remarks on Jñānaśrīmitra's life and his lasting influence, see Anantalal Thakur, "Jñānaśrīmitra and His Works," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Buddha Jayanti Special Issue, 1956, 186–192, and his more extensive "Introduction" to JNĀ, 1–42: see especially 29–42 for an impressive litany of later citations of Jñānaśrīmitra's work in non-Buddhist materials. For some information regarding his name and the significance of -śrīmitra, see Peter Skilling, "The Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-viniścaya of Daśabalaśrīmitra," *Buddhist Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (1987): 3–23, esp. 14 and fn. 18.

stray works, Jñānaśrīmitra did not make it into the Tibetan canon.⁸ In India, however, he was treated as a serious philosopher whose objections needed to be dealt with: Udayana’s famous *Ātmatattvaviveka* is devoted to refuting Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, and through this important proto-Navya-Nyāya work (in addition to responses from Jaina philosophers) his thought lived on in India for centuries. Among Buddhist circles, his students Ratnakīrti and Yamāri (ca. 1000–1060) continued his legacy and defended him from Buddhist and non-Buddhist attacks.

Not much more than this can be gleaned from what little historical information we have about Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra. But we have other avenues into the lives of these authors. It has long been recognized that these two philosophers were also esteemed poets.⁹ Not only did both adorn their philosophical work with elegant verse; both also wrote independent treatises on metrics (not to mention Ratnākaraśānti’s book of on riddles, *Astonishing the Astute*

⁸ The *Kāryakāraṇabhāvasiddhi* and *Vṛttamālāstuti* are present in the bsTan ’gyur: see Toh. 4258 and 4305. Other works attributed to Jñānaśrī in their Tibetan translations may prove to be by Jñānaśrīmitra, but this is far from certain at this point: see my note regarding the **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa* in chapter 5, fn. 99. For dGe ’dun chos ’phel’s report, see *Grains of Gold: Tales of a Cosmopolitan Traveler*, Gendun Chopel, trans. Thupten Jinpa and Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 46. There, he lists separately: “97. *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* composed by Paṇḍita Jñānamitra; two hundred eight long folios with seven lines per page; good condition,” this being the Sanskrit manuscript of the JNĀ, and “94. *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* with a label stating ‘composed by paṇḍita Jñānamitra’ and another section of text; both are Tibetan texts written in Tibetan script on palm leaves. They are extremely difficult to read and are not clear. This appears to be the main book that represents an initial translation by a *lotsāwa*; it seems to be on the topic or *prajñāpāramitā*.” He calls what Thakur named the *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvali* the *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* because this is the last work in this collection of texts, which, combined with the fact he does not list the individual texts’ titles, suggests that perhaps he did not have time to look through the whole bundle and discern the different works in it. From this we might infer that the occasional marginal notes in Tibetan found in the Sanskrit manuscript of the JNĀ (Tibetan translations of chapter titles in the SSS, for instance) were perhaps not written by dGe ’dun chos ’phel but instead by this unknown translator in preparing his draft, or else by another interested party earlier in the manuscript’s history. To my knowledge, the whereabouts of this Tibetan translation of JNĀ are unknown, and it has not surfaced in the collections of photographs taken by Rāhula Sāṅkrītyāna.

⁹ Anantalal Thakur observes in his introduction to his edition of Jñānaśrīmitra’s work, “Our author had a facile pen and a very lucid style that made the works pleasing in spite of the abstruseness of the subject-matter. [...] Sometimes the language becomes poetic,” he continues, noting that “Jñānaśrīmitra’s poetic fame seems to have been widespread” (JNĀ 13–14). Summarizing years of study of both Jñānaśrīmitra’s and Ratnākaraśānti’s poetic and metrical works, Michael Hahn tells us that “Highly sophisticated works like the *Vṛttamālāstuti* [of Jñānaśrīmitra] and the *Vidagdhasivismāpana* [of Ratnākaraśānti] show that the professors of philosophy were by no means specialists in only one discipline of learning but regarded it worthwhile to spend some part of their knowledge and energy on such worldly topics like the intricacies of elaborate Sanskrit poetry,” 22, in “Ratnākaraśānti’s *Vidagdhasivismāpana* — an old and unpublished work on Sanskrit riddles,” *Bulletin d’études indiennes* 20.2 (2002): 3–81.

[*Vidagdhavismāpana*]). Their institutional home of Vikramaśīla would seem to have been a hotbed of poetic composition and compilation, where scholars were free to engage in literary pursuits alongside their philosophical and spiritual ones.

Making use of their poetry—especially the elegant verses with which they open their works—I will here introduce Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra’s distinctive positions, world-views, and personalities by contrasting the authorial characters that they construct for themselves in their writing. If, for Sanskrit-speaking Buddhists, personal identity and self-cultivation became intimately linked to the hyper-refinement that grounds the practice of poetry, as Matthew Kapstein has suggested,¹⁰ then it will be no surprise that different identities emerge in relation to different poetic practices. The choices—involved in different exemplifications of poetic excellence confer on different poets their different identities: the choice of meter, of allusion, of poetic ornament, of pun leads the reader to understand the poet’s identity in one way and not another. Further, in the introductory verses we will focus on here, we will see that Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra also use verse as an opportunity to align themselves with different strands of the Buddhist philosophical tradition and to take stands on central issues. When we juxtapose the choices made by these two authors, we find two very different characters. With this initial sketch of Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra in hand, we will then turn to their philosophical and buddhological arguments in the following chapters.

ii. Jñānaśrīmitra’s Ostentatiousness:
a) Poetic Allusions

¹⁰ See *Reasons Traces: Identity and interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 135–156, esp. 151–154.

We can begin by looking at a verse of praise penned by Ratnākaraśānti. He begins his *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (PPU), a work cited and critiqued at great length by Jñānaśrīmitra, with the following:

*yaḥ śirasi bhāti kṛtināṃ mokṣadvārārghakusumareṇur iva /
jayati suramaulimṛgyaḥ sa pādapāṃsur daśabalasya // PPU 1 //*¹¹

Glory to the dust on the feet of the Buddha with his ten powers—
the dust that shines on the head of the learned (yours truly),
like the pollen of flowers offered at the gateway to liberation,
sought out for the crowns of the gods.

The meter is *āryā*, a meter measured in morae (or *mātras* [viz. 12, 18, 12, 15]) rather than in syllables (or *akṣaras*). It is succinct and elegant and lends itself to a great deal of variability, and so allows for some rhythmic and musical creativity on the part of the composer. We will see that Ratnākaraśānti was especially fond of this meter. But, as Luo Hong mentions in a footnote to his edition of the recently-discovered Sanskrit of these verses, this particular verse has a striking parallel with the second opening verse of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*:

*jayanti bāṇāsuramaulilālītā daśāsyacūḍāmaṇicakracumbinaḥ /
surāsurādhiśāsikhāntaśāyino bhavacchidas tryambakapādapāṃsavaḥ //*¹²

Glory to the dust on the feet of Three-Eyed One,
which has caressed the crown of the demon Bāṇa—
the dust that kissed the jeweled wheel of the diadem of Rāvaṇa with his ten mouths,
which brings an end to saṃsāra,
resting on the moon-stone longed for by gods and demons.

Ratnākaraśānti echoes not only the theme but a number of specific points here. For Bāṇa's *daśāsya*- (“Rāvaṇa with his ten mouths”), Ratnākaraśānti uses *daśabalasya* (“of the Buddha with

¹¹ Luo Hong, “The Opening Verses of Ratnākaraśānti's *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*,” *The First International Academic Forum on Maitreya Studies*: (2013) 18–29.

¹² See Luo, “The Opening Verses,” 23 fn. 2.

his ten powers”), which echoes both Bāṇa’s “ten” (*daśa*) and his use of the syllable *-sya*. And then there are direct borrowings: *pādapāṃsu*, “the dust on the feet,” and Ratnākaraśānti’s *suramauli-*, “crowns of the gods,” for Bāṇa’s *-asuramauli*, “crown of the demon.” It is another instance of Bāṇa’s popularity among poets working under the Pālas that might be added to those Gary Tubb has already explored in his essay “On the Boldness of Bāṇa.”¹³ We will come to another possible nod to Bāṇa below.

Now compare this with the opening of Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* (SSSū), his *Summary Verses on the Sākāravāda*. Here, Jñānaśrīmitra—not one to be outdone—makes his own poetic allusion:

*prajñā yena khalīkṛtāambaradaśām ākṛṣya naḥ preyasī
sāsūyaṃ sadasi sthiteṣu kṛtiṣu prakhyātakīrtiṣv api /
krūranyāyamayo nirākṛtinayo duḥśāsanaḥ sāmpratam
so 'yaṃ madbhujapañjare nipatitaḥ samrakṣyatām kauravāḥ // SSSū 1.1 //*

This Nirākṛtinaya [or Nirākāravāda], which consists of cruel logic and is so difficult to discipline (*duḥśāsanaḥ*), by which, having distorted her sky[-like] state (*ambaradaśām ākṛṣya*), our beloved Prajñā was disdainfully humiliated before the assembly, despite the far-famed scholars who stood there—it has now fallen into my clutches. Save it if you can, Kauravas!

As Thakur notes in his edition, the last line of this verse is borrowed verbatim from the *Veṅīsaṃhāra* of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, a dramatic retelling of the epic war in the *Mahābhārata*, where the full verse is sung by Bhīma having captured Duḥśāsana. Jñānaśrīmitra’s verse is an elaborate double-entendre (*śleṣa*), and reading it in the context of the *Mahābhārata*, we might have something like this:

¹³ Gary Tubb, “On the Boldness of Bāṇa,” in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, ed. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 308–354.

This Duḥśāsana, who is full of cruel arguments
and whose behavior is ugly (*nirākṛtinaya*),
by whom, having dragged her by the hem of her garment (*ambaradaśām ākṛsya*),
our wise beloved was disdainfully humiliated before the assembly,
despite all the far-famed noblemen who stood there—
he has now fallen into my clutches.
Save him if you can, Kauravas!

It is quite the tour de force. Jñānaśrīmitra not only borrows the last line from the *Veṅiśaṃhāra*, but he effectively uses punning to critique particular aspects of Ratnākaraśānti's view. For instance, we will see in Chapter 5 that a recurrent theme in Jñānaśrīmitra's attack is Ratnākaraśānti's misunderstanding of what *sky-like* is supposed to mean when, in many different places, Buddha's gnosis or fundamental embodiment, the Dharmakāya, is said to be like the sky. Ratnākaraśānti thinks this straightforwardly means that the fundamental gnosis attained by Buddha is *nirākāra*, devoid of all appearances, in the same way the sky is devoid of clouds on a clear autumn day. Jñānaśrīmitra argues rather that sky-like means devoid of *adventitious* stains. The clouds in the simile are not immediate appearances—such appearances, Jñānaśrīmitra thinks, are undeniably real. Rather, the clouds are just that conceptually determined mental content that distorts appearances and leads us into the cycle of rebirth. Through his distortion of what sky-like is supposed to mean, Ratnākaraśānti has stripped Prajñā, wisdom or insight embodied, of all appearances, just as Duḥśāsana humiliated Draupadi in the assembly of far-famed noblemen. And as the Kauravas could not save Duḥśāsana from Bhīma, so too no one can protect the Nirākāravāda from Jñānaśrīmitra's attacks.

The SSSū was written after the *Sākārasiddhiśāstra* (SSŚ), his *A Treatise Proving Sākāravāda*: the arguments presented in the latter text, then, are what has led to Ratnākaraśānti's Nirākāravāda falling into Jñānaśrīmitra's clutches. But there is something comedic to this too, I

think. The SSS, as one of its introductory verses states, is meant to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of various Buddhist idealist views: “This whole triple-world is established to be nothing but consciousness. Here, we will address the strengths and weaknesses of rival positions regarding that idealist view.”¹⁴ The colophon to the whole work ends with reference back to this: “Completed now is this *Sākārasiddhiśāstra*, composed by the *mahāpaṇḍita* Jñānaśrīmitra, which was undertaken by means of a critical investigation into the strengths and weaknesses [of various Buddhist idealist views].”¹⁵ The view that there is nothing but consciousness is agreed upon at the very beginning, and indeed, the disputants in the text’s 146 closely-printed pages assume the truth of this view. It is rival views *internal to Buddhist idealism* that are investigated and debated in the work, especially the Nirākāravāda and Sākāravāda, but also certain Madhyamaka views that grant at least the conventional truth of idealism. So, we can imagine that likening this intra-Buddhist idealist debate with his colleague at Vikramaśīla to the greatest war in history—and his colleague’s philosophical affronts to those of the war’s greatest villain in particular—would surely have amused his audience as much as the punning composition would have impressed them. Retaining the word *kaurava* from the *Veṅṅisaṃhāra*’s verse in the last line perhaps even heightens the effect: by doing so, Jñānaśrīmitra further inhabits the legendary war, play-acting as Bhīma and casting Ratnākaraśānti as the enemy. One can almost imagine Jñānaśrīmitra reciting the verse in an assembly of scholars with Ratnākaraśānti among them, wryly smiling on the sidelines but unmoved in his convictions.

¹⁴ JNĀ 367.10–11: *vijñaptimātram akhilaṃ sthitam etaj jagattrayam / tatrāvāntarabhedasya balābalaṃ ihocyate //*

¹⁵ JNĀ 513.8–9: *samāptaṃ cedaṃ balābalaparīkṣāmukhenārabdhaṃ sākārasiddhiśāstram kṛtir mahāpaṇḍita-jñānaśrīmitrapādānām iti*

Something we glimpse in this verse of Jñānaśrīmitra's is his fondness for oneupmanship. Jñānaśrīmitra has a deep-seated understanding of what the mind is, what Buddhist practice is, and what buddhahood is, and this drives his work. But in his defense of his view, it seems to me that he intends, quite simply, to be the best: it seems important to him that he is able to produce the most beautiful poetry, the most complex arguments, and the most impressive interpretive leaps. SSSū 1.1 has him showing off: whereas Ratnākaraśānti's echo of Bāṇa was certainly elegant, Jñānaśrīmitra looks like he is trying to outdo him with this more ostentatious play on the *Veṇīsamhāra*.

**ii. Jñānaśrīmitra's Ostentatiousness:
b) Metrical Works**

This penchant for oneupmanship is present in another especially striking work of Jñānaśrīmitra's, the *Vṛttamālāstuti*. Ratnākaraśānti had previously written a handbook on Sanskrit metrical rules entitled the *Chandoratnākara*. This work is accompanied by an auto-commentary, but as Michael Hahn notes, Ratnākaraśānti's metrical rules "are so clear and well-formulated that they hardly require any further elaboration—this clarity is a special feature of Ratnākaraśānti's treatise."¹⁶ The work seems to have been popular given its accessibility, and its influence would be felt in Tibet as well, both through its influence on Sakya Paṇḍita's work on metrics and through its circulation in Tibetan translation.

¹⁶ Michael Hahn, "Sanskrit Metrics — As Studied at the Buddhist Universities in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries A.D." *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, Vol. XI (1993), 59. See Hahn's edition of this work, *Ratnākaraśānti's Chandoratnākara* (Kathmandu: Nepal Research Centre, 1982).

Jñānaśrīmitra’s metrical work could not be farther from this ideal of clarity. In the *Vṛttamālāstuti*, Jñānaśrīmitra illustrates 150 different meters in the form of a praise of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, using the name of each meter in such a way that it forms a part of the hymn through double-entendre. He also uses punning to define the rules for a meter’s caesura where appropriate, and to incorporate the names of different metrical categories, such that these too can be read either as part of the praise or as having relevance for the science of metrics.¹⁷ The commentary by Śākyarakṣita (fl. 1050–1150) is all but indispensable for understanding the subtleties of the text.

Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti*, then, already outshines Ratnākaraśānti’s work on metrics for its ingenuity (if not for its pedagogical usefulness!). But Jñānaśrīmitra aims to outdo Ratnākaraśānti more explicitly. As Hahn notes, *Vṛttamālāstuti* 135 “ingeniously expands” on Ratnākaraśānti’s definition of a particularly strange meter named *yavamatī*.¹⁸ Generally the name of a meter *fits* the meter, such that it can easily be used in its definition and exemplification. *Yavamatī* however is an irregular meter, alternating between long (–) and short (˘) syllables in its first and third lines and short and long syllables in its second and fourth lines. *Yavamatī* (˘ ˘ ˘ –) does not fit the meter. Earlier metricians like Jayadeva came up with a solution to this, which Ratnākaraśānti borrows in his definition in the *Chandoratnākara*:

rephajau rajau tathā jarau jragaś ca
yavadhvaner matupstriyā samābhidhānā / 3.11

– ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ –
 ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – –

¹⁷ See Michael Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* on Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti* (1),” *South Asian Classical Studies* 8 (2013): 265–277.

¹⁸ For the following, see Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* (1),” 271–272.

There is *ra* [– ˘ –], *ja* [˘ – ˘], *ra*, and *ja* [in the even lines], then *ja*, *ra*, *ja*, *ra*, plus a long syllable [in the odd lines]. This meter has the same name (*samābhīdhānā*) as the feminine of the suffix *mat* after the word *yava*, i.e. *yava-mat-ī*, “mixed with barley.”¹⁹

The verse thus defines the meter in the meter by including the name of the meter not per se, but through the *grammatical description* of the meter’s name.

Jñānaśrīmitra means to outdo Ratnākaraśānti by expanding on the line he uses in the *Chandoratnākara*. Jñānaśrīmitra writes:

*caittamātrabhāvabhāji bhāvvyate kva
parā parārthasampad īdṛṣī dayāyām /
seyam etadākṛticchalād ato ’va-
yavadhvaner matupstiyā samābhīdhānā // 135 //*

With regard to compassion, whose true nature is only mental, how can one cultivate such a supreme fulfillment of others’ aims? This is due to a deception regarding Your appearance. For this reason, You have the same name as the feminine of the suffix *mat* after the word *avayava*, i.e. *avayava-mat-ī*, “having parts,” that is, “whole.”²⁰

By expanding *yavamātī* to *avayavamātī*, Jñānaśrīmitra hides the name of the meter *within* the word he uses to praise Mañjuśrī (*avayavamātī*): Mañjuśrī’s compassion is *whole* (*avayavamātī* = *avayavin*) even though his true nature is nothing but mind. One might worry that Mañjuśrī cannot accomplish the supreme fulfillment of others’ aims (that is, he cannot lead beings in saṃsāra to enlightenment) if he is only mind because, as Śākyarakṣita explains, “it would be impossible to attain such a fulfillment of others’ aims insofar as that fulfillment is not embodied (*amūrtatvena*).”²¹ But such a worry is deceived about the true appearance of Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī can cultivate the supreme fulfillment of others’ aims insofar as his compassion is embodied to

¹⁹ Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* (1),” 271. Ratnākaraśānti borrows the second line from Jayadeva, only modifying Jayadeva’s *samābhīdheyā* to *samābhīdhānā*.

²⁰ Compare Hahn’s more literal translation, which I have trouble making sense of as a praise of Mañjuśrī.

²¹ See Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* (1),” 271: *tasyā amūrtatvena tādṛkparārthasampadanāsāmārthyāt*.

others in appearances—despite these appearances being mind-only.²² Jñānaśrīmitra thus brings a central tenet of his Sākāravāda to bear on his implicit criticism of Ratnākaraśānti in this verse: compassion (and so a full account of buddhahood) is possible only insofar as enlightened cognition is endowed with appearances. In another place, Jñānaśrīmitra makes a similar move vis-à-vis Jayadeva, citing half a verse of his and then twisting it into his own praise of Mañjuśrī.²³ Jñānaśrīmitra, then, would seem to delight in showing off his skill not only by composing such a baroque work, but also by citing earlier works in the metrical tradition and giving their words new meanings.

iii. Competing Claims to Tradition

We saw above that the SSSū opens with an allusion to the *Veṅṅīsamhāra*, play-acting the battle between Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnākaraśānti as if it were the great war of the *Mahābhārata* itself: just as Duḥśāsana humiliated Bhīma’s beloved in the assembly of noble men, so too Ratnākaraśānti has humiliated Prajñā, Wisdom embodied. In SSSū 1.2, Jñānaśrīmitra continues in this vein, claiming now not only that Ratnākaraśānti’s reasoning is all wrong, but, importantly, specifying just which scholars in the assembly would be offended by his cruel logic:

*sākāretaramadhyamāsu kṛtinām utthāpya nānāvidhā
vikrāntīr yuvarājanāyakanaye vyakte mamāyaṃ bharaḥ /
śrīnāgārjunapādasaṃmatipade bhāṣyāntimair varṇite*

²² Note again Śākyarakṣita’s gloss, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* (1),” 271: **īdṛśī sarvākārapravṛttā parā parārthasampat**.

²³ See Hahn’s discussion of the meter *āpīḍa*, which suffers the same problem as *yavamātī*: “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* (1),” 272–273. Śākyarakṣita appeals to the *Chandoratnākara* at a number of points in his commentary: see ad *Vṛttamālāstuti* 5, 44 (where Ratnākaraśānti is referred to by his title, *kalikālasarvajña*), 78, 83, 84, and 117. I have not found another explicit reference to Ratnākaraśānti in Jñānaśrīmitra’s own text aside from the one identified by Hahn.

tannyūnādhikacintanāya saphaloⁱ madhyasthabuddheḥ śramaḥ // SSSū 1.2 //

ⁱsaphalo] Whitney Cox, em.; *saphale* JNĀ, MS.

Having raised all kinds of mighty arguments (*vikrānti*)
belonging to scholars of the Sākāravāda, the Nirākāravāda, and the Madhyamaka,
I put my weight behind (*bharaḥ*) the distinguished tradition of the foremost Maitreya,
which is in agreement with that of the glorious Nāgārjuna
and has been made to resound by the definitive portions (*-antimaiḥ*)
of Prajñākaragupta's *Bhāṣya*.

Effort spent considering the strengths and weaknesses of this view
will be fruitful for one whose mind is impartial (*madhyasthabuddhi*).

Jñānaśrīmitra here draws a proverbial line in the sand, claiming Ratnākaraśānti's philosophical heroes as his own: one whose mind is impartial will see that the Sākāravāda is the proper interpretation of the philosophers named here. This strikes at the heart of Ratnākaraśānti's project. Across his many works, Ratnākaraśānti had tried to show that Maitreya and Asaṅga, the founders of the idealist Yogācāra philosophy, were definitively right, and that Nāgārjuna, the founder of Madhyamaka—when properly understood—taught the same Yogācāra doctrine of idealism, the three natures, and so on, which is itself the real middle way (*madhyamapratipad*). In both his works on Madhyamaka, the *Commentary on and Instructions Regarding the Ornament of the Middle Way* (**Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti-Madhyamapratipadsiddhi* [MAV] and **Madhyamālaṃkāropadeśa* [MAU], respectively), Ratnākaraśānti presents an introductory verse naming these luminaries:

The two truths—taught by Maitreya and Asaṅga, and intended by Nāgārjuna as well—
will be taught in this work [viz. both the MAV and the MAU] by means of logic
(*pramāṇa*) together with scripture.²⁴

²⁴ MAV 78—263 (=MAU 78—604): *byams pa thogs med kyis gsungs shing / klu sgrub kyis kyang bzhed pa yi / tshad ma lung dang ldan pa yis / bden pa gnyis 'dir bshad par bya*. It might be more accurate to say that this verse is the first verse of Ratnākaraśānti's own composition, *The Ornament of the Middle Way* (**Madhyamālaṃkāra*), the verses of which are preserved in full in the MAV.

These three figures—all of varying levels of attainment on the bodhisattva path—are Ratnākaraśānti’s philosophical heroes. His is in many ways a conservative philosophical project: not because he does not speak the language of Dharmakīrti’s logic with sophisticated fluency—for indeed he does—but rather, because he uses this logic to return to and to justify the view of these earlier philosophers. He wants to leap back in the intellectual history of Buddhist India, back to the ontology and soteriology expressed before the proliferation of Dharmakīrti’s tradition—while nevertheless preserving all the formal insights of Dharmakīrti’s method.²⁵

From Jñānaśrīmitra’s perspective, not only is Ratnākaraśānti to blame for misinterpreting these learned Āryas; he also offends the innovative and influential interpreter of Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, whose late 8th-century *Commentary (bhāṣya)* on the *Pramāṇavārttika*, the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra*, Jñānaśrīmitra holds in especially high esteem. We will consider the details of this dispute over Prajñākaragupta below in Chapter 4, but suffice it to say here that Ratnākaraśānti—who rarely names his opponents explicitly—refers to Prajñākaragupta by name and criticizes his interpretation of one of the most fundamental arguments for idealism in the

²⁵ As we will have opportunity to explore when we come to the details of Ratnākaraśānti’s philosophical view, the view Ratnākaraśānti wants to bring back to the philosophical mainstream is squarely Yogācāra—despite Nāgārjuna’s presence in this verse from the MAV and MAU. In Ratnākaraśānti’s mind, these three Āryas are very clearly ranked, and their view is ultimately one and the same: that of Maitreya. As he says in commenting on this verse in the MAV, “In the statement ‘by means of *pramāṇa* together with scripture,’ ‘scripture’ means the Mahāyāna. [And we say ‘*pramāṇa* together with scripture’ because,] regarding the profound meaning of the Mahāyāna, only the Āryas are a *pramāṇa*; hence, we say ‘taught by Maitreya’ and so on. The Blessed One Maitreya is a bodhisattva [of the highest stage] who will immediately attain the highest, perfect enlightenment; Ārya Asaṅga is a third level bodhisattva; and Nāgārjuna is a first level bodhisattva.” MAV 78–264: *tshad ma lung dang ldan pa yis / zhes bya ba la lung ni ’dir theg pa chen po ste, de ’i yang zab mo ’i don la ’phags pa ’ba’ zhig tshad ma yin te, de ni byams pa la sogs pas gsungs pa yin no. bcom ldan ’das byams pa byang chub sems dpa’i mthar phyin pa de ma thag tu mngon par rdzogs par ’tshang rgya ba dang, ’phags pa thogs med sa gsum pa dang, ’phags pa klu sgrub ni sa dang po pa yin te [...].* The classical Yogācāra view of Maitreya, then, will be the closest to reality. The view of Asaṅga, who is in any case often commenting directly upon Maitreya’s work, is the next best thing. As Ratnākaraśānti goes on to argue in the MAU and MAV, Nāgārjuna’s view—whatever his commentators might say to the contrary—is precisely in line with Maitreya’s and Asaṅga’s Yogācāra: Nāgārjuna too taught idealism (*vijñaptimātratā*) and the doctrine of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*). See Shinya Moriyama, “Ratnākaraśānti’s criticism of the Madhyamaka refutation of causality,” *China Tibetology* 1 (2013): 53–67; Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 74–75, 131–138; and Daniel McNamara, “When Madhyamaka Is Not the Middle Path: Ratnākaraśānti on Yogācāra, Nāgārjuna, and the *Madhyamapratipadā*,” *JABS* 40 (2017): 189–207.

Buddhist tradition. Contra Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra finds the truth of non-dualism and the ultimate position on consciousness in Prajñākaragupta’s interpretation of Dharmakīrti. Indeed, in the sixth chapter of the SSS, we see Jñānaśrīmitra make this move again, tracing the Sākāravāda’s pedigree from Prajñākaragupta back through the august lineage of Dharmakīrti, Dignāga, Vasubandhu, Asaṅga, and Maitreya.²⁶ By tying the Yogācāra of Maitreya and the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna to Prajñākaragupta in particular, Jñānaśrīmitra means to steal away from Ratnākaraśānti the tradition he holds so dear: all these authors are properly understood as Sākāravādins, in line with Prajñākaragupta. By denouncing Prajñākaragupta and his view, Ratnākaraśānti has embarrassed himself before *this* assembly of scholars—not only those present at Vikramaśīla, but also those luminaries of the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka who have been dead for centuries.

Jñānaśrīmitra’s concern with vindicating Prajñākaragupta ran deep. Indeed, in the SSS, after a silent citation of the verse of homage from Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*, the first words of Jñānaśrīmitra’s own are a beautiful praise of Prajñākaragupta:

*jīyān munīndramatavārttikabhāṣyakāraḥ
sākārasiddhinayanāṭakasūtradhāraḥ /
saṃsāranirvṛtipathaprathamānagarva-
sarvārīvīraduratikramavikramaśrīḥ // SSS 1.2 //²⁷*

Victory to Prajñākaragupta, the author of the *Bhāṣya*
on Dharmakīrti’s *Vārttika* that explains the Buddha’s view—
Prajñākaragupta, the director of the play that is

²⁶ JNĀ, 506.5–8; see Thakur’s introduction, 4. Note that again, in the immediately following prose, the view is said to be what Nāgārjuna meant as well. See JNĀ 506.9–10, where he writes, “Even Ārya Nāgārjunapāda, being of a different lineage, is shown to stand by this common position with respect to the truth that is to be proven [i.e., in the works of Maitreya up to Prajñākaragupta], because he accepts indefeasible self-awareness” (*āryanāgārjunapādānām tu bhinnavaṃśatve ’pi sādharmaiva sādhyatattvasthitir iti darśitam, abādhyasvasaṃvedanasvikārāt*). He cites Nāgārjuna not infrequently (see, for example, JNĀ 488–489).

²⁷ JNĀ 367.6–9. Note, as we will below, that Jñānaśrīmitra returns to Dharmakīrti’s *namaskāraśloka* 97 pages later: see JNĀ 464.20–25.

the way of proving that consciousness has appearances,
whose unsurpassed majesty cannot be dimmed
by the heroism of any of his enemies,
with their pride pervading the path
to the cessation of saṃsāra.

Notice how the Sanskrit here is just four words, which get longer and longer as the verse goes on. The first line gives the skeletal sentence—and this is already a declaration of war: “Victory to Prajñākaragupta,” already says, “Victory to Prajñākaragupta *over Ratnākaraśānti*.” Jñānaśrīmitra wastes no time getting to the point. The next line, a single compound-adjective, tells us what we would already expect, but with a nice dramatic flair: Prajñākaragupta is the stage-manager or the director, the *sūtradhāra*, of the play or drama (*nāṭaka*) that is the proof of the Sākāravāda. Once again, as at the opening of the SSSū and its allusion to Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa’s play, we are transported to the stage. This is however a subtle point, as Jñānaśrīmitra makes clear at the beginning of the following prose: Dharmakīrti always *intended* the Sākāravāda, but he did not seem to feel the need to definitively *prove* it; rather, because some Nirākāravādins came along and maligned Dharmakīrti’s view in the interim, Prajñākaragupta had to prove the Sākāravāda once and for all in his *Bhāṣya*.²⁸ Finally, the culminating two-line compound-adjective gives us a short narrative of Prajñākaragupta’s defiance of the forces who would see him defeated. The arrogance of his popular enemy has obscured the path to nirvāṇa; however, Prajñākaragupta’s majesty or his fortune, his *śrī*, cannot be overcome by these attacks, and the fact that

²⁸ See JNĀ 367.17–21: *tathā ca sūtram, vijñaptimātram bho jinaputrā yad uta traidātukam iti yad arthaṃ vārtikakāraḥ prayatnaparamparayā bahirartha eva sākāravādam uddīpayati. kathaṃ tarhi bhāṣyakāropajñam idam ucyata iti cet. nirākāradīśānyair yojitatvāt, sattāmātrasthita ivānena prasādhita ity ucyate, na punas tasyaivopajñeti.* “Through his repeated efforts, Dharmakīrti (*vārtikakāra*) illustrates the Sākāravāda primarily with regard to external objects—[the Sākāravāda that is] the point of such Sūtra passages as ‘Bho Jinaputra! This triple-world is indeed only consciousness.’ [An opponent interjects:] ‘In that case, how do you assert that the Sākāravāda is the discovery of Prajñākaragupta (*bhāṣyakāropajña*)?’ I said that Prajñākaragupta (*anena*) proved [the Sākāravāda]—applied, as it were, to existence in general [and not just external objects]—because others had construed Dharmakīrti according to the Nirākāravāda. Still, I have not said it was the discovery of Prajñākaragupta alone.”

Prajñākaragupta’s position remains undefeated shows the enemy’s pride to be unjustified. All this builds up to a nod to Ratnākaraśānti’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s institutional home, Vikramaśīla, with *-vikramaśrīḥ* at the end of the verse (which is beautifully assonant with *-duratikrama-*). This allusion to their shared institution makes clear, had there been any doubt, that the target here, the arrogant enemy of Prajñākaragupta, is Ratnākaraśānti.²⁹ And he is indeed cited on the next page, as Jñānaśrīmitra’s critique begins in earnest.

iv. Jñānaśrīmitra’s Humility

In the SSSū, however, Jñānaśrīmitra is willing to admit his occasional shortcoming. He continues his opening verses to this work by telling us what he has already accomplished in the SSŚ. While non-Buddhists have been dealt with in other of his works, the SSŚ proved the Sākāravāda over and against Ratnākaraśānti. As he writes of his own work in SSSū 1.5–7ab:

*tatsādhanapravaṇaśāstraparamparāyā
yatnād vicitramatimātrajagatprasiddhyā /
dhvasto ’khillas tadapavādiṣu tīrthikaughas
tanmārgasaṃgamaguṇaprathitās tv avāryāḥ // SSSū 1.5 //*

Among those who have critiqued [the Sākāravāda] (*tadapavādiṣu*),
the whole torrent of non-Buddhists (*tīrthikas*)
has already been refuted with care
by the clear demonstration that the world
is just variegated awareness, which [clear demonstration]
belongs to the tradition of treatises that are intent upon its proof.
On the other hand, those who have become celebrated
by virtue of embracing the way of that [Buddhist tradition of treatises]

²⁹ Harunaga Isaacson first pointed out (personal communication) that *vikramaśrī* may very well be a pun on Vikramaśīla. Note that, with this in mind, we might read the end of the compound still as a *bahuvrīhi* referring to Prajñākaragupta, but with this subtlety: “[...] Prajñākaragupta, [...] whose majesty in Vikramaśīla cannot be dimmed [...]” That is, perhaps, Prajñākaragupta’s works still hold sway in the curriculum at Vikramaśīla despite Ratnākaraśānti’s ‘heroic’ attempts to refute him (heroic yet prideful—indeed, *vīra* rings a little ironic here).

have [hitherto] been impossible to resist.

*eketarātmavikalahaḥ kila bhāsane 'pi
citrākṛtivyatikaro 'yam asatya eva /
tatrāpi satyam aparaṃ svaivid abhyupetaṃ
tanmātraśeṣam avadānam iti kva nāthaḥ // SSSū 1.6 //*

“The mixture of variegated appearances—
even though it directly appears—
is surely neither one nor many, and so is precisely *unreal*.
Something different [from appearances] is true,
which we call self-awareness;
liberation (*avadānam*) is that state
in which only self-awareness remains.”
Where did the Lord say this?

*yuktyāgamoktiyuvarājanayānugo 'yam
adhveti sākṛtinaye nihataḥⁱ pravādaḥ /*

ⁱ *nihataḥ*] MS_{pc}; *nihitaḥ* MS_{ac}, JNĀ.

In the *Sākārasiddhi* (*sākṛtinaye*), I refuted that slander
by showing that it is only this path [viz. the Sākāravāda]
that accords with logic,
the statements of scripture,
and the view of the Crown Prince [Maitreya].

Note here Jñānaśrīmitra’s concern with having refuted the whole torrent of non-Buddhists.

Whereas Ratnākaraśānti refers to non-Buddhists in only a few perfunctory places, about half of Jñānaśrīmitra’s corpus is concerned with refuting non-Buddhists, particularly Naiyāyikas, but also Mīmāṃsakas. He refutes the existence of Īśvara, he establishes momentariness at great length in response to Naiyāyika objections from Bhāsarvajña, Trilocana, and Vācaspatimiśra, and, as we noted above, his works are critiqued in turn by Naiyāyikas and other non-Buddhists for centuries after his death. Jñānaśrīmitra was tuned-in to non-Buddhist philosophical debates, and he meant to show the superiority of the Buddhist position to that of these figures. In the SSŚ

and SSSū, having finished with the non-Buddhists in other works, he turns to his famous Buddhist colleague. As we will see, his presentation of Ratnākaraśānti's blasphemous view here in SSSū 1.6 is an apt characterization of the Nirākāravāda. Jñānaśrīmitra tells us that the SSS has already dealt with this view, showing it to be mistaken—logically, scripturally, and in terms of its compatibility with the view of Maitreya.

But Jñānaśrīmitra immediately goes on to make an uncharacteristic admission of a fault of his own:

*vādashitāṅva iva vivādimatakrameṇa
lekhāvidhes tu sa nayo 'jani viprakīrṇaḥ // SSSū 1.7 //*

But because I wrote [the *Sākārasiddhi*]
with a sequence of views of various opponents,
as if standing in a debate,
my text became very scattered.

*samāsatas tena kariṣyate 'yaṃ
tadarthasaṃgrāhakaśūtrakośaḥ /
parārthacaryā hi bhaven na veyam
svārthas tu tattvābhyasanād avāryaḥ // SSSū 1.8 //*

Therefore, I am now going to make succinctly
this treasury of verses summarizing the meaning of that treatise.
For while this might or might not turn out to be for the benefit of others,
in any case my own benefit cannot be denied,
for I am strengthening my own realization
by practicing the truth (*tattvābhyāsana*).

At 146-pages, the SSS is indeed a lengthy work, which is sometimes repetitive not in its language so much as in its content. Jñānaśrīmitra sometimes comes to make the same point here one way, there in a slightly different way, attending to different nuances, different scriptural sources, and so on. This, he seems to admit in the SSSū, might result from his writing it as if standing in a debate: he deals with one opponent here, then turns to another, then comes back to

another objection from the first opponent, and so on, seemingly without a great deal of organizational forethought.³⁰ Through all this, Jñānaśrīmitra's prose at times does sound as if it was taken straight from the debate field, ranging from the terse, precise language characteristic of this late phase of Buddhist logic to what almost seems like a colloquial form of Sanskrit, full of playful putdowns and peculiar idioms. Take, as one of countless examples we might choose, his initial response (before a more substantive one) to an opponent early in SSS 2: *sphāragalam utthānaṃ syāt, tatrākṣiṇī nimīlya yadi cintayet svayam ātmānam upahaset*,³¹ something like “You may stick out your neck like this,” or perhaps, “You may shout all you want, but if you close your eyes and think, you'll just laugh at yourself.” Idiomatic putdowns like this are common in his work, and certainly they give it a lively flair.

I think we can take seriously Jñānaśrīmitra's claim here in SSSū 1.8 that he is not sure his work will help anyone other than himself. While verses expressing this sort of humility are indeed a trope in Sanskrit literature, it seems to me that Jñānaśrīmitra's apt description of the possible perceived failings of his SSS—that it was too scattered, written as if in the throes of debate, and thus in need of a summary—lends authenticity to his doubts about whether it will be of much use to many others. He certainly expects serious scholars to wrestle with his arguments, to admire his poetry, and to feel the burn of his insults, but it would not seem that students were his principal concern. There is clear evidence that he had at least some students;³² nevertheless, it

³⁰ We may only speculate about whether the work had any literal connection to the debate field.

³¹ JNĀ 392.11.

³² Notably Ratnakīrti (ca. 990–1050), author of the works contained in the *Ratnakīrtinibandhāvali* (RNĀ), and Yamāri (c. 1000–1060), who wrote a sub-commentary on Prajñākaragupta's *Bhāṣya*; see Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 101–103, and the sources cited there. The Sanskrit of Yamāri's work has recently been discovered and an edition is forthcoming, which will make tracing connections between Yamāri and Jñānaśrīmitra much easier in the near future. Maitrīpa (b. 1007/1010) is also said to have studied with Jñānaśrīmitra; see Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 54.

is telling that Jñānaśrīmitra's principal disciple, Ratnakīrti, spent much of his career writing short essays on topics covered in Jñānaśrīmitra's corpus, silently or explicitly citing his teacher in an effort to distill Jñānaśrīmitra's arguments and to make them more readily comprehensible. The *Citrādvaitaprakāśavāda* is a good example of this. In this short, 15-page essay, Ratnakīrti presents in very precise terms the inference for the position Jñānaśrīmitra defends in SSŚ 4—that is, the position that what manifests to consciousness is non-dual despite its variegation—, he defends this inference from various attacks (including Ratnākaraśānti's, but also Naiyāyika attacks), and he constructs a theory of mental content on its basis. He does all this citing verses from Jñānaśrīmitra's SSSū and silently borrowing sentences (or even whole paragraphs) from the SSŚ, SSŚ 2 in particular, rearranging them in an order that gets to the point more concisely.³³ Of course, he leaves out a great deal of Jñānaśrīmitra's intellectual-historical and buddhological work in the process; Jñānaśrīmitra's more scattered writing is even more fascinating than his student's (already very fascinating) logical distillation. Still, Ratnakīrti's text is more user-friendly than Jñānaśrīmitra's. I expect Jñānaśrīmitra would not have been too worried about this.

v. **Ratnākaraśānti, Teacher Extraordinaire**

Jñānaśrīmitra's relative lack of explicit concern with his students provides a stark contrast with Ratnākaraśānti's efforts. If nothing else, Ratnākaraśānti means to be understood. He writes elegantly and clearly, often quite explicitly with his readers' comprehension in mind. But Ratnākaraśānti is concerned not only with his students understanding his words; he is concerned

³³ See especially RNĀ 136.2–141.28 for Ratnakīrti's citation of Ratnākaraśānti's PPU and his repackaging of Jñānaśrīmitra's arguments in SSŚ 2 against Ratnākaraśānti.

more generally with their spiritual attainment. One sign of this might be simply the genres he inhabits, as opposed to Jñānaśrīmitra. While they both wrote short essays and longer treatises of different sorts, Ratnākaraśānti also writes commentaries on sūtra and tantra. In the tantric realm he was especially prolific, writing not only commentaries but also independent technical *sādhana*s, manuals describing the practical techniques of different tantric systems.

Ratnākaraśānti concludes his introduction to the *Muktāvalī Pañjikā* (MuĀv), his great commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* (HT), with an elegant verse noting his intention in this regard:

*śrutam asati na bodhe nāśrute cāsti cintā
dvayavipadi na yogo yogahānau na siddhiḥ /
iti ciram iha tantre tāpam utkaṅṭhitānām
haratu ḥṛdi nibaddhā hanta muktāvalīyam // MuĀv 6 //*

As long as there is no understanding (*bodha*),
there is no learning (*śruta*),
and as long as there is no learning,
there is no rational reflection (*cintā*).
When both learning and reflection fail, there is no yoga,
and when yoga is lacking, there is no accomplishment (*siddhi*).
O, may this *Muktāvalī* [lit. ‘Necklace of Pearls’],
firmly fixed at the heart [or placed on the breast],
remove the suffering of those long full of longing
with regard to this tantra!³⁴

Using the classic Buddhist triad of hearing the words of the Buddha (*śruta*), rational reflection on the true intent of those words (*cintā*), and cultivation of the truth they teach (*bhāvanā*, or here *yoga*), Ratnākaraśānti states the humble goal of his commentary: to make the words of the *Hevajra Tantra* clear so that practitioners longing to hear this important text might gain some

³⁴ The text is that of Harunaga Isaacson, and my translations of the opening verses of the MuĀv largely relies on his. See his “The opening verses of Ratnākaraśānti’s *Muktāvalī* (Studies in Ratnākaraśānti’s tantric works II)” in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ryutaro Tsuchida and Albrecht Wezler (Reinbek: Dr. Inge Wezler Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 2000), 121–134.

understanding, reflect on its meaning, and undertake its practices in order to attain buddhahood. Of course, Ratnākaraśānti's work is full of fascinating philosophical and practical digressions; still, with all this his primary aim is to make the meaning of the tantra clear.

That Ratnākaraśānti is attuned to the suffering of those who are “full of longing” with regard to the *Hevajra Tantra* is no accident. His concern for people who are inexplicably attracted to one particular text is part of his character as an ecumenical teacher. Consider the beginning of his *Guṇavatī Tīkā* (GT), a commentary on another *yoginītantra*, the *Mahāmāyā Tantra*:

*atīlaghu mahāmāyātantram girā guruṇārthato
jagati katicit tasyedānīm nirantaravedinaḥ /
pratipadam atas tatra jñānam śuci śrutaśālinām
nibhṛtasulabhaṃ loke kartum mamaiṣa pariśramaḥ // GT 2 //*

Only a few in the world today
know intimately the very concise *Mahāmāyā Tantra*,
with its words profound in terms of their meaning.
For this reason, this labor of mine
is to make pure knowledge with respect to it, word by word,
gentle and easy for those in the world
endowed with scriptural learning (*śruta*).

*vividhaḥ sugatena bodhimārgaḥ
kathito bhinnaruciṃ vilokya lokam /
rucito bahavaḥ svayaṃ pravṛttā
vivṛtir me guṇavatya atho 'tra kāryā' // GT 3 //³⁵*

ⁱ *kāryā*] Isaacson, em.; *karma* MS, Sarnath ed.

The Buddha taught a manifold path to enlightenment,
having noticed that sentient beings
have different scriptural tastes (*ruci*).
Due to that scriptural taste,
many have proceeded on their own.

³⁵ GT 1. See too Chen Gaoyuan's forthcoming edition of this text: I thank him for sharing his work with me.

Hence, my fruitful *Guṇavatī* commentary ought to be undertaken here.

Like the verse from the *Muktāvalī* we saw a moment ago, these verses present relatively simple syntactic units, enlivened with different kinds of rhyme and abstaining from the sort of line-long compounds we saw in Jñānaśrīmitra. And as with these verses, Ratnākaraśānti intends to make the *Mahāmāyā Tantra* easy to understand—that much justifies his labor. But further, the Buddha taught different paths to enlightenment for people with different scriptural tastes (*ruci*) and, because some people have been inclined toward the path of the *Mahāmāyā Tantra* but have not had the assistance of a commentary to guide them through its profound words, it is especially appropriate for him to undertake such a commentary.

This notion of a scriptural taste, a *ruci*, is an important one for Ratnākaraśānti. We can trace it back to Maitreya and Asaṅga in works like the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. There, it is part of their defense of the view, shared by Ratnākaraśānti, that there are three different vehicles to enlightenment, not one: different beings are endowed with different *gotras*, different innate spiritual predispositions, that will lead them to the vehicle of the hearers or śrāvakas, that of the pratyekabuddhas, or finally the Mahāyāna, the way of the bodhisattvas and the buddhas.

These different spiritual predispositions are distinguished by and supported by *faith* or *conviction* (*śraddhā*, *adhimukti*, etc.) in different doctrines.³⁶ This faith is not trust in something that is in principle beyond reason; it may be trust in something that is *not yet* rationally believed, but the object of faith is nevertheless something that a cooperative practice of faith and reason leads us to understand rationally. In her discussion of faith in Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvalī*, Amber Carpenter helpfully discerns two aspects of faith in Buddhist traditions: *faith that* and *faith in*.³⁷ *Faith that* is an affective conviction that some claim is true. *Faith in* is analogous to the faith we have in a person: it “is not *belief* in the proposition ‘this person will do or be this or that’; nor is it some such belief *plus* some extras. It is rather an affective state, an attitude of confident optimism in the good-will, and related competence, of another towards us.”³⁸ Faith in the Mahāyāna, then, is a general comportment that guides a bodhisattva’s practice and aspiration for awakening. This faith in the Mahāyāna is in turn grounded on the faith that certain claims made in Mahāyāna scriptures are true—truth-claims that will have a rational defense, but are nevertheless not yet rationally believed when the initial conviction in them is inspired.

For instance, before one comes to know it rationally, one might have faith that non-duality as taught in Mahāyāna scriptures is true. On the basis of this faith *that*, one may develop

³⁶ See MSA 10 on *śraddhā*, *adhimukti*, *saṃpratyaḥ*; note too Vasubandhu’s comment on MSA 12.15: *bhakti* = *adhimukti* = *saṃpratyaḥ*. For some recent studies of the notion of faith in Buddhist thought, see Andy Rotman, *Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Amber Carpenter, “Faith Without God,” <https://projectintegrity.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/thomistadcpaper3formatted2.pdf>; Matthew Kapstein, “Stoics and Bodhisattvas: Spiritual Exercise and Faith in Two Philosophical Traditions,” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns—Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, ed. Michael Chase et al. (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 99–115 (esp. 108–109); William Edelglass, “Aspiration, Conviction, and Serene Joy: Faith and Reason in Indian Buddhist Literature on the Path,” forthcoming in *Beyond Faith Versus Reason: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Sonia Sikka and Ashwani Peetush. I thank Edelglass for sharing a draft of his article with me.

³⁷ Carpenter, “Faith Without God,” 4–9.

³⁸ Carpenter, “Faith Without God,” 6.

faith *in* the Mahāyāna and thus undertake the arduous practice of a bodhisattva.³⁹ The so-called “abode of conduct based on faith” (the *adhimukticyāvihāra*) is the basis for all the stages of the bodhisattva’s practice in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, and a person without such faith will be inclined instead toward the vehicle of the hearers. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* also makes clear that the practitioner on the bodhisattva path will waver, understanding a truth and then losing sight of it, acting compassionately and then acting badly, etc.; faith in the Mahāyāna sūtras, an “attitude of confident optimism,” is supposed to sustain the bodhisattva’s practice through these ups and downs.⁴⁰ It is no mistake that the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* of Śāntideva, his *Training Anthology* for the bodhisattva, also begins with a long discussion of faith as the root of a bodhisattva’s practice.⁴¹

Ruci, then, “scriptural taste” or perhaps “inclination,” comes together with this faith. We can say it is an affective sign of faith *that*: one finds that one has a taste for, has *ruci* for, a particular teaching, which is a sign of an innate predisposition (*gotra*) toward that teaching, and so one develops faith in it. Despite how it may sound, I think it is not really a very mysterious idea. I could say that my own *ruci* was for Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra: when I first read them, I did not understand very much, but it was fun and intriguing, and that favorable inclination was enough to keep me going on this path through the ups and downs. That is *ruci*: the fact that we are immediately attracted to certain authors or texts or traditions for no discernible reason. Our attraction and our faith will later be grounded on reason. But *at the start*, faith is blind.

³⁹ One might compare the foundational role of faith in, for instance, Śāntideva’s *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. See Charles Goodman’s translation, *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva: A Translation of the Śikṣā-samuccaya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), as well as Kapstein’s comments in “Stoics and Bodhisattvas.”

⁴⁰ See Engle’s translation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment* (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2016), 69–72, 520–521, 524–529.

⁴¹ See Goodman, *Training Anthology*, 3–20.

All this is part of the classical Yogācāra explanation of the three vehicles. Ratnākaraśānti adapts this notion, bringing it into the realm of particular tantric traditions. He tells us in the opening to the GṬ that the Buddha taught different paths for people of different *rucis*, and that people undergo tantric practices of different sorts on the basis of these *rucis*. People, that is, have a particular taste for the teachings of the *Mahāmāyā Tantra*, or for those of the *Hevajra*, the *Guhyasamāja*, the *Khasama*, the *Kṛṣṇayamāri*, or perhaps even those the *Sarvarahasya Tantra*, a *yogatantra* of slightly lower standing than these other *yoginītantras*.⁴² His small contribution in the GṬ, then, is to make the *Mahāmāyā Tantra* clear for people who are so inclined. In his other commentaries, he aims to do the same for people with a taste for other tantric practices.

vi. Ratnākaraśānti and the Concern for Proper Faith

In his opening verses to the MuĀv, Ratnākaraśānti again notes the fact that different people have different scriptural tastes, making explicit that those “long full of longing with regard to this tantra” are those who have a particular *ruci* for it. He writes:

*hitam uktam anekadhā jinaiḥ pratigrhṇanti yathāśayaṃ janāḥ /
tad ihāpi ruciḥ pravartanī vivṛṇoty artham iyaṃ tu pañjikā // MuĀv 5 //*⁴³

The Buddhas have taught what is beneficial in many ways.
People take those teachings to heart
according to their inclinations.
Thus it is a person’s *ruci* that causes them to act here too.
This commentary, on the other hand, explains the meaning.

⁴² On Ratnākaraśānti’s commentary on the *Sarvarahasya Tantra*, see Harunaga Isaacson’s and Francesco Sferra’s forthcoming edition and translation with the *Manuscripta Buddhica* series. I thank Harunaga Isaacson for sharing some thoughts about the significance and peculiarity of this commentary with me.

⁴³ For this verse and the following ones, see again Isaacson’s “The opening verses of Ratnākaraśānti’s *Muktāvalī*” for both the Sanskrit and the English translation on which mine is based.

As with the *Mahāmāyā Tantra*, the *Hevajra* is one of many paths taught by the Buddhas. Some people have the *ruci* that causes them to undertake the study and practice of the *Hevajra*.

Ratnākaraśānti says here his commentary will reveal the text's meaning for them.

But despite this statement of modesty—that he is only concerned with explicating the *Hevajra*'s meaning—Ratnākaraśānti's commentary is also concerned with showing it to be the proper object of the proper kind of faith. Ratnākaraśānti makes this point in *āryā*-meter again, in short, elegant, clear verses that avoid the long compounding Jñānaśrīmitra revels in. Note too the double-entendre in the first of these verses:

*darśitasūtrānugamā pramāṇavṛttaprasādhitā viśadā /
muktāvalīva hr̥dyā hevajre pañjikā kriyate // MuĀv 2 //*

I make this commentary on the *Hevajra*,
which shows its accordance with [non-tantric] sūtras
and is established by the use of authoritative means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*)—
this commentary that is clear and pleasing
like a necklace of pearls (*muktāvalī*)
[which follows the string on which it is strung (*darśitasūtrānugamā*),
is made of rounded pearls of good measure (*pramāṇavṛttaprasādhitā*),
and is bright (*viśadā*) and lovely (*hr̥dyā*)].

*aśraddhā mūlaripuḥ praṇāśapadam ekam iyam atīśraddhā /
nanu sarvavit pramāṇaṃ na gauravāt sarvavid bhavati // MuĀv 3 //*

A lack of faith is the root-enemy;
excessive faith is the primary cause of ruin.
Surely the omniscient one is an authority (*pramāṇa*) [so do not lack faith];
however, one cannot become omniscient just out of reverence
[so do not rely on faith alone].

*kṛtam apy akṛtaṃ jinena yas tadanuktaṃ ca taduktaṃ āha yaḥ /
kṣipataḥ samam eva tāv ubhau paramāptaṃ jagatas tathāgatam // MuĀv 4 //*

One who claims that the Buddha did not do something he did do,
and one who claims that what was not spoken by the Buddha was taught by him:
both these two equally malign the Buddha,

the world's foremost authority.

Faith is in part the conviction that certain teachings of the Buddha are true. Ratnākaraśānti tells us here that if you believe that certain teachings of the Buddha—the *Hevajra Tantra*, say—are apocryphal, you will avoid their especially fruitful practices. In one sense, there is nothing wrong with this: if your inclination is toward the lesser-vehicle of the śrāvakas, Ratnākaraśānti will accept that. There are three vehicles after all, and that may be your *gotra*, your innate predisposition. But if someone *maligns* the Buddha's teaching, actively disparaging texts like the *Hevajra*, that is unacceptable. There is some evidence for this sort of hostility toward tantra in Ratnākaraśānti's time: Tāranātha reports that groups of more conservative Buddhist monks, śrāvakas from Vajrāsana, broke images of tantric deities and burned tantric manuscripts.⁴⁴ And so Ratnākaraśānti aims to show that the *Hevajra* is in accordance with the teaching of the world's foremost authority, the omniscient Buddha, by means of both scriptural interpretation—with special appeal to non-tantric Buddhist sūtras—and reasoned argument in his commentary.

Despite saying that his commentary on the *Hevajra* is meant to make its words clear for people who are innately attracted to its practices, Ratnākaraśānti also has another goal in mind: to show that the *Hevajra* accords with non-tantric Buddhism, and so to convince people who would doubt its authenticity that it is indeed an authentic teaching, one worthy of faith and a Buddhist's *ruci*.

Not only this, however. Ratnākaraśānti also warns against those who would accept as teachings of the Buddha things he did not teach: he warns against those who have excessive faith (*atiśraddhā*). In a series of papers on the early Kālacakra masters, Francesco Sferra gives reason

⁴⁴ See Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age," 239–240; Skilling, "The Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-viniścaya of Daśabalaśrīmitra," 12–19.

to believe Ratnākaraśānti might have the nascent Kālacakra tradition in mind.⁴⁵ The meteoric rise of literature surrounding the *Kālacakra Tantra* in the eleventh century is a fascinating topic, and the fact that it may have been challenged by tantric authorities at the time like Ratnākaraśānti may be surprising given the prominence the *Kālacakra Tantra* would go on to enjoy in Tibet. It is thus worth considering in some detail.

The strategy by which the early Kālacakra masters harnessed authority was threefold. First, two commentaries appeared on well-known *yoginītantras*, the *Cakrasaṃvara* and the *Hevajra*, which purported to be written not by human commentators like Ratnākaraśānti and his colleagues at Vikramaśīla, but by bodhisattvas. (Indeed, the author of the *Hevajra* commentary, the *Hevajratantrapīṇḍārthaṭīkā*, aka *Ṣaṭsāhasrikā*, purports to be Vajragarbha himself, the bodhisattva who is a principal interlocutor in the *Hevajra Tantra*.) This is an aggressive means to claim privileged access to the Buddha's true intentions in these esoteric works. These commentaries took their root-texts in new directions, bringing them in line with the supposed *Ādibuddha* or *Mūlatantra*, a very possibly fictitious tantra in 60,000 verses that was the supposed root of the Kālacakra teachings, into which these bodhisattvas claim direct insight and which they cite as an authority. This strategy of relying on direct insight into texts otherwise unknown

⁴⁵ See Francesco Sferra, "Constructing the Wheel of Time. Strategies for Establishing a Tradition," in *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, ed. Federico Squarcini (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2005), 253–286; "The *Laud of the Chosen Deity*, the First Chapter of the *Hevajratantrapīṇḍārthaṭīkā* by Vajragarbha," in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, 435–368; "Kālacakra," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism: Volume I: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 341–352. My thanks to Harunaga Isaacson for initially pointing me in this direction. Sferra names both Ratnākaraśānti and his colleague, Vāgīśvarakīrti, as opponents of the Kālacakra texts in "Constructing the Wheel of Time," 258. Note that this puts these two scholars at odds with their possible colleague, Nāropā, whose *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* is an important early commentary on a small section of the *Ādibuddha*, the *Kālacakra Tantra*'s root tantra (*mūlatantra*). Sferra in this regard builds on the work of John Newman in his dissertation, *The outer Wheel of Time: Vajrayāna Buddhist cosmology in the Kālacakra tantra* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin Madison, 1987), 108–110.

and inaccessible was another way the early Kālacakra masters harnessed authority.

“Vajragarbha,” as Sferra notes,

even claims that he was present at the teaching of the root *Hevajratantra*, a scripture of purportedly 500,000 verses, and that his commentary on the short, actually circulating, *Hevajratantra*, based on this root *Hevajratantra*, was written for the benefit of humankind, in order to remove misconceptions and wrong interpretations introduced by wicked masters.⁴⁶

In relation to this strategy, a new hermeneutic directive guided the early Kālacakra masters, a principal supposedly taught by the Buddha himself: “a tantra must be understood on the basis of another tantra.”⁴⁷ In practice, this came to mean that a tantra must be understood on the basis of the *Ādibuddha*, which was accessible only to the Kālacakra masters themselves. In his commentary on the *Hevajra*, Vajragarbha makes this explicit:

The *Cakrasaṃvara* and the *Catuḥpīṭhaka* [another important *yoginītantra*] must be understood through the *Hevajra*. The *Hevajra* and the *Catuḥpīṭhaka* must be understood through the words of the *Cakrasaṃvara*. The *Hevajra* and short *Cakrasaṃvara* must be understood through the *Catuḥpīṭhaka*. But the deep meaning of all these tantras must be understood through the words of the *Ādibuddha*, which contain great secrets. In this way, those who desire the true path must always understand tantras through other tantras, summaries, teachings, and commentaries.⁴⁸

It is only through the words of these bodhisattva-commentators, then, who have privileged access to these texts and to the Buddha’s intentions, that a work like the *Hevajra* can be understood. Vajragarbha’s opening salvo contains strong words for masters who lack this sort of access. While some teachers are looking just for wealth and other men’s wives, “some will

⁴⁶ Sferra, “Kālacakra,” 342.

⁴⁷ Sferra, “Kālacakra,” 344.

⁴⁸ See Sferra’s “The *Laud of the Chosen Deity*.” I have modified Sferra’s translation only slightly. HTPṬ 1.76–77: *hevajreṇa hi cakrasaṃvaram idaṃ jñeyam catuḥpīṭhakam hevajram khalu cakrasaṃvarapadair jñeyam catuḥpīṭhakam / hevajram laghucakrasaṃvaram idaṃ jñeyam catuḥpīṭhakair nītārthaḥ punar ādibuddhavadanair jñeyo mahāsaṃvaraiḥ // 76 // evam anyāni tantrāni anyais tantrāntaraiḥ sadā / jñeyāny uddeśanirdeśaiḥ ṭikābhir mārgakāṅkṣibhiḥ // 77 //*

comment on tantras without the five kinds of super-knowledge, etc. They will belittle the practice of yoga (*yogācāra*) through their pride in logical treatises.”⁴⁹

One can imagine Ratnākaraśānti would take offense. He may not have the five super-knowledges, but he’ll be damned if he belittles the *Hevajra Tantra*’s practice of yoga—let alone the *Yogācāra*!—through his devotion to logical treatises. However, Ratnākaraśānti’s commentary on the *Hevajra* not only seeks to establish the tantra’s meaning on the basis of logic: he also grounds it on the basis of sūtras, as he makes clear in the second opening verse of the MuĀv. It is not inconceivable that this is a direct response to the hermeneutic principle guiding the Kālacakra masters: for Ratnākaraśānti, a tantra must be understood not only on the basis of other tantras, but on the basis of sūtra as well. Ratnākaraśānti makes this clear throughout his commentary, frequently grounding his interpretation of the *Hevajra* on sūtra citations and other non-tantric sources, in addition to the *Yogācāra* authors who are his philosophical bedrock. The special concern Ratnākaraśānti shows for this project in his discussion of the *Hevajra Tantra* might suggest that this text in particular was what Ratnākaraśānti himself took delight in studying and practicing. While Ratnākaraśānti refers to non-tantric Buddhist texts in all his tantric commentaries, it is telling that it is in introducing the *Hevajra Tantra* in particular that he makes this programmatic statement, and it is in this commentary that he is most explicitly concerned with the issue.

Ratnākaraśānti was also deeply committed to the perfection of wisdom, or the non-tantric Mahāyāna path, composing commentaries on the 8,000 verse perfection of wisdom sūtra as well

⁴⁹ HPT 1.9: *keciṭ ṭīkāṃ kariṣyanti pañcābhijñādibhir vinā / tarkaśāstrābhimānena yogācāraviḍambakaḥ //* Again, see Sferra, “The *Laud of the Chosen Deity*,” HPT 1.7–18. As Sferra notes (fn. 16), the super-knowledges are the divine eye (*divyacakṣus*), the divine ear (*divyaśrotra*), knowledge of other minds (*paracittajñāna*), memory of former lives (*pūrvanivāsānusrīti*), and magical powers (*ṛddhi*).

as on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. However, notice how he introduces his PPU, or the concise instructions on the perfection of wisdom we noted above for its introductory echo of Bāṇa. The arguments presented in this text are, as we will see, the principal source for Jñānaśrīmitra's criticisms in the SŚŚ. In PPU vv. 6–8, Ratnākaraśānti writes:

*kleśaiś cirāt phalati pāramitānayaena
kleśān vinaiva laghu mantranayena bodhiḥ /
uddāmadhāmabalināṃ prathamō 'tra panthāḥ
śraddhātirekakṛtinām itaras tu mārgaḥ // PPU 6 //*

Via the way of perfection, enlightenment results after a long time and in a painful way.
Via the way of mantras, enlightenment results quickly and *without* pain.
Among these two paths, the first is suitable for those who are powerful and contain enormous energy,
while the second, the path of mantras,
is suitable for those clever ones
who have deep faith (*śraddhātirekakṛtinām*).

*manye tam eva subhagaṃ tanayaṃ munī[nām]
[yo bodhaye cirasuduṣkaracaryayāste] /
mantrāṃs tad eva padam āśu sukhair dadānān
yo vetti saugatamaṇīn sugataḥ sa eva // PPU 7 //*

In my opinion, one who continues with such difficult practice for such a long time for the sake of enlightenment is indeed the blessed son of the buddhas.
One who knows the mantras—
which quickly bestow that very stage [i.e. buddhahood]
in a pleasant way, and which are the jewel of the buddhas—
that one alone is a buddha.

*ārādhayati sa mantrān pāramitāḥ pañca karatale tasya /
bhāvayati yo bhagavatīm dine dine paramapāramitām // PPU 8 //*

One who cultivates the blessed supreme perfection of wisdom, day after day, has earned the mantras,
the other five perfections

in the palm of his hand.⁵⁰

The way of the perfection of wisdom is all well and good, and it leads to enlightenment for those who are patient enough to endure three countless eons of painful practice. However, the perfection of wisdom itself is most effective for clever people who have a more profound faith in the way of mantras (here *śraddhātireka*- would seem to be a good thing, unlike the *atiśraddhā* or the “excessive faith” referred to in the opening of the MuĀv). For these people who choose the pleasant fast-track of mantras, the practice of the perfection of wisdom acts as worship, *ārādhana*, a kind of service that propitiates the way of mantras. So even here, in a text on the perfection of wisdom, the way of perfections is subtly subordinated to the way of mantras.⁵¹

Proving the authority of the way of mantras on the basis of logic and sūtra, then, is of great importance to Ratnākaraśānti. Perhaps he tries to do this most explicitly in his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* not only because of the text’s importance (including as a site to confront the early Kālacakra masters), but also because this is the text he takes the most delight in, for which he himself has *ruci*, and so its authority and proper interpretation especially concerns him. Harunaga Isaacson has suggested that perhaps the very fine first verse of the *Muktāvalī*, a description of Heruka’s wild cosmic dance, might also reveal Ratnākaraśānti’s particular liking for this tradition, and I would like to conclude our discussion of his poetry with this. He writes,

*pādanyāsaiḥ pṛthivyā vihitavighaṭanaṃ bhūbhṛtām aṭṭahāsair
dṛktejahketughaṇṭādhvanibhir api nayan nāśasṛṣṭīr jaganti /
bibhrāṇasyāvaliptaprasāmanavidhaye bhīṣaṇān abhyupāyān
pāyād vo jainaguhyatrayahṛdayahṛdas tāṇḍavaṃ herukasya // MuĀv 1 //*⁵²

⁵⁰ See Luo Hong, “The Opening Verses.”

⁵¹ See the conclusion of the PPU as well, where a verse from the *Guhyasamāja* is said to encapsulate Ratnākaraśānti’s view of the proper meditation taught in the way of perfections. See Yael Bentor, “Fourfold meditations: Outer, inner, secret and suchness,” in *Religion and secular culture in Tibet*, ed. Henk Blezer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 41–55.

⁵² See again, for both the edition and my translation, Isaacson’s “The opening verses.”

Before translating this verse, note that we might compare it again with a verse of Bāṇa's. There are a number of verses praising Śiva's wild cosmic dance written in the beautiful *sragdharā* meter, like Ratnākaraśānti's verse here; and, granted, the iconography of Śiva and Heruka is very similar. Still, there are nice conceptual parallel's with Bāṇa's verse:

*maulau vegād udañcaty api caraṇabharanyañcadurvītalatvād
akṣuṇṇasvargalokasthitimuditasurajyeṣṭhagoṣṭhīstutāya /
samtrāsān nihsarantyāpy aviratavisaraddakṣiṇārdhānubandhāt
atyaktāyādriputryā tripuraharajagatkleśahantre namas te //*

Gary Tubb translates Bāṇa's verse:

Homage to you, taker of the Triple City,
destroyer of the world's afflictions;
you to whom the senate of the gods
gives joyous praise at seeing heaven's safety
unbroken even when your head zooms up,
because the earth must then sink down
under your weighty feet;
you whom the Mountain's daughter cannot leave
even if she shrinks away in terror,
because her bond to you as her right half
must always pull her back.⁵³

Ratnākaraśānti's verse picks up on a number of these themes: the dance of Heruka that shakes the world under the weight of his feet; a dance he dances in union with his consort; Heruka's terrifying form that yet, out of his compassion, leads sentient beings out of the mire of affliction; Heruka who is himself the very *essence* of the essence of liberation, the secret body, speech, and mind of the buddhas:

The stamping of his feet shatters the earth
and his boisterous laughs shatter the mountains;
the fiery energy of his eyes

⁵³ *Subhāṣitaratnaśā* 56; see "On the Boldness of Bāṇa," 315.

and the sound of his lovemaking
govern the repeated destruction and creation of the universe—
may this wild dance of Heruka protect you!
Heruka, who bears terrifying means
in order to pacify the afflicted,
who is the essence of the essence
of the triple secret of the buddhas.

The fact that Ratnākaraśānti does not *pay homage to* Heruka’s dance—he does not say *namas te*—, but rather says *pāyād vah*, “May this dance protect you, O reader!” is perhaps telling: even when Ratnākaraśānti is delighting in the tradition he holds most dear with an especially elegant verse, he is concerned with us first of all.

vii. Our Protagonists, On Stage

When Jñānaśrīmitra praises Prajñākaragupta in his opening verse to the SSŚ, calling him “the director of the play that is the way of proving consciousness has appearances” (*sākārasiddhi-nayanāṭakasūtradhāraḥ*), this also suggests that Prajñākaragupta is the director of the play that is *this very text*, the *Sākārasiddhi*. The text itself transports us on stage. For indeed the SSŚ (as Jñānaśrīmitra himself admits with a hint of contrition in his SSSū) is laid out in the form of a long but lively debate wherein both drama and comedy are at times palpable. With this chapter’s look at their respective styles, I hope to have begun to bring these two authors to life as distinct characters in this play. We see that Ratnākaraśānti is deeply concerned with his students, with their understanding and with their spiritual attainment, while Jñānaśrīmitra is concerned first and foremost with defending what is true—that is, the view of the mind he finds in Prajñākaragupta—and with being the best while he does so. Both of these are viable ways to be a Buddhist

philosopher. However, I think it is fair that this dispositional difference between them might effect how we understand what motivates their philosophical differences.

In this regard, let us step back for a moment and consider our focus in the remainder of this dissertation, which we discussed briefly above in the introduction. Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra fundamentally disagree about the nature of consciousness. Ratnākaraśānti argues on the basis of scripture and logic that the nature of consciousness is not contentful: conscious states exist, in other words, that are not about or directed toward anything. This means that the nature of consciousness, manifestation (*prakāśa*), might exist alone after unreal, accidental appearances have ceased. Jñānaśrīmitra exhaustively rebutted Ratnākaraśānti's arguments and defended a view that manifestation is by nature the manifestation of an appearance, that manifestation only exists where there are appearances that are manifest.

Elsewhere, I have begun to argue that Ratnākaraśānti gives a certain priority to buddhahood in his articulation of this position that Jñānaśrīmitra does not in the articulation of his own, and that Jñānaśrīmitra in fact calls him out on this.⁵⁴ Ratnākaraśānti's view, it seems to me, is grounded on a certain intuition about what buddhahood is, one derived from his tantric work and the *Hevajra Tantra* above all, and he fills in this belief and works out its implications in his philosophical and commentarial work. Opposed to this, it seems to me that Jñānaśrīmitra begins with a certain commitment to what consciousness must be, given especially the Dharmakīrtian tradition as interpreted by Prajñākaragupta, and then he brings this in line with a notion of buddhahood he is able to discover in Dharmakīrti, Nāgārjuna, and especially the canonical Yogācāra works of Maitreya.

⁵⁴ See "The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti's Philosophy of Mind," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (2018) 46:355–372; compare now chapter 5 below.

So to caricature our two protagonists: Ratnākaraśānti gives priority to buddhahood, while Jñānaśrīmitra starts from a particular view of the mind. Each arrives at a system that encompasses both buddhahood and consciousness, but they come at their systems from different directions. They each bring presuppositions about buddhahood to bear on their notion of consciousness, presuppositions that are necessarily rooted in scripture, but they do so in different ways. But how does one show this sort of directionality? What counts as evidence that Ratnākaraśānti might have given priority to an intuition about buddhahood rather than starting from a particular idea about consciousness and then bringing buddhological notions in line with it? What counts as evidence that Jñānaśrīmitra works in the other direction? There are many ways one might approach this. Indeed, the problem may be a false one: the systematic thought of a philosopher may well be characterized precisely by its not having this sort of directionality.⁵⁵ But by introducing these philosophers as real people with distinct voices, I hope to give some narrative form to their debate such that the notion of their working in different directions and with different motivations may begin to make sense. Recognizing at the start the personalities these authors construct for themselves in their writing—through the different genres they choose to inhabit, the different styles they adopt, the different voices that come across—we will continue to see them come to life as we narrativize the argumentative moves they make as they build and buttress their systems. While the question of directionality remains difficult to settle definitively, we will see that Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra make different choices regarding the form of their arguments and the authorities they appeal to. They construct and defend their respective systematic views of consciousness and buddhahood in different ways, each bringing to bear in

⁵⁵ On the notion of systematic thought, see Steven Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*, 121–133.

his own way his distinct buddhological presuppositions. They thus exemplify two subtly different approaches to philosophy that are each nevertheless distinctively Buddhist.

Chapter 2: Buddhology, Tantra, and the Meaning of Contentless Consciousness

i. Introduction: The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti's View

The notion of contentless consciousness may well be meaningless. For most in the Buddhist tradition, as in contemporary Anglo-American and Continental philosophy, conscious states are characterized fundamentally by their intentionality, or by the fact that they refer to content or are directed toward an object. “Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself,” Franz Brentano says in his canonical explication of this idea: “In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.”¹ Fond as he was of medieval scholasticism, Brentano cites Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas as support for this statement; were his scholastic predilections inclined toward India, he could also have cited Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, or countless other Buddhists as well—not to mention scriptures attributed to the Buddha himself. If consciousness is by definition consciousness *of* something, then the notion of contentless consciousness, consciousness that is not consciousness-*of*, sounds absurd.

Still, regardless of the tenacity of the idea of intentionality in the Buddhist tradition, notions of pure contentless consciousness show up in the tradition's discussions of non-conceptual cognition, non-dual consciousness, luminosity, self-awareness, and so on. These ideas are subjected to careful critical scrutiny throughout the tradition's history. Inspired by the work

¹ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London: Routledge, 1973), 88.

of Robert Sharf and Janet Gyatso, Eviatar Shulman's recent study of early Buddhist philosophy as meditative perception (the subtitle to his *Rethinking the Buddha*) exemplifies how one might read the earliest tradition's discussions of meditative experience in such a way as to make sense of these achievements. Maintaining the view that consciousness must be contentful, Shulman shows that the highest-level attainments discussed in the earliest Buddhist teachings were not contentless at all, but were instead focused on highly specific mental contents. In Pali texts, the Buddha may have spoken of his enlightenment as a form of pure, unmediated, non-discursive gnosis, but by reading his words carefully, we see he meant something very particular by this, not simply a generic mystical blankness. Paul Griffiths earlier undertook a similarly careful inquiry into what precisely non-dual and pure consciousness mean in Yogācāra sources, clarifying that these ideas too are unpacked in their own particular ways.²

So too Ratnākaraśānti means something very particular by his idea of the bare manifestation (*prakāśamātra*) of consciousness that is without content (*nirākāra*). First and foremost, he means to redefine consciousness itself, moving away from intentionality as its basic criterion. In the next chapter, we will consider his arguments in defense of the possibility of contentless consciousness (or indeed, arguments he thinks should convince the rational Buddhist of its necessity); first, we will explore here precisely what this idea might mean. To do so, we will have to delve deeply into his buddhology, for it is in his teachings for the sake of practitioners whose goal is buddhahood that he is most candid in this regard. This candidness is no surprise, for it is only in explicating different aspects of buddhahood itself that we begin to

² See Griffiths' *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986); "Pure Consciousness in Indian Buddhism," in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Robert Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 71–97; and *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

make sense of contentless consciousness. To this end, we will draw out the systematic connections Ratnākaraśānti draws between contentless consciousness, buddhahood, and the tantric practices he views as most effective for attaining it.

A logic of identification is at work in what we will consider here. Ratnākaraśānti tells us that x is y , that y is z , and that all three are buddhahood, and in so doing he reveals facets of x that would remain hidden without such identifications. That is, Ratnākaraśānti tells us that bare manifestation ($x = prakāśamātra$) is another way to describe what philosophers of mind today refer to as *subjective character*, or the fact that conscious states have a subjective feel: they can be experienced first-personally ($y = svasamvedya$). Rather than intentionality, this subjective character alone is the criterion of consciousness. Further, this is not an abstract fact about consciousness: it is itself something that can be experienced, something that has a subjective feel of its own. In other words, and to borrow the well-worn language of Thomas Nagel, there is still something it's like to be conscious when all content has ceased to appear. What that's like is innate bliss ($z = saḥajānanda$), an experience cultivated in tantric practice. Each of these, finally, might be said to characterize buddhahood. By putting these pieces together over the course of this chapter, we will have a fuller sense of what contentless consciousness is supposed to mean.³

³ In certain respects, then, I am sympathetic to the project of Robert Forman et al. in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). This is especially so when, for instance, Forman writes that the definition of consciousness “as always and inevitably intentional” is “unjustly restrictive” (*The Innate Capacity*, 14–15), or when Mark B. Woodhouse argues against this definition at length in his “On the Possibility of Pure Consciousness” (*The Problem of Pure Consciousness*), 254–268. Nevertheless, I do not think that Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of contentless consciousness represents a “common core” to all mystical insight, another instance of a “pure consciousness experience” that could be exchanged with any other. Given the systematic relationships between contentless consciousness, buddhahood, and tantric practice we will see Ratnākaraśānti develop, his view of contentless consciousness is highly specific to the details of tantric practice as he understands it. Ratnākaraśānti would thus agree with Forman et al. that contentless consciousness is possible; however, I contend in this chapter that his view of what contentless consciousness is like is very much influenced by cultural constructions. Ratnākaraśānti’s explication of contentless consciousness in his tantric works is thus an instance of the “dialectical relationship among cultural, historical, and linguistic constructions and the universal possibilities of human experience,” as Matthew Kapstein puts it in his preface to *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), x–xi.

Ratnākaraśānti bases certain of these identifications on (among other texts) the *Hevajra Tantra*, a text that adds, for Ratnākaraśānti and other late adherents of the Buddhist tantras, the authority of an especially profound scripture pronounced by the Buddha. The analogies and more minor, mediating identifications he makes along the way (the notion that both *prakāśamātra* and the bodies of Buddha are like the sky [*khasama*], for instance) are also based on his interpretation of the *Hevajra Tantra*'s words. Indeed, some of the identifications he makes could *only* be based on such an authority: it is obvious only to Buddha that buddhahood is one way or another, and so by studying Ratnākaraśānti's explanations of the *Hevajra*'s scriptural pronouncements, we are meant to discover something we could only learn in this way. So, while we will see that Ratnākaraśānti defends their coherence using reason, his primary warrant for these particular identifications is scripture (*āgama*).

There is no other way to begin when we are aiming at, or even simply discussing, buddhahood: we have to start by understanding scripture. As we saw in chapter 1, Ratnākaraśānti concludes his introduction to the MuĀv, his great commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* that will be our focus below, with an elegant verse making just this point. Using the classic Buddhist triad of *hearing* the words of the Buddha (*śruta*), *rational reflection* on the true intent of those words (*cintā*), and *cultivation* of the truth they teach (*bhāvanā*, or here *yoga*), Ratnākaraśānti states the humble goal of his commentary: to make the words of the *Hevajra Tantra* clear so that they might be understood by practitioners longing to hear this important text, to reflect on its meaning, and to undertake its practices in order to attain buddhahood. But it is in this context that we, too—struggling to understand just what contentless consciousness might mean—will gain some level of understanding, and on the basis of this, our rational reflection will continue in

the following chapter. Of course, more than a selective, cursory understanding of the *Hevajra*'s discussion of yoga will remain outside the scope of this dissertation: *yoga* and *siddhi* will be left to the reader.

ii. Contentless Consciousness and Buddhahood

a) The Embodiments of Buddhahood: *Dharmakāya*, *Sambhogakāya*, *Nirmāṇakāya*

Clear statements that buddhahood is contentless consciousness abound in Ratnākaraśānti's work, but to understand them we must have before us a picture of just what buddhahood is on his view. Thankfully, throughout his remarks on philosophy and the path to buddhahood in both his tantric and non-tantric works, Ratnākaraśānti is strikingly consistent in the basics of this. We might begin our investigation of his buddhology, then, by making some general observations.⁴ First, Ratnākaraśānti adheres to the classical Yogācāra view that there are three vehicles (*triyāna* or *yānatraya*) rather than one (*ekayāna*). He holds that not all beings have the predisposition to reach buddhahood: many who will attain liberation will become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas rather than fully enlightened buddhas, and that is what they will remain. Members of all three of these vehicles can attain the realization of the ultimate truth (*paramārthasambodha*) that constitutes liberation, this being the embodiment of liberation or *vimuktikāya*. The methods used to attain this aim (and hence the speed at which it is attained) will differ quite starkly between,

⁴ Throughout this discussion, I am indebted to the very fine work of Greg Seton and Kazuo Kano, in addition to conversations with Harunaga Isaacson. In addition to the passages I'll cite, Seton's D.Phil Dissertation *Defining Wisdom: Ratnākaraśānti's Sāratamā* (Oxford University, 2015) and Kano's *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness: rNgog Blo-ldan-shes-rab and A Transmission of the Ratnagotravibhāga from India to Tibet* (Vienna: ATBS, 2016) should be consulted for a clearer picture of Ratnākaraśānti's view, especially regarding the specifics of his interpretation of the *prajñāpāramitā*. The details of his strategy for synthesizing the *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* will come up occasionally in what follows, but a more focused inquiry into this important aspect of Ratnākaraśānti's project remains a desideratum.

say, a śrāvaka and an adept who aims at buddhahood and follows the practices prescribed in the *Hevajra Tantra*; still, in a certain respect the ultimate that is realized as the *vimuktikāya* cannot be differentiated. As Ratnākaraśānti puts it in his *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (PPU): “Since the [blessed buddhas, śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] all have a *vimuktikāya* that is not different (*nirviśeṣa*) in terms of its resemblance to a pure crystal, the blessed buddhas are not superior to the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas by way of their *vimuktikāya*.”⁵

What *does* distinguish the buddhas, however, is the perfect enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*) that consists of the cultivation, realization, and emanation of the buddha-bodies. As Ratnākaraśānti immediately continues in his PPU:

[Rather, the buddhas] are superior [to the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] due to their *dharmakāya*. That is, due to eliminating their defilements, they all have the transformation of the basis qua the embodiment of liberation. But the perfect buddhas also have the *dharmakāya*—“the body or collection (*kāya*) of qualities (*dharma*),” analyzed as meaning the basis for a buddha’s qualities (*dharmas*).

Here again, Ratnākaraśānti relies on Yogācāra doctrine to express his view. While debates raged on concerning just what the important doctrine of the buddha-bodies meant, or even how many bodies there really were (and as John Makransky and, more recently, Greg Seton have shown, Ratnākaraśānti eagerly dove into the fray), still we might summarize a few important points.

There are, as Ratnākaraśānti sees things, three buddha-bodies.⁶ The *sambhogakāya*, or the embodiment of buddhahood in the enjoyment of the Buddhist teachings, is the form-body that

⁵ This and the next citation from PPU are from Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 101: *de nyid kyis na sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnams kyi nram par grol ba'i sku ni nyan thos dang, rang sangs rgyas dag las bye brag med de, thams cad kyi nram par grol ba'i sku shel dag pa lta bu khyad par med pa'i phyir ro. chos kyi sku ni de dag las khyad par 'phags te, 'di ltar sangs rgyas rnams ni nram par grol ba'i sku thams cad du gnas gyur pa dag ni kun nas nyon mongs pa zad pa'i phyir ro. yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi chos kyi gzhir gyur pas chos kyi sku yang yin te, chos kyi sku ni sangs rgyas kyi chos rnams kyi rten byed pas so.* I have modified the translation only slightly.

⁶ See John J. Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 269–279, for a quick summary of Ratnākaraśānti’s position in this regard, especially vis-à-vis Haribhadra’s influential interpretation according to which there are in fact *four* buddha-bodies.

emanates in the heavenly realms on the basis of the past accumulation of merit and wisdom, sharing the dharma with high-level bodhisattvas. The *nirmāṇakāya*, the embodiment of buddhahood in magical emanations, is the form-body that teaches in ordinary worlds like ours.⁷ The historical Buddha Śākyamuni would have been one such *nirmāṇakāya* on this account. These form-bodies present images to the sentient beings they teach, both in the form of a (more or less) human body, marked by certain characteristics, and in the form of the dharma, the teachings they bestow. They also partake of the worlds they inhabit to some extent: they interact with the unenlightened sentient beings they teach, and so at least come into contact with the forms of ignorance that keep sentient beings in saṃsāra. Even the *sambhogakāya* shares in and experiences the dharma in heavenly realms. How exactly the perfectly enlightened buddha can so interact with ignorance is, as one might expect, a delicate and contested issue.⁸

A buddha's enlightenment from his (or better its) own perspective ("Buddha as Buddha really is, not as Buddha appears to non-Buddhas," as Paul Griffiths puts it) is the *dharmakāya*, the embodiment of buddhahood in the reality Buddha realizes.⁹ As one might expect, this is variously understood. Most would agree that this constitutes the real body of Buddha, which is to say the body of reality (*dharmatā*): as Griffiths puts the point, in many classical Yogācāra texts,

dharmatā refers to what all reals have in common, 'the dharma-hood of all dharmas' (*sarvadharmāṇām dharmatā*) or the reality of all reals, to use a tag frequently found in the digests. The term thus picks out whatever it is in virtue of which everything

⁷ Compare Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, chapters 5 and 4, respectively, with Ratnākaraśānti's initial gloss on the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*, MuĀV_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.5 (MuĀV_{ed} 7–8).

⁸ See especially Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, for a discussion of these controversies in India and Tibet as it relates to the buddha-body theory, though the problem of how the enlightened buddha still interacts with the world is one that runs throughout the Buddhist tradition. When we come to Jñānaśrīmitra's discussion of the *sambhogakāya*, we will have the opportunity to return to these issues in more detail; suffice it to say that his understanding of this in his view most fundamental buddha-body complicates the picture.

⁹ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 147. In addition to *Buddhahood Embodied* and *On Being Buddha*, see too Paul Harrison, "Is the Dharma-kāya the Real 'Phantom Body' of the Buddha?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15, no. 1 (1992): 44–94.

there is what it is. And so Buddha's real body [viz. the *dharmakāya*] is understood as the embodiment or assemblage of what there really is.¹⁰

Ratnākaraśānti would accede to this picture. As he says in his MuĀv, the *dharmakāya* “is the body, the abode, the basis of all the buddha-qualities (*buddhadharmas*), because it is the support of their seeds,” which is to say it is that from which the buddha's teaching and form-bodies emerge. Further,

the principal nature of the *dharmakāya* is natural luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara*), the ground of the real (*dharmadhātu*), which is without beginning or end; since it is just that way (*tathaiva*) at all times, it is called *tathatā*. For this very reason, since it is never differentiated, it is indestructible (*vajra*) because it cannot be differentiated, which means that it is permanent insofar as its nature is permanent (*prakṛtinityatayā nitya*).¹¹

We can say, then, that the *dharmakāya* is that abstract state of affairs that a buddha has realized—the permanent reality of all things, or the being-thus that makes things what they are.

Ratnākaraśānti's view of buddhology is so far very much in line with orthodox Yogācāra sources.

We will see below in chapter 5 that this orthodoxy is challenged by Jñānaśrīmitra.

The buddhas realize the *dharmakāya* in addition to the *vimuktikāya*, and this makes their realization of enlightenment fundamentally different from that of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. This is the case despite the fact that the realization is the same for any of these enlightened beings in a certain respect: each of the three vehicles arrives at contentless consciousness in a way, or “insofar as it resembles a pure crystal,” as we saw Ratnākaraśānti say. But the path taken to the goal more fully discloses the experience of it. Paris, for instance, is in a sense the same destination for anyone, no matter a person's background knowledge or means of

¹⁰ Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 149–150.

¹¹ MuĀv_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.4 (MuĀv_{ed} 6–7): *buddhadharmāṇām kāyo nivāsa āśrayas tadbījādhāratvād iti dharmakāya ity ucyate. dharmakāyasya ca pradhānam śarīram anādinidhano dharmadhātuḥ prakṛtiprabhāsvaraḥ. sarvakālam tathaiveti kṛtvā tathatākhyāḥ. ata eva na kadācid bhidyata ity abhedyatvād vajraḥ. prakṛtinityatayā nitya ity arthaḥ.*

transportation. But a person who takes an arduous boat-trip from New York to get there without learning a word of French will have a different experience of the city from one who researches the city’s history and geography, studies French, and lands at Charles de Gaulle after a comfortable flight. So too, the buddhas’ pursuit of the realization of the *dharmakāya* more fully discloses the experience of the realization of contentless consciousness, entailing as it does the phenomenal characteristic of innate bliss that we will discuss later in this chapter. Further, the buddhas’ realization of the *dharmakāya* entails the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāyas*, the form-bodies that are the “natural outflow” (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya*, through which the buddhas teach. This is what it means for the *dharmakāya* to be the basis for a buddha’s qualities: chief among those qualities are a buddha’s body and speech, his teaching.¹² So regardless of a person’s predispositions, he can come to the realization of the ultimate truth and be freed from saṃsāra by this realization. What differs between the vehicles is in part, we might say, how a person arrives at this realization, the experience of it, and what a person does with it. Does he simply remain free? Or does he have a strong inclination toward or a scriptural taste for (*ruci*) practices that lead him to realize the ultimate as the *dharmakāya*, out of which the form-bodies emanate to teach others? This latter amounts to the perfect enlightenment of the buddhas.

¹² Ratnākaraśānti clarifies this point when he tells us why the *dharmakāya* attained by the buddhas must be distinguished from the *vimuktikāya* attained by any liberated being. The *vimuktikāya* does not amount to the *dharmakāya*, he explains, “for the *vimuktikāya* of a liberated person (*mahāpuruṣa*)[, regardless of their vehicle,] is purity (*viśuddhatā*). The *dharmakāya*, however, is complete purity (*suviśuddhatā*). It is called *dharmakāya* in the sense that it is the *kāya* of the *dharmas*, viz. the qualities of the buddhas, where *kāya* means dwelling place or storehouse, because it is the support of the seeds of the buddha-qualities.” MuĀV^{Isaacson} (MuĀV^{ed} 6): *viśuddhatā hi mahāpuruṣasya vimuktikāyaḥ. suviśuddhatā dharmakāyaḥ. buddhadharmāṇāṃ kāyo nivāsa āśrayas tadbijādhāratvād iti dharmakāya ity ucyate*. The *dharmakāya*, that is, is not simply the realization of the ultimate that leads to liberation; it is in fact that realization of the ultimate that acts as the basis of the buddha-qualities—*suviśuddhatā* rather than only *viśuddhatā*. This is what makes it a body of a buddha rather than of any liberated person.

Now, what is this realization? Most basically, it is the realization that all content—however it appears, whether conceptual or non-conceptual, etc.—is but an erroneous obstruction to the realization of what consciousness really is. Enlightenment (and from here, we will be speaking of the enlightenment of a buddha in particular) consists of a fundamental transformation of the mind, a *transformation of the basis* (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). In its negative aspects—contentfulness in general, for Ratnākaraśānti, but also desire, attachment, conceptualization, etc., in particular—the continuum of the mind ceases; in its nature as contentless consciousness and in its positive aspects—viz. as the source of the buddha-qualities, form-bodies, or the buddha’s teaching—it proceeds. As Ratnākaraśānti puts the point in an elegant (if lengthy and inelegant in translation) single sentence in the introduction to his commentary on the *Khasama Tantra*, the *Khasamā Ṭīkā* (KT), or *The Sky-Like Commentary on the Sky-Like Tantra*:

The transformation (*parāvṛtti*) of the basis (*āśraya*) that is the mental continuum—which is called the store-house (*ālaya*) so long as it is the support (*ādhāra*) for so-called negativities, viz. the seeds of afflicted phenomena and their *vāsanās*, and which later is called the non-store-house (*anālaya*) due to the destruction of those negativities by means of the long-cultivated noble path that is free from conceptual proliferations—[the transformation of this basis refers to (1)] a principle of cessation (*nivṛttiniyama*) in one particular nature, since there is the disappearance of arisen representations (*viññapti*) that appear in the form of the external world, the body, and objects of experience, as well as their associated afflicted phenomena, without their ever arising again;¹³ [while it also refers to (2)] a principle of proceeding actively (*pravṛttiniyama*) in another nature, viz. that of *prakāśa*, free from conceptual proliferation and like the clear, unending sky.¹⁴

¹³ Literally something like, “[...] and because those unarisen [*viññaptis* and *dharmas*] are totally unarisen, [...]”

¹⁴ KT 231: *tatra cittasantānalakṣaṇasyāśrayasya yāvat sāmkleśikadharmabījānām tadvāsanānām dauṣṭhulyākhyānām ādhāras tāvad ālayākhyasya paścād āryamārgeṇa niṣprapañcena cirabhāvitena tāsām pariṣayād anālayākhyasya sataḥ, pratiṣṭhādehabhoganirbhāsānām viññaptīnām itareṣām ca sāmkleśikānām dharmānām utpannānām astaṅgamād anutpannānām cātyantam anutpādād tenātmanā nivṛttiniyamaḥ, viśuddhagaganopamena tu niṣprapañcena prakāśātmanānantena pravṛttiniyamaḥ parāvṛttiḥ*. Compare Isaacson (2013), 1043–1044, whose translation I’ve relied on here.

Contentless consciousness, then, is the way in which consciousness proceeds upon enlightenment. Enlightenment, Ratnākaraśānti is clear (and as we will see in greater detail below), is an attainment of consciousness: cultivation is conscious work, not simply turning the mind off, and so it stands to reason that the result of this conscious work is a conscious attainment. But because all the appearances that show up to consciousness are unreal, only contentless consciousness can remain once everything unreal has been eliminated. Insofar as the mental continuum proceeds actively for a buddha, then, it proceeds actively as contentless consciousness. This is what it means for the basis to have been transformed.

This contentless consciousness, however, was always already there. Indeed, it *must* have been in order for it to be available for the buddhas to realize, and hence for buddhahood to be possible. It is the innate nature of the mind: what the mind is in itself, divorced from all the unreal, afflicted phenomena that keep us bound in saṃsāra. Ratnākaraśānti writes that,

Since the elements and so on are indeed unreal (*alīka*), i.e. constructed by erroneous (*bhrānta*) consciousness, they are not the innate (*nija*) nature of consciousness. Therefore, they are said to disappear in unerroneous (*abhrānta*) gnosis. For this very reason, it is not the case that everything is real in its dual form, i.e. by having dual *ākāras*, and it is not the case that everything is unreal insofar as it is non-dual bare manifestation (*advayaprakāśamātra*).¹⁵

Buddhahood consists of a transformation, then, but it is a transformation that frees the mind's innate nature, letting it show itself as it really is. Ratnākaraśānti's simile in the KT passage above, viz. that contentless consciousness is like the sky, is meant in part to explain this notion.

Ratnākaraśānti appeals to this simile often when speaking about the ultimate nature of

¹⁵ MuĀV_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.12 (MuĀV_{ed} 15): *yato 'līkam eva tan mahābhūtādi bhrāntena vijñānena vikalpitam, na tat tasya nijah svabhāvaḥ. tasmād abhrānte jñāne 'staṃgacchatīti. ata eva na sat sarvaṃ dvayarūpeṇa dvayākārarūpeṇa ca nāsat sarvaṃ advayaprakāśamātrarūpeṇeti*. Again, compare Isaacson, “Yogācāra and Vajrayāna,” 1042–1043, and note that the context of this comment is a gloss of Nāgārjuna's YŚ 34, a verse Ratnākaraśānti was very fond of. We will have opportunity to consider his idealist interpretation of Nāgārjuna in Chapter II.

consciousness and buddhahood alike—and, we will see, his understanding of what “sky-like” is supposed to mean is a serious point of contention for Jñānaśrīmitra. Ratnākaraśānti takes it that the comparable qualities, or the qualities shared between the sky, contentless consciousness, and buddhahood, are threefold: being free of appearance (*nirābhāsa* or *kevala*), being unending (*ananta*), and being completely pure (*suviśuddha*).¹⁶ Both the sky and consciousness are by nature free of appearance (or clouds and dust and dew, etc., in the case of the sky), are unending, and are by nature pure—or again, free of the defilement lent by appearances (or clouds, etc., in the case of the sky). The innate nature of consciousness, then, shines forth when it is transformed, or when its defilements have been removed, just as the sky on an autumn day at noon (as he’ll often fill out the simile)¹⁷ is naturally luminous when the clouds have been blown away.

ii. Contentless Consciousness and Buddhahood
b) The Sky-Like Form-Bodies and the Buddha’s Tiny Bit of Error

That this describes buddhahood, however, presents a serious problem. When Ratnākaraśānti tells us that the *dharmakāya* is like the sky because both it and the sky consist of manifestation that is free of appearance, unending, and completely pure,¹⁸ or because both it and the sky are endless

¹⁶ KṚ 231: *prakṛtir asya svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ, tena khasama eva nirābhāsānantasuviśuddhaprakāśānām tathatāsvabhāvatvāt*. Note the use of *suviśuddha* here, which is consistent with his use above in fn.12.

¹⁷ See for instance Isaacson, “Yogācāra and Vajrayāna,” 1047: *śaradamalamadhyāhnagaganopamam*.

¹⁸ KṚ 231: *svābhāvikaḥ kāya ity apy ucyate, tathatāprakāśayoḥ svarūpe ’tyantam avasthānāt. tad ayam buddhabodhilaḥṣaṇo bhagavān vajradharaḥ prakṛtyā khasamaḥ. prakṛtir asya svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ, tena khasama eva nirābhāsānantasuviśuddhaprakāśānām tathatāsvabhāvatvāt*. “The *svābhāvikaḥ kāya* [another name for the *dharmakāya* in Ratnākaraśānti’s reckoning], viz. the essential body, [is also a fitting name for the *dharmakāya*] for *tathatā* and *prakāśa* definitively remain in their own nature. Now, the Blessed One Vajradhara, who is the enlightenment of the buddhas, is by nature like the sky (*prakṛtyā khasamaḥ*), because his nature, which is the *svābhāvikaḥ kāya*, is exactly the same as the sky because the *prakāśas*, free of appearance, unending, and completely pure, have the nature of *tathatā*.”

and natural luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara*),¹⁹ this makes sense in his system. The *dharmakāya*, the fundamental nature of all phenomena that is realized by a buddha, is contentless consciousness—that innate nature of consciousness that proceeds after the transformation of the basis, or the removal of all appearances. So its being sky-like is clear enough once the simile between contentless consciousness and the sky has been understood. It is what a buddha realizes, but also, insofar as it is permanent in its nature, it is that state of affairs that makes buddhahood possible in the first place: just as the natural clarity and luminosity of the sky makes it possible for the sky to shine when the clouds and dust have blown away, so too, when all content has ceased to appear, consciousness manifests in its contentless nature, which has always been there in any case.

But what about the other buddha-bodies? Buddhahood is not the *dharmakāya* alone: we have seen that an essential part of being Buddha is teaching sentient beings in ordinary world-realms through the emanated *nirmāṇakāyas* and teaching highly advanced bodhisattvas in heavenly realms through the *sambhogakāya*. And as Ratnākaraśānti says, it is because of the form-bodies consisting of forms that Buddha can say, “I exist.”²⁰ But how can these form-bodies be contentless or appearanceless? Ratnākaraśānti admits that, first of all, the form-bodies are

¹⁹ See above, fn.11.

²⁰ See MuĀ_ved 144: *nanu dharmakāyasaṃgrhītaṃ mahāsukham atra sādhyam, dharmakāye ca dehabhogapraṭiṣṭhānirbhāsānāṃ vijñānānāṃ parikṣayato dehādih katham. tatas tasmīn sādhye na yuktā dehabhāvanety ata āha, bhāvo 'haṃ naiva bhāvo 'ham iti. rūpādīmān ahaṃ sambhoganirmāṇakāyena dehādipratibhāsatvāt tayoh. naiva rūpādīmān ahaṃ dharmakāyena nirābhāsatvāt tasyety arthaḥ.* “The goal (*sādhyā*) here is great bliss (*mahāsukha*) which has apprehended the *dharmakāya*, and because all conscious states whose appearances depend upon bodily experience (*dehabhoga-*) have ceased, how is there anything bodily (*dehādi katham*)? Therefore, bodily cultivation (*dehabhāvanā*) is not reasonable when it comes to this goal.’ The Blessed One responds to this [in HT II.ii.37] with, ‘I exist and indeed I do not exist’ (***bhāvo 'haṃ naiva bhāvo 'ham***). I am one who possesses form and so on (*rūpādīmān*) insofar as I am the *sambhoga-* and *nirmāṇakāyas*, for those two bodies have appearances of the body and so on (*dehādipratibhāsatvāt*). I am indeed not one who possesses form and so on (*rūpādīmān*) insofar as I am the *dharmakāya*, for that body is appearanceless (*nirābhāsatvāt*). This is the idea.” The whole comment on this verse is worth comparing with what we will consider in a moment from the KṚ. Note that here and below, Sanskrit words in bold are words in the root-text being commented on.

precisely that, *form*-bodies, so they must present images or appearances to the beings that behold them in ordinary and heavenly worlds. Further, these bodies are those through which Buddha teaches, and so, insofar as Ratnākaraśānti refuses to accept the idea that Buddha manifests in the world without consciousness at all, phenomenally, too, they must consist of content for the embodiments of Buddha that speak. This is especially true of the *sambhogakāya*, which is characterized by the enjoyment of the Buddhist teachings together with high-level bodhisattvas in heavenly realms: it is both bodhisattvas *and Buddha as the sambhogakāya* that so enjoy the dharma.²¹

How the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāyas* can teach but still be by nature free of appearances and content, or “sky-like” in this special sense, is difficult for Ratnākaraśānti to argue—and it would seem he knows it. In the opening section of his KT, Ratnākaraśānti takes the opportunity to give an explanation of this delicate point, commenting on his own opening verse wherein he refers (as per the title of the *Khasama Tantra*) to each of the three bodies of Buddha as sky-like (*khasama*).²² When he comes to the *sambhogakāya*, he employs some elegant commentarial contortions:

Even if, insofar as he is the *sambhogakāya*, [Vajradhara, or the enlightenment of all the buddhas,] is not at all sky-like in accordance with his mental content (*yathākāra*), due to the variegatedness of content (*ākāraivaicitrya*), still he is sky-like in accordance with his appearance (*yathāpratibhāsa*). For the unhindered *dharmakāya* experiences phenomena in their nature, which is like the sky. And the *sambhogakāya* determines (*paricchinatti*) phenomena to be precisely that way [viz. sky-like, or devoid of mental content], since it

²¹ Ratnākaraśānti, it should be noted, refuses to accept the position of certain Mādhyamikas who argue that buddhahood is simply an insentient state, and that the Buddha teaches solely on the basis of the momentum of good karma developed over his many lifetimes of practice, much as a potter’s wheel keeps spinning even after the potter has left the room. We will have much more to say about this below in Chapter 3.

²² KT 231: *kāyais tribhīr api khasamaṃ paramādyam praṇamatā tadarthasya / tantrasya mayā kriyate tīkā khasamasya khasamaiva //* “Bowling to the Supreme Primordial (*paramādyam*), who is like the sky (*khasama*) with each of his three bodies [as will be explained in what follows], I compose this commentary, itself like the sky, on the *Khasama Tantra*, which has him as its aim [or its meaning].” The Supreme Primordial nature of buddhahood *in all three of its bodies*, the tantra he’s commenting on, and his commentary itself, then, are all like the sky (*khasama*).

is the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the experience [that is the *dharmakāya*]. And how does the *sambhogakāya* determine phenomena in that way? Because object, subject, and their respective appearances are determined as not existing. It is like ordinary people’s determination of pots, etc., as existing, which is the natural outflow of the experience of pots and so on. And just as, for ordinary people, the vivid experience that has the mental content of a pot determines the pot as precisely existing—even without any verbalization of existence—due to the force of the latent traces of former repeated practice of such determinations; so too, the *sambhogakāya* of the buddhas, though non-conceptual, determines its own content as precisely non-existent. It is just this determination that is here intended by the word “appearance” [when it was said a moment ago that Vajradhara, insofar as he is the *sambhogakāya*, is “sky-like in accordance with his appearance”]. For appearance is of two kinds: direct awareness (*saṃvedana*) and implication (*upalakṣaṇa*). Therefore, the *sambhogakāya* of the buddhas, too, is indeed sky-like in accordance with its appearance [which is to say in accordance with its implication, its determination].²³

The *sambhogakāya* is in fact not devoid of mental content or images (*ākāras*), and so it is sky-like not in the first place, so to speak, but only by implication. The direct awareness (*saṃvedana*) that the *sambhogakāya* has is contentful and so not at all sky-like, Ratnākaraśānti admits. Its implication (*upalakṣaṇa*), however, is devoid of that content. He considers the way ordinary experience works in order to explain this idea, making appeal to the notion of a “natural outflow” (*niṣyanda*)—a concept that goes back at least to Vasubandhu, where it is said that some *y* that is the natural outflow of *x* has the same nature as *x*.²⁴ The *sambhogakāya* is the natural outflow of the *dharmakāya* in the same way certain judgments are the natural outflow of our immediate

²³ KṚ 231–232: *sāmbhogikena yady apy ākāravaicitryād yathākārannaivaⁱ khasamaḥ, tathāpi yathāpratibhāsaṃ khasama eva. dharmakāyo hi khasamena [232] tattvena dharmān anāvṛto ’nubhavati. sambhogakāyas tathāiva paricchinnati, anubhavasya niṣyandatvāⁱⁱ. katham ca tathā paricchinnati? grāhyagrāhakatatpratibhāsānām asattayā paricchedāt. tadyathā bālānām ghaṭādyanubhavanīṣyandoⁱⁱⁱ niścayaḥ sattayā. yathā ca bālānām ghaṭākāraḥ paṭīyān anubhavaḥ sattājālpanam antareṇāpi sattayaiva paricchinnati prāktananiścayābhyāsavāsanābalāt; tathā buddhānām akalpako ’pi sambhogakāyaḥ svam ākāram asattayaiva paricchinnati. sa eva paricchedaḥ pratibhāsaśabdenātra vivakṣitaḥ. dvividho hi pratibhāsaḥ, saṃvedanam upalakṣaṇam ca. tasmāt sambhogakāyo ’pi buddhānām yathāpratibhāsaṃ khasama eva. ⁱ yathākārannaiva] MS; yathākāra naiva KṚ. ⁱⁱ niṣyandatvāt] MS; niṣpandatvāt KṚ. ⁱⁱⁱ -niṣyando] MS; niṣpando KṚ.*

²⁴ See Isaacson “Ratnākaraśānti’s *Hevajrasahajasyadyoga* (Studies in Ratnākaraśānti’s Tantric Works I),” in *Le Parole E I Marmi*, edited by Raffaele Torella (Rome: Istituto Italiano per L’Africa e L’Oriente, 2001), 466, who notes Ratnākaraśānti’s citation of Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa*, 2.57c: *niṣyando hetusadrśa iti lakṣaṇam*, and Isaacson, “First Yoga: A Commentary on the *Ādiyoga* Section of Ratnākaraśānti’s *Bhramahara* (Studies in Ratnākaraśānti’s Tantric Works IV),” in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ. Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. Birgit Kellner et al. (Vienna: ATBS, 2007), I:293, for further sources.

experience of everyday objects. Just as our experience of those objects is mistaken, and hence our judgments regarding them are mistaken, so too, since the *dharmakāya* is unmistaken, the judgment regarding it (viz. the *sambhogakāya*'s judgment) is unmistaken. Though non-conceptual, the *sambhogakāya* (paradoxically, one might fairly object) has some capacity for judgment: it determines (*paricchinatti*) its appearances as not really existing in the same natural, instantaneous way we ordinary deluded beings judge pots and such things to exist after our experience of them. It is like the sky, then, insofar as it judges its appearances to be non-existent.²⁵

This determination, Ratnākaraśānti tells us elsewhere, is accomplished by the so-called “discriminating gnosis” (*pratyavekṣaṇājñāna*), one of the categories of gnosis possessed by a buddha discussed in Yogācāra doctrine.²⁶ The *sambhogakāya*, then, is not completely erroneous, for it knows its appearances not to exist through its discriminating gnosis, the natural outflow of the *dharmakāya*. It has *śuddhalaukikajñāna* or *-vikalpa*, a purified worldly gnosis that is caused by the transcendent gnosis (*lokottarajñāna*) of the *dharmakāya* and attained afterwards—hence

²⁵ The *nirmāṇakāya* need not detain us here. Suffice it to say, Ratnākaraśānti tells us that: “The *nirmāṇakāya* for its part is all the more sky-like, because even magicians determine humans [or elephants or whatever] they themselves have produced to be unreal.” KṚ 232: *nirmāṇakāyas tu sutarāṃ khasamaḥ māyākārair api svayaṃ nirmītasya puruṣāder asattayaiva paricchedāt.*

²⁶ See MuĀ_{ved} 145, ad HT II.ii.37: *nirābhāsenā ca jñānena dharmāṇāṃ sāmānyalakṣaṇam eva tathatākhyam drśyate na viśeṣalakṣaṇāni. anantāni tāni tatpratibhāsenādarśajñānena drśyante, tatparicchedakena ca pratyavekṣaṇājñānena paricchidyante cobhe jñāne saṃbhogakāyaḥ. tasmāt tribhiḥ kāyair ahaṃ buddho naikena, saṃbhoganirmāṇakāyau vinā svaparārthasampadoḥ paripūraṇābhāvān, na ca tāv atyantam bhrāntau yathāpratibhāsam asattayā māyopamāditvena prakhyānāt.* “Gnosis that is without appearance [that is, the *dharmakāya*] sees what is called tathatā or the thusness of phenomena—which indeed has a universal characteristic (*sāmānyalakṣaṇam eva*), not particular characteristics (*viśeṣalakṣaṇāni*). Those unending particular characteristics are seen by the mirror-gnosis (*ādarśajñānena*) that contains the appearance of them, and they are determined (*paricchidyante*) by the discriminating gnosis because that is their determiner (*tatparicchedakena pratyavekṣaṇājñānena*), and both these gnoses are the *saṃbhogakāya*. Therefore, I am buddha with the three bodies, not with one, because without the *saṃbhoga*- and *nirmāṇakāyas*, there would be no fulfillment of the accomplishments of one’s own and others’ needs. Moreover, the two [rūpakāyas] are not completely erroneous, for they are known [respectively] as non-existent in accordance with appearance (*yathāpratibhāsam*) and as being like an illusion and so on.” Compare Isaacson, “First Yoga,” 297, for an edition of the *Guṇavatī*'s presentation of the five *jñānas*.

also referred to in Yogācāra texts as “gnosis attained after [transcendent gnosis]” (*tatprṣṭhalabdhajñāna*). But note the way Ratnākaraśānti is willing to put the point in his MuĀv ad HT II.ii.37: The *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāyas*, he says, *are not completely erroneous* (*na ca tāv atyantam bhrāntau*)—which comes very close to saying that they are, in fact, at least *a little bit* erroneous. Indeed, he would seem to have admitted this in the passage we saw a moment ago, when he says that the *sambhogakāya* is “not at all sky-like in accordance with its mental content” (*yathākāran naiva khasamaḥ*).

In a terminologically related passage of his *Madhyamālamkāropadeśa* (MAU), he concedes this point explicitly. There, considering the purified worldly gnosis (**śuddhalaukikajñāna*) of the buddha—the sort of awareness, that is, that Ratnākaraśānti thinks the buddha’s form-bodies have when they teach—he tells us that such gnosis,

is purified insofar as it determines reality (*de kho na nyid yongs su gcod pa nyid kyis, *tattvaparicchedatvena*), and it is worldly insofar as it is erroneous (*'khrul ba, *bhrānta*). Therefore, in accordance with the purpose or aim of the stage of buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi sa la dgos pa'i dbang gis, *buddhabhūmiprayojanavaśena*), perfect enlightenment (*rdzogs pa'i byang chub, *samyaksambodhi*) [contains] a little bit of error (*'khrul pa, *bhrānti*).²⁷

This is a rather striking concession: insofar as the form-bodies are an essential part of buddhahood, and insofar as those form-bodies must engage with appearances even if they judge those appearances to be unreal, buddhahood—the highest goal of Buddhist practice—is a little bit erroneous. The *dharmakāya* might be perfectly like the sky and totally devoid of all content and appearance, but the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāyas* still participate in the world of appearances even if they know those appearances to be unreal, illusory, and so on.

²⁷ MAU 78—611: [...] *ye shes des de kho na nyid yongs su gcod pa nyid kyis dag pa yin la, 'khrul ba nyid kyis 'jig rten pa yin no. de bzhin du* [D,P: *du*; N: *dus*] *sangs rgyas kyi sa la dgos* [D: *dgos*; P,N: *dgongs*] *pa'i dbang gis rdzogs pa'i byang chub cung zad 'khrul pa yin te, dag pa 'jig rten pa'i bdag nyid yin pa'i phyir ro.*

Ratnākaraśānti is so committed to the fundamental unreality or falsehood (*alīkatva*) of appearances that he is willing to say that buddhahood itself, to the extent that it must include the form-bodies and their attendant appearances, contains a little bit of error.

We will see in later chapters that this is an inadmissible and inexcusable conclusion, as far as his fellow Yogācāra Jñānaśrīmitra is concerned. Ratnākaraśānti’s consistency, however, is admirable. Thanks to his interpretation of scripture (and to the logic we will consider in the next chapter), he has reason to believe that all mental content is fundamentally erroneous, and he is willing to accept the implications of this view for his buddhology. The identification of contentless consciousness with buddhahood, then, is basic to Ratnākaraśānti’s view: the *dharmakāya* is contentless consciousness, plain and simple; the form-bodies that naturally flow from the *dharmakāya* and are indubitably an essential part of buddhahood are a form of purified worldly gnosis—erroneous to the extent that they still engage with mental content (even so much as to judge it to be mistaken), but nevertheless purified through their being the *dharmakāya*’s natural outflow in a way no other worldly awareness can be.

iii. Contentless Consciousness and Self-Awareness:
a) *Svasaṃvedana* and *Svasaṃvedya*

So far we have seen that contentless consciousness is buddhahood—or in particular the fundamental nature of buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*. Contentless consciousness, however, is also what is realized or known through self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*); it is, so to speak, the “object,” *svasaṃvedya*, of self-awareness. This is a term of art in Ratnākaraśānti’s work that is

liable to cause confusion. Though the term strikes us in the first place as a gerundive, we might also understand it in an objective sense: to say that contentless consciousness is *svasaṃvedya* is to say that it is that of which awareness is conscious when it is aware of itself. Though we will see that self-awareness does not take an object in the sense of a reified and distinct object of cognition, we will nevertheless call this the ‘object’-sense of *svasaṃvedya*, retaining the scare-quotes as a reminder that we are not speaking of an object per se (*artha*, *viśaya*, etc.), but rather awareness reflexively aware of itself.

However, *svasaṃvedya* also captures something of the deeply old Buddhist notion of *pratyātmavedya/-vedanīya*, or a truth that must be realized for oneself.²⁸ Just as, in a trivial sense, the taste of an orange has to be experienced for oneself to be truly understood, so too with the truths the Buddha taught: if they are not experienced for oneself, they remain a conceptualized set of doctrines rather than an enlightening realization. This we will call the gerundive-sense of *svasaṃvedya*. To say that contentless consciousness is *svasaṃvedya*, then, means that contentless consciousness is something that must be realized for oneself or first-personally experienced to be known: no amount of description can capture what it is like to experience contentless consciousness.²⁹ By adding the ‘object’-sense of *svasaṃvedya* to this more literal gerundive-sense, Ratnākaraśānti means to indicate that when we are truly self-aware, the ‘object’ of that experience is just contentless consciousness.

²⁸ See Shulman, *Rethinking the Buddha*, 13ff.; Kapstein, “We Are All Gzhan stong pas,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 7: 112–113.

²⁹ Note in this regard the parallel with the famous argument put forward by Frank Jackson in his 1982 article, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Chalmers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 273–280. Here, Jackson presents the following thought experiment against physicalism: Mary, a specialist in the neurophysiology of vision who has lived her life in and made all her studies from a black-and-white room, has learned everything there is to know about the physical properties of the color red and its effects on the eyes and brain; still, Jackson suggests, she learns something new when she emerges from her black-and-white room and first experiences red for herself. Because she learns something despite knowing all the physical facts about red, Jackson concludes that physicalism is false.

Note that, despite the warning Matthew Kapstein presents against conflating notions of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *rang rig*) and something to be realized for oneself (*pratyātmavedanīya*, *so so rang rig*), I believe Ratnākaraśānti avails himself of an ambiguity of the term *svasaṃvedya* in his work.³⁰ That is, *svasaṃvedya* refers to that nature of awareness known through self-awareness, and this, properly understood, means that the nature of awareness can only be known for oneself first-personally or subjectively. Part of the reason this is so, we will see, is that the nature of awareness has a peculiar phenomenal character that can only be experienced first-personally. Just as with the taste of an orange, no amount of third-person description captures what it is like to experience contentless consciousness.

For a fuller understanding of this idea, we may begin by considering one of Ratnākaraśānti's many statements of his proof of idealism. In the course of refuting a Mādhyamika opponent who denies the reality of self-awareness in his PPU, Ratnākaraśānti takes the opportunity to provide the following proof:

Being an object of awareness (*saṃvedya*) is just being evident to awareness (*aparokṣatā*), and that [being evident to awareness] is not possible without a relation to manifestation (*prakāśa*). [Now,] manifestation has as its nature precisely the open clarity [that is intrinsic to being evident]. The relation to that nature is just one of identity. Further, an object of cognition that cannot be known without something is known through that something; hence, self-awareness (*svasaṃvitti*) is not contradictory.³¹

A great deal is packed into this line of reasoning. An object of consciousness has to show up to awareness, and to show up to awareness it must be related to manifestation, or *prakāśa*, for that has as its nature precisely the shining-forth (*sphuṭa*) that here is said to define anything's being evident to awareness (or not being hidden to awareness, *aparokṣatā*). An object of awareness

³⁰ See Kapstein, "We Are All Gzhan stong pas."

³¹ For the text of this passage and another translation, see Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 81–82. Seton's discussion of this passage is quite lucid and very helpful.

must have some relation to whatever makes it possible for it to show up to awareness in the first place. Something that did not have this relation would forever remain outside of awareness' scope. An object of awareness, then, is constituted as such (that is, as an *object of awareness* in the first place) by its relation to the manifestation that makes it evident.

As Ratnākaraśānti puts the point, for something to be related to manifestation is for it to have manifestation as its nature or its identity (*tādātmya*): for it to consist of manifestation.³² So, given that objects of cognition cannot be known without manifestation, they are said to be known through manifestation. But since they themselves consist of manifestation insofar as they are evident, an instance of knowing an object is on this analysis an instance of awareness knowing itself. When I know the nature of an object of experience, in other words, what I know is the shining-forth that makes it evident to me in the first place, and that shining-forth is just consciousness, the same thing that does the knowing. Self-awareness would then seem to be nothing but the mere manifestation of manifestation, of the shining-forth that is at the heart of anything's being evident to awareness.

The proof continues with Ratnākaraśānti confirming that for this reason, awareness only knows itself, not anything external to it, whenever it is aware. He writes,

And that through which something is known is nothing but awareness (*jñāna*); hence, mind and mental factors, which have as their nature awareness, are alone the 'objects' of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedya*), and their relation to manifestation is nothing other than identity; by this, idealism (*vijñaptimātratā*) is established. Therefore, it is proven that no object of cognition is external.³³

³² Here, Ratnākaraśānti is clarifying that, of the two types of relation accepted by the Dharmakīrtian tradition, *tādātmya* (identity, "having that as its nature") and *tatutpatti* (a causal relation, "arising from that"), the relation he is considering is the former. It may be objected that, if a given appearance and manifestation must have some form of identity in order to explain the manifestation of an appearance, then this would undermine Ratnākaraśānti's position that appearances are ultimately eliminable while manifestation is not. This is indeed the line of argument advanced by both the Mādhyamika and the Sākāravādin, and we will see Ratnākaraśānti's response in the next chapter.

³³ Again, see Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 82–83.

What is known through self-awareness, the ‘object’ of self-awareness, is related to manifestation through identity. Because of this, anything we are conscious of is in its nature simply manifestation, or the shining-forth that makes it something evident to consciousness in the first place. And so any purported consciousness of an object is really, on the analysis presented here, consciousness of manifestation. Idealism is hence established since, insofar as any object of consciousness must be evident and so in its nature manifestation, there is no object that is outside consciousness’s scope.³⁴

Ratnākaraśānti has the opportunity to explore this idealist point in his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* too, and there he further clarifies the identification between *svasaṃvedya* and contentless consciousness. The *Hevajra* tells us, according to Ratnākaraśānti’s interpretation, that the true, thorough knowledge of all phenomena (*sarvadharmaparijñāna*)—or the cultivation that leads to buddhahood—amounts to the cultivation of all things as just the supreme reality (*param tattvam*).³⁵ This supreme reality, Ratnākaraśānti comments, is not constructed through various words or mental content.³⁶ And what is it exactly? The root-text of the *Hevajra* says it is that whose nature is one’s own being (*ātmabhāvasvarūpaka*), which Ratnākaraśānti clarifies means the reality (*tattva*) of one’s own mind (*svacitta*)—nothing but, that is, *prakāśamātra*, the bare manifestation of contentless consciousness.

³⁴ Note that we will return to this passage of the PPU when we discuss the *sahopalambhaniyama* below, Chapter 3, section iii.

³⁵ MuĀV_{ed} 96, HT I.viii.45: *sthīracalāś ca ye bhāvās tṛṇagulmalatādayaḥ / bhāvyaṅte vai param tattvam ātmabhāvasvarūpakam //*

³⁶ MuĀV_{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.45 (MuĀV_{ed} 96): *te sarve param eva tattvaṃ bhāvyaṃ, nādhimuktītattvaṃ nānājalpair nānākāraiś ca vikalpitam*. “All of these should be cultivated as just the supreme reality (*param eva tattvaṃ*), not as the reality of [the object of] firm conviction (*adhimuktītattvaṃ*) [discussed in the immediately preceding section of the commentary], which is conceptualized through various words and various *ākāras*.”

The *Hevajra Tantra* then goes on to say that the cultivation under discussion leads to the realization that all phenomena have just this one reality, that of the reality of one's own mind, and that this reality is *svasaṃvedya*.³⁷ In his comment, Ratnākaraśānti entertains an objection. A Mādhyamika opponent might claim that emptiness (*śūnyatā*), not *svasaṃvedya*, is said to be the true pinnacle of all realities (*bhūtaḥkoṭi*), either by the Buddha in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* or by the great philosophers of the Madhyamaka, and so it is contradictory to say that *svasaṃvedya* is the one supreme reality as the *Hevajra* seems to say. But worry not, for Ratnākaraśānti is happy to resolve the contradiction (and in so doing put the Mādhyamika in his place): emptiness is really no different from *svasaṃvedya*. On the proper understanding of emptiness (one the opponent would seem to lack), what it means is emptiness *of subject and object*, or the lack of the imposition of duality onto *svasaṃvedya*.³⁸ *Svasaṃvedya* is the true reality of one's mind, the bare manifestation of contentless consciousness, and this is in itself empty of any hypostatized subject that is conscious (*grāhakākāra*) or object of which the subject could be conscious (*grāhyākāra*).³⁹ Emptiness, then, is but a property of or fact about *svasaṃvedya*, and as such it is inseparable from it. And not only this. The opponent is also

³⁷ MuĀved 96, HT I.viii.46ab: *teṣāṃ ekaṃ paraṃ nāsti svasaṃvedyaṃ mahat sukham /*

³⁸ As we will have opportunity to comment below, this represents the middle way taught in the *Madhyāntavibhāga*.

³⁹ MuĀV^{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.46 (MuĀved 96): *nanu śūnyataiva paraṃ tattvam. tathā hi sā bhūtaḥkoṭir ucyate. bhūtāni tattvāni, teṣāṃ koṭir agram. nātaḥ paraṃ tattvam astīty arthaḥ. iha tu svasaṃvedyaṃ paraṃ tattvam ucyata iti virodhaḥ. nāsti virodhaḥ. na hi śūnyatā nāma kācid anyā dharmāt, dharmatāyāḥ pṛthakśarīrābhāvāt, api tu tasyaiva svasaṃvedyasya sarvadharmāṇāṃ bhāvatattvasya yā dvayarahitatā vijñaptimātratā sā śūnyatā. sā cet paraṃ tattvam tadā svasaṃvedyam eva paraṃ tattvam ity uktaṃ bhavati. tat kuto virodhaḥ?* “But the following objection may be raised: ‘Emptiness alone is the supreme reality, for that is said to be the pinnacle of existents (*bhūtaḥkoṭi*). Existences means realities, and the pinnacle of them is the best. There is no supreme reality other than this; this is the meaning [of saying *śūnyatā* is the *bhūtaḥkoṭi*]. But here, *svasaṃvedya* is said to be the supreme reality, and so there is a contradiction.’ There is no contradiction. For there is no such thing as emptiness that is different from [*svasaṃvedya*], because *dharmatā* does not have any existence (*śarīra*) separate from a *dharmā*; rather, emptiness is just the fact that precisely this *svasaṃvedya*, which is the true reality of all phenomena (*sarvadharmāṇāṃ bhāvatattvasya*), is devoid of subject and object, i.e. *vijñaptimātratā*. If that [emptiness] is said to be the supreme reality [by the Buddha in the *prajñāpāramitāsūtras* or by the Mādhyamika], then it amounts to saying that *svasaṃvedya* alone is the supreme reality. How is that a contradiction?”

mistaken about conception emptiness here because, while emptiness qua property of *svasaṃvedya* (viz. its emptiness of duality) might be said to be the supreme reality among apprehensible truths (*ālambanatattva*), emptiness so understood is not itself conscious. It is really just an insentient (*jaḍa*) fact about *svasaṃvedya*. On the other hand, *svasaṃvedya* is the very nature of consciousness. Hence, *svasaṃvedya* might be called the supreme reality of the subject (*ālambakatattva*), and to this extent it has a leg up over emptiness, even when emptiness is properly understood.⁴⁰

**iii. Contentless Consciousness and Self-Awareness:
b) Self-Awareness, Contentfulness, and Subjectivity**

The supreme reality, the true nature of one’s own mind, is *svasaṃvedya*, and this is the bare manifestation of contentless consciousness. This identification means that contentless consciousness is the ‘object’ of self-awareness: what one experiences for oneself when one’s awareness is aware of itself. But what is *that* supposed to mean? How does this identification make the notion of contentless consciousness any clearer? Here, as this will help make sense of

⁴⁰ MuĀV_Isaacson ad HT I.viii.46 (MuĀV_{ed} 97): *api cālambanatattvānām eva śūnyatā paramā, nālambakāditattvānām. svasaṃvedyaṃ punaḥ sarvadharmaparamatattvātmakam. tathā hi svasaṃvedyam apy ālambanatattvānām paramam, śūnyatādarśanena svarūpasyāpi darśanāt. ālambakatattvaṃ tu paramam svasaṃvedyam eva, na śūnyatā, jaḍatvāt.* “Moreover, emptiness is supreme only among realities that are object (*ālambanatattvānām eva*), not among realities that are subject and so on (*ālambakāditattvānām*). On the other hand, *svasaṃvedya* has the nature of the supreme reality of all phenomena (*svasaṃvedyaṃ punaḥ sarvadharmaparamatattvātmakam*). To explain: *svasaṃvedya* too is supreme among realities that are object, because the nature (*svarūpa*) too is seen through seeing emptiness. But the reality that is subject (*ālambakatattvaṃ*) is *svasaṃvedya* alone, not emptiness, because emptiness is insentient.” In the rest of this fascinating passage ad HT I.viii.46–47, Ratnākaraśānti then follows the root-text and identifies *svasaṃvedya* as the most supreme reality of the fruit (great bliss, or the accomplishment of enlightenment), the cause (the cause of enlightenment), the path (cultivation in particular as the cause of enlightenment), action (the abandonment of the *kleśa*- and *jñeyāvaraṇas* and production of knowledge), agent (the bodhisattva who accomplishes those actions), Īśvara (the one who has accomplished those actions qua highest among beings in the world), and the powerful lord (the one who has accomplished those actions for himself so that he might bring about the enlightenment of others)—*svasaṃvedya* is the most supreme reality of all these.

the novelty of Ratnākaraśānti's claim about contentless consciousness, a more general consideration of what exactly self-awareness might be is warranted.

Self-awareness was a preoccupation of Ratnākaraśānti's, Jñānaśrīmitra's, and everyone else's in Dharmakīrti's text-tradition.⁴¹ This is not least of all because it presents a set of particularly enduring philosophical difficulties. The problem is deceptively simple: how can we be conscious of consciousness? We might think that we are only ever conscious *of objects*, or of content taken up by consciousness. I am aware of this or that physical object out in the world that attracts my attention, or I might direct consciousness' gaze toward a particular mental state, a sadness I am feeling or a belief I want to interrogate, which is hence made the object of consciousness. But consciousness itself, the *subject* of experience, would seem inaccessible to consciousness: if consciousness always takes an object, it definitionally loses sight of itself *as a subject* when it turns toward itself, finding not the subject of experience but only another object. And yet it would seem that consciousness is somehow aware of itself, or that I have some experience of being the subject of my experience of objects. How is that?

In the modern west, the incomprehensibility of this fact was expressed succinctly (and influentially) by Kant, who wrote, "That I am conscious of myself is a thought that already contains a twofold self, the I as subject and the I as object. How it might be possible for the I that I think to be an object (of intuition) for me, one that enables me to distinguish me from myself, is

⁴¹ One would do well to begin research into this topic by looking at Mookerjee's still-insightful foundational study in *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1935), 319–336. For a state-of-the-art consideration, see the articles in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 38, No. 3, *Special issue on Buddhist Theories of Self-awareness (svasamvedana): Reception and Critique* (June 2010), 203–378; Dan Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 158–198; Christian Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 235–273; Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 122–174.

absolutely impossible to explain, even though it is an indubitable fact.”⁴² Some neo-Kantians, Paul Natorp most vocal among them, concluded from this sort of incomprehensibility *impossibility*: if experience must be the experience *of an object*, then it is simply impossible for one to experience oneself *as a subject*.⁴³ Some form of self-awareness (Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception, say) might be the condition for the possibility of experience, but that itself is not something we can experience, for despite the supposed indubitability of the fact Kant alludes to, one is never truly aware of oneself *as a subject*. This is a common objection to notions of self-awareness, built as it is on the straightforward assumption that consciousness is by definition intentional, or that it functions only in its apprehension of an object. Buddhist and other Indian critics of self-awareness made similar claims, citing, for instance, the impossibility of anything (consciousness included) acting with respect to itself and defending the notion that consciousness is by definition consciousness *of* some content.⁴⁴

⁴² See Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 16. For a sense of the influence of this sort of thought on post-Kantian philosophy in Germany (that is, Fichte, Schelling, the Romantics, and Hegel), see especially Dieter Henrich’s *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), Manfred Frank’s *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), and Eckart Förster’s *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴³ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 16. As he there presents Natorp’s argument, “1. Awareness is a relation between a subject (qua experiencing) and an object (qua experienced). 2. If the subject is to be aware of itself, it must take itself as an object. 3. If the subject is aware of an object, it is not aware of itself. 4. Real self-awareness [or a real experience of subjectivity] is impossible.” Cf. Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 73–76 and Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum Press, 2000 [1919]), 77–79. Zahavi considers Heidegger’s important response to Natorp in the remainder of chapter 4 of *Subjectivity and Selfhood*.

⁴⁴ We will have opportunity to consider this sort of objection, and Ratnākaraśānti’s response, in the next chapter.

In the west, the phenomenological tradition's opposition to this line of objection has been particularly influential.⁴⁵ One way to avoid the criticism, put forth by Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre,⁴⁶ is to reject the idea that *all* awareness must include *reflection* or *position*, that is, the determination or positing of something distinct as an object. Sartre, then, distinguishes from ordinary object-consciousness a *pre-reflective* or *non-positional* self-awareness as that feature of every conscious state that picks it out as conscious. The transcendental argument he makes for this view is a common one among defenders of self-awareness, in the west as among Buddhists.⁴⁷ He writes, "the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be conscious of itself as being that knowledge. This is a necessary condition," he continues, "for if my consciousness were not consciousness of being consciousness of the table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of

⁴⁵ Of course, the phenomenological tradition is not alone in its rejection of the sort of reasoning typified by Natorp. Post-Kantian German Idealism (and I think it is fair to say, Kant himself) made great strides in thinking through self-awareness of a sort that is different in kind from ordinary consciousness of objects. See, for instance, the works referred to in fn.42. (Zahavi considers some aspects of Henrich's thought in chapter 2 of *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, esp. 31–37.) The British Idealists, influenced as they were by Hegel's work, have a similar set of concerns. F. H. Bradley, for instance, argues that, because consciousness is always relational—that is, the relation to an object (*conceding*, in other words, a point like Natorp's)—what we are characterizing here as self-awareness might be better characterized as a *feeling*: "The subject is always felt, and neither itself, nor its actual distinction from the object, can be got out and placed before it as an object. And there is no distinction here between the experience and what is experienced. For the subject always is experienced because it is felt" ("Consciousness and Experience" in *Essays on Truth and Reality* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968], 196). This problematic is taken up by A. C. Mukerji and K. C. Bhattacharyya, influenced as they were by Bradley and neo-Hegelianism. See Bhushan and Garfield, *Minds Without Fear: Philosophy in the Indian Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 247–283; as well as Bhushan and Garfield's edited volume, *Indian Philosophy in English: From Renaissance to Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), which contains Mukerji's "Absolute Consciousness," 325–352, and Bhattacharyya's "The Concept of Philosophy," 517–533.

⁴⁶ Cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 52–59. In addition to the important introduction to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), esp. 10–17, 20–24, which we'll come to in a moment, see *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*.

⁴⁷ Already in 1935, Satkari Mookerjee's *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, 319–336, considers the importance of self-awareness in this tradition, with special attention to the way it is defined by Śāntarakṣita to be definitive of consciousness but not itself a form of object-consciousness. Compare Arnold, "Is *svasamvitti* transcendental?" For more on transcendental arguments in Buddhist philosophy of mind, see Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 158–198; David Higgins, *The Philosophical Foundations of Classical Rdzogs Chen in Tibet: Investigating the Distinction Between Dualistic Mind (Sems) and Primordial Knowing (Ye Shes)* (Vienna: ATBS, 2013), 120–139.

being so”—an unconscious state, in other words, rather than a conscious one.⁴⁸ It makes no sense to say I am conscious of the table but not conscious of the fact that I am conscious of the table. If I am conscious, I am conscious of being conscious.

This self-consciousness, however, must itself be a form of pre-reflective consciousness on pain of regress. As Sartre continues,

The reduction of consciousness to knowledge in fact involves our introducing into consciousness the subject-object dualism which is typical of knowledge. But if we accept the law of the knower-known dyad, then a third term will be necessary in order for the knower to become known in turn, and we will be faced with this dilemma: Either we stop at any one term of the series—the known, the knower known, the knower known by the knower, etc. In this case the totality of the phenomenon falls into the unknown; that is, we always bump up against the non-self-conscious reflection and a final term. Or else we affirm the necessity of an infinite regress (*idea ideae ideae*, etc.), which is absurd. [...] If we wish to avoid the infinite regress, there must be an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.⁴⁹

Were the self-consciousness that picks out any conscious state as conscious itself a reflective or positional form of consciousness, it would require another instance of self-consciousness to pick *it* out as consciousness, *ad infinitum*. To stop this regress (and, Sartre goes on to show, because it is an accurate account of our conscious life), we must set self-consciousness apart from ordinary object-consciousness. “This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new mode of consciousness,” he concludes, “but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*.”⁵⁰ Rather than a separate act of consciousness, then, self-

⁴⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 11.

⁴⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 12.

⁵⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 14.

consciousness refers to the fact that a conscious state exists as a state of consciousness at all, and as available for subsequent reflective or positional consciousness.⁵¹

Now, even granting that pre-reflective self-awareness does not take an object the way ordinary conscious states do, we still might wonder about its relationship to contentful consciousness more generally. There are a number of positions one might take in this regard, but they fall on two basic sides: either pre-reflective self-awareness makes sense independently of all content, or it does not. Sartre, for instance, joins the Sākāravādin (and, I think, most philosophers who accept some similar form of self-awareness) in taking this latter stance.⁵² For him, consciousness is always consciousness of something, and so, while every instance of consciousness will be pre-reflectively self-aware, every instance will also have content.⁵³ This is not an incidental relationship; rather, “to say that consciousness is consciousness of something means that for consciousness there is no being outside of that precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something—i.e., of a transcendent being. [...] Absolute subjectivity,” Sartre continues, “can be established only in the face of something revealed; immanence can be defined

⁵¹ Sartre’s example in this regard is instructive. He writes, “every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself. If I count the cigarettes which are in that case, I have the impression of disclosing an objective property of this collection of cigarettes: *they are a dozen*. This property appears to my consciousness as a property existing in the world. It is very possible that I have no positional consciousness of counting them. Then I do not know myself as counting,” *Being and Nothingness*, 13. While I might not know myself as counting, that is, I am pre-reflectively self-aware of the fact, and this fact is thus available for my positional consciousness.

⁵² Indeed, a great many in the phenomenological tradition would agree with this, in one way or another—Zahavi included. The conjunction is not without meaning in the title of his book, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, which has this as its aim: to answer the question, “*To what extent does the self-awareness of subjectivity depend upon its relation to something foreign, be it worldly objects, another subject, or itself as Other?*” *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 41. Merleau-Ponty (cited by Zahavi, *ibid.*) puts the point this way: “the question is always... *how the presence to myself [Urpräsenz] which establishes my own limits and conditions every alien presence is at the same time derepresentation [Entgegenwärtigung] and throws me outside myself.*” Opposed to this, Ratnākaraśānti would answer Zahavi’s question by saying that the self-awareness of subjectivity does *not* depend upon something foreign. More on this anon.

⁵³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 21–24.

only within the apprehension of the transcendent.”⁵⁴ It is essential to consciousness, in other words, to be faced with an object that transcends it, an object that it itself is not. Some apprehended content is necessary for a conscious state to exist, and so self-awareness, too, which is constitutive of that conscious state as such, is nevertheless dependent upon content. Some variety of this position is popular among philosophers for reasons that are straightforward enough, for it certainly seems true to experience that our consciousness is always consciousness *of*, and that, even if self-awareness is pre-reflective and so is not in fact intentional, it must still relate to intentionality in some essential way.

In his *Subjective Consciousness: A Self-Representational Theory*, Uriah Kriegel highlights a distinction that brings further clarity to this notion of self-awareness. Kriegel suggests that the phenomenal character of consciousness—the fact that there is something it’s like for me to have an experience of, say, the blue sky—has two components: a qualitative character and a subjective character. The qualitative character of a phenomenally conscious state is what makes it the particular conscious state it is—the bluish component of my experience of the sky. The subjective character is what makes a phenomenally conscious state such a thing in the first place—the *for-me* component of my experience of the sky.⁵⁵ The subjective character constitutes a conscious state as like something *for me*; the *something it’s like* is the qualitative character.

⁵⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 23. See Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 127–132.

⁵⁵ Kriegel, *Subjective Consciousness: A Self-Representational Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1. Note that later he credits this distinction to Joseph Levine, who writes (in Kriegel’s citation, 45): “There are two important dimensions to my having [a] reddish experience. First... there is something it’s like for me to have this experience. Not only is it a matter of some state (my experience) having some feature (being reddish) but, being an experience, its being reddish is “for me,” a way it’s like *for me*... Let’s call this the *subjectivity* of conscious experience. The second important *dimension* of experience that requires explanation is qualitative character itself. Subjectivity is the phenomenon of there being *something* it’s like for me to see the red diskette case. Qualitative character concerns the “*what*” it’s like for me: reddish or greenish, painful and pleasurable, and the like.”

In this respect, subjective character is much like pre-reflective self-awareness. However, it adds something to our understanding of it by highlighting its distinctly first-person nature. Subjective character is the “warmth and intimacy,” we might say with William James, that my conscious states have through which I know immediately that they belong to me and not to someone else.⁵⁶ In the Buddhist tradition, Dharmakīrti makes a similar claim when he argues that I alone am able to directly experience my conscious states through self-awareness, whereas even an advanced yogin, while he might know my conscious states third-personally when he reads my mind, does not experience them with the self-awareness I have of them.⁵⁷ My conscious states are not *for him* in the same way they are *for me*. This for-me-ness is the subjective character of a conscious state.⁵⁸

The unique immediacy of this perspective I have on my own conscious states is part of what it means to say that I am aware of my conscious states first personally. I am aware that I am conscious not by perceiving my conscious states, but rather simply by *being* conscious. First-

⁵⁶ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1910), 238–239: “[...] The past thought of Peter’s is appropriated by the present Peter alone. He may have a *knowledge*, and a correct one too, of what Paul’s last drowsy states of mind were as he sank into sleep, but it is an entirely different sort of knowledge from that which he has of his own last states. He *remembers* his own states, whilst he only *conceives* Paul’s. Remembrance is like direct feeling; its object is suffused with a warmth and intimacy to which no object of mere conception ever attains. This quality of warmth and intimacy and immediacy is what Peter’s *present* thought also possesses for itself. So sure as this present is me, is mine, it says, so sure is anything else that comes with the same warmth and intimacy and immediacy, me and mine.”

⁵⁷ See PV III.449–460 and Shinya Moriyama, “On Self-Awareness in the Sautrāntika Epistemology” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (2010): 261–277.

⁵⁸ Of course, this would have to be very delicately understood for the Buddhist committed to selflessness: it cannot imply some substantive Self to whom conscious states belong. Rather, it captures something contained in the idea of *pratyātmavedanīya* or the gerundive-sense of *svasamvedya*—that is, something that is to be realized *for oneself*. Perhaps some infelicitous phrase like *one’s-own-ness* would be more precise, but—with this caveat—I will stick with for-me-ness or simply subjective character. Compare in this regard Zahavi’s question regarding “the egological and/or nonegological character of self-awareness,” *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 39.

person knowledge is not a form of observation or reflection that might be in error.⁵⁹ This endows it with at least two pertinent characteristics. First, it gives me a *peculiar* access to my own conscious states, a sort of access no one else has but me—only I have first-person access to my conscious states, not another person or even a powerful yogin. Further, the first person is characterized by a sort of *privileged* access—not of the sort that claims I know everything about myself (which is of course obviously untrue, for Buddhists as much as for anyone else), but rather a minimal *luminosity* each of my conscious states must have. When I am conscious, I am uniquely in a position to know that I am conscious.⁶⁰ To put the point Sanskritically, self-awareness is the primary and most powerful instance of *pratyakṣa*: when I am conscious, it is

⁵⁹ Here, I refer to Sebastian Rödl’s repeated formulation in his *Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), e.g., “I know in a first person way that an object is *F* by being that object, i.e., by being *F*” (17). Or again, with reference now to self-consciousness, “self-consciousness is a relation a subject bears to herself by virtue of being a subject of thought. This means that it is in the first instance a character of the nexus a subject bears to her acts of thinking, of the way in which she represents herself as thinking” (12). Cf. 123–126, where Rödl considers Anscombe’s essay, “The First Person,” in which she tries to dissuade us of a common misunderstanding regarding first-person knowledge. In such knowledge, she writes, “Getting hold of the wrong object *is* excluded, and that makes us think that getting hold of the right object is guaranteed. But the reason is that there is no getting hold of an object at all. [...] “I” is neither a name nor another kind of expression whose logical role is to make a reference, *at all*” (Anscombe, cited in Rödl 2007, 123). “First person knowledge,” as Rödl goes on to summarize Anscombe’s point, “has no room for these forms of error. For, the relationship to an object that is the source of first person knowledge is not *sensory affection by*, but *identity with*, the object. First person knowledge is knowledge I have of an object by being that object” (124). Compare Richard Moran’s discussion of first-person immediacy in the first chapter of his *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1–35, and Ratnākaraśānti’s statement in the PPU, which we will consider in detail in the next chapter, that “*prakāśa* alone is the innate nature of *prakāśa*; hence, it does not result from some malfunctioning due to which the awareness of it might be mistaken. [...] Hence, a defeating argument befalls blue and so on, but not *prakāśa*” (*prakāśasya hi prakāśa eva nijaṃ rūpam iti na tat tasya viplavopanītaṃ yena tadvedanaṃ bhrāntiḥ syāt. [...] tato śti nīlādau bādhakasyāvātāro na prakāśe*).

⁶⁰ It is this technical sense of “luminosity” that I mean here. See Timothy Williamson’s influential discussion and critique of the idea in *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 4, wherein he defines luminosity with this: “A condition *C* is defined to be *luminous* if and only if (L) holds: (L) For every case *a*, if in *a* *C* obtains, then in *a* one is in a position to know that *C* obtains” (95). This seems to mirror in certain respects Rödl’s understanding of first-personal or spontaneous knowledge, as for instance when he distinguishes it from mediated, receptive knowledge with the following: “Knowledge of an independent object is *knowledge from receptivity*. By contrast, if the subject’s knowledge of an object includes and is included in the reality of this object, then the notion of its being given to the subject does not apply. There is no room for a receptive faculty to mediate the subject with what she knows. I know that and why I believe or am doing something by exercising my power of belief and intentional action” (*Self-Consciousness*, 121). We will see that, while Jay Garfield has said of this form of luminosity that it “may in the end be too thin to count as any kind of knowledge worth having, in addition to being so odd, that it is hard to see it as knowledge in the sense that anything else we count as knowledge is knowledge” (*Engaging Buddhism*, 148), for Ratnākaraśānti, however thin or odd it may be, this is not only essential to what consciousness is, it is essential to what *enlightenment* is.

immediately evident to me that I am conscious. A thousand subsequent instances of perception cannot overturn this knowledge. All this is packed into the notion of self-awareness as we will understand it here: it is a form of pre-reflective awareness that does not take an object; it is constitutive of conscious states as such insofar as it gives them their warmth and intimacy, or their subjective character (as opposed to their qualitative character or particular phenomenal contents); and it gives us the peculiar and privileged access we have to our own conscious states.

Kriegel would agree with Sartre and Dharmakīrti that self-awareness so understood is a defining characteristic of any intentional conscious state. It would seem to be a formal fact about intentional consciousness, in other words, rather than something that is experienced in itself: if there is no phenomenal content to be *for-me* in some way, there is no for-me-ness at all. But contra Kriegel, Sartre, Dharmakīrti, and many others, by identifying *svasaṃvedya* and *contentless* consciousness and telling us it is indeed present when all content has disappeared, Ratnākaraśānti suggests that content and self-awareness are *not* both necessary for a conscious state to exist. The presence of content in a conscious state is accidental; true, it differentiates one conscious state from another—consciousness of blue from consciousness of yellow, say—but content has no essential relationship to being conscious, and indeed every conscious state so differentiated is ultimately an erroneous one. Self-awareness, on the other hand, is essential to consciousness: a conscious state just is a mental state that has some subjective character, some warmth and intimacy that is present to me in a unique, first-person way.

This is the criterion of consciousness on Ratnākaraśānti's view: subjective character alone, not intentionality. Content may be present in a conscious state (as it is in all unenlightened experience), or it may not be (as it is not for a buddha's essential body, the *dharmakāya*);

subjective character, however, is by definition present in every conscious state, the *dharmakāya* included. By identifying contentless consciousness and subjective character, Ratnākaraśānti is suggesting that subjective character might be both devoid of and separable from phenomenal content. Once all content has disappeared, the fundamental nature of consciousness still remains, which is to say that there is still some subjective character left over after the disappearance of all content, still some warmth and intimacy left to experience.

iv. Contentless Consciousness and Innate Bliss:

a) The Experience of Bliss in the Tantras: Initiation and Post-Initiatory Practice

But how can this be? From the general discussion above, subjective character would seem to be a formal fact about consciousness rather than something one might experience. It should be simply the fact that any given experience of the content that shows up to consciousness is by definition an experience *for me*, one I experience first-personally. It is hence *a fact about* contentful consciousness in particular, not something that is itself experienced. But Ratnākaraśānti's identification of it with contentless consciousness rejects this picture: subjective character cannot be the fact that content shows up in a peculiarly first-person way, because it exists without content. Subjective character alone, without reference to content, is what consciousness really is. And this, Ratnākaraśānti insists, *can be experienced*. Indeed, what it means to be contentless-ly conscious is precisely to experience subjective character alone, to experience just the warmth and intimacy that characterizes the for-me-ness of consciousness without experiencing any of the content that would otherwise occlude that experience.

The peculiar phenomenology of this is filled out by the exemplary glimpse of it that we are given in tantric practice. This we learn from Ratnākaraśānti’s further identification of *svasamvedya* (in both its senses) with *sahajānanda*, or innate bliss. In order to detail what this experience is like, then, we turn again to Ratnākaraśānti’s writings on tantra.⁶¹

Buddhist tantra (and for that matter Hindu tantra, with which it is closely related) is an immensely vast subject that we will not be able to address in detail here.⁶² We might say generally that tantras that have soteriological ends as their aim (and not, for instance, the ritual accrual of political or magical power, etc.) are distinctive for utilizing ritual means (and sometimes transgressive ritual means) for the attainment of liberation in this very life and this very body. In Ratnākaraśānti’s view, the highest Buddhist tantras are the *yoginī-* or

⁶¹ Here, an objection might already be raised. Ratnākaraśānti, it may be thought, is simply commenting on the *Hevajra Tantra*. How creative could this exercise be for his philosophy? Mustn’t any commentator on the *Hevajra* come to similar conclusions? Not so, however. Ratnākaraśānti’s innovative commentary is distinctive for its strong Yogācāra pedigree, for its philosophical excursions, and for its making the identifications we’ll discuss below, thus bringing its practices—as he interprets them—into his systematic philosophical view. While a more thorough proof of Ratnākaraśānti’s distinctiveness in this regard is beyond the scope of our discussion here (and indeed, this is something I hope to pursue in the future), one case we might readily juxtapose with Ratnākaraśānti is worth noting: that of his student Kṛṣṇa’s commentary on the *Hevajra*, the *Yogaratnamālā*. As Isaacson notes, “Kṛṣṇa [...] follows Ratnākaraśānti in everything except, as it were, the Yogācāra position” (“Yogācāra and Vajrayāna,” 1048). It would be fair to say that Kṛṣṇa’s treatment of philosophy is more perfunctory than his teacher’s—but where he does make gestures towards philosophy, he stakes a starkly different claim. Kṛṣṇa defends a Madhyamaka position wherein emptiness is the emptiness of all phenomena (*sarvadharmasūnyatā*), not of duality (*dvayaśūnyatā*) as Ratnākaraśānti would have it, and consciousness does not ultimately exist—it is *niḥsvabhāva*, it has no inherent nature, contra Ratnākaraśānti’s commitment to *prakāśamātra*. See Isaacson, “Yogācāra and Vajrayāna.” 1038–1041, for a concise presentation of Ratnākaraśānti’s and Kṛṣṇa’s contrasting views on these positions vis-à-vis HT II.viii.9–10.

⁶² Of the many fine general studies of these topics, one can consider Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009), 41–350; Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and Padoux, *The Hindu Tantric World: An Overview* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

yoganiruttaratantras that teach the cultivation of innate bliss in sexual yoga.⁶³ Buddhist tantra may be understood in many ways, but a fundamental distinction is between tantras that teach only external rituals (*kriyātantras*) and those that teach practices that primarily concern the internal world of the practitioner’s own body (*yogatantras*).⁶⁴ In other words, while *kriyātantras* deal primarily with making physical maṇḍalas, tending *homa* fires, consecrating images, and other such external rituals, *yogatantras* often include those rituals but also deal with yoga, wherein maṇḍalas are arrayed inside the body of the yogin, the yogin cultivates himself as a deity, and in that form he participates in various antinomian activities in order to transcend duality and reach enlightenment.

The *yogatantras* may be further divided between those that teach antinomian practices such as the ingestion of impure substances but merely hint in passing at sexual practices,⁶⁵ and those that teach sexual yogas in detail as the primary means for attaining enlightenment. Here, unhelpfully, *yoginītantras*, which count as *yogatantras* in the general sense (that is, as opposed to *kriyātantras*), are juxtaposed with *yogatantras* in this more restricted sense. As Ratnākaraśānti puts the point,

The *yogatantras* teach enlightenment in this very life. In order to explain why [the *Hevajra Tantra*, qua a *yoginī-* or *yoganiruttaratantra*] is superior to them, the Buddha says [in HT I.viii.55]: “There is no accomplishment without that [innate bliss].” In other tantras too there is enlightenment here in this very life or in the next life, but not without

⁶³ See MuĀv ad HT I.viii.54–55. There, Ratnākaraśānti states that the enlightenment of the way of perfections (*pāramitānīti*) is inferior to that of the *yogatantras*, because the perfection of wisdom takes innumerable lifetimes, whereas the *yogatantras* bring about enlightenment quickly. The *Hevajra*, however, is superior to the *yogatantras* (and is thus their *uttaratantra*) insofar as, without innate bliss (*sahajānanda*), the highest enlightenment cannot be attained. See Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics, Or Antinomianism as a Norm* (D.Phil: University of Oxford, 2002), 154–160, and Isaacson, “Conceptions of Awakening (*bodhi*) in Indian Tantric Buddhism” (Handout for a presentation at the Centre of Buddhist Studies, Hong Kong University, Sept. 14th 2010). For a concise discussion of the classification of tantras, on which I rely in what follows, see Isaacson and Sferra’s “Tantric Literature: Overview South Asia,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. 1*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 307–310.

⁶⁴ As per Isaacson and Sferra’s discussion, see MuĀv ad HI I.ii.19 for this distinction in Ratnākaraśānti’s work.

⁶⁵ On which, see Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism*.

that innate bliss. [...] The idea is that practitioners should know the *Hevajra* alone in order to experience perfectly that innate bliss, which is only hinted at in other tantras.⁶⁶

At this point, Ratnākaraśānti has already explained that all tantras are to be distinguished from the non-tantric Buddhism of the way of perfections (the *pāramitānaya* or *-nīti*): non-tantric Buddhism teaches that enlightenment is reached over a succession of births that lasts incalculable eons, whereas the practices taught in tantra are so powerful that they can bring a person to enlightenment over the course of a single lifetime.⁶⁷ But we are told here that the tantras, too, offer different sorts of teachings, some of which are superior to others. As Isabelle Onians summarizes the point in her very fine study of sexual practices in these higher Buddhist tantric systems,

The *Hevajra*, and possibly by extension other members of the Yoginītantra class, are not qualitatively distinct from the Yogatantras, inasmuch as both offer enlightenment and with the option of liberation in this very life. The quantitative difference is that the Yoga tantras, and here this would refer to the *Guhyasamāja*, only briefly mention or hint at the *sahajānanda* [viz. innate bliss], whereas the *Hevajra* has a great deal to say on the topic. Again, such a distinction would presumably result in the qualitative difference that the Yoginī tantras are guaranteed to bring success, while with the *Guhyasamāja* it is rather a hit and miss affair, depending on whether one can pick up on the hints given.⁶⁸

Only the *Hevajra* teaches the details of innate bliss, which is the true aim of practice and the true characterization of enlightenment. Hence the superiority of the *Hevajra*.

⁶⁶ See Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics*, 157–158; Isaacson, “Conceptions of Awakening,” 2–5; translation modified slightly. Isaacson presents the text thus: *yogatantrais tv ihaiva janmani bodhir uktā. tebhyaḥ ko 'śyātīśaya ity āha—na cetyādi. ihaiva janmani janmāntare vā sannihite yottamā bodhis tantrāntare 'pi bhavati na sā tena sahaajānandena vinā. [...] tantrāntarasūcitasya tasya samyakparijñānārthaṃ hevajram eva sādhakair jñātavyam ity arthaḥ. idaṃ teṣāṃ uttaratantram iti bhāvaḥ. Cf. MuĀ_ved 102–103.*

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, MuĀ_v ad HT I.viii.54. Compare too the opening verses to the PPU considered in the last chapter, as well as MuĀ_vIsaacson ad HT I.viii.36 (MuĀ_ved 92): *iha tu puṇyād ity uktam, na pūrvakṛtāt puṇyād iti kiṃ kāraṇam? ihopacitād api puṇyād adhiḡamasya mantranītāv abhimatatvāt, upāyaviśeṣeṇa.* “[It may be asked:] ‘But what is the reason that the Blessed One says here [in verse 36] that [realization] is due to merit, and not due to merit cultivated in a previous life?’ Because, in the Way of Mantras, realization is accepted even from merit that has been collected here in this life, because [the Way of Mantras utilizes] special means.” That is, one can go from never having cultivated any merit in any previous life to utilizing the special means taught in tantra and achieving liberation in this very life.

⁶⁸ Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics*, 159.

The details of innate bliss are explained to the practitioner at a number of different stages in the *Hevajra* and related works. It is experienced and then taught first in initiation (*abhiṣeka*) into the system's practices. The topic of tantric initiation is again a vast one that need not detain us here for too long, but a few comments will be useful to help see what all this is about.⁶⁹ To speak generally, we can say that the first initiation (or really set of initiations called together the "vase-initiation" [*kalaśābhiṣeka*]) consists of the ritual consecration of the body and other important external preparations. The second, "secret initiation" (*guhyaḥbhiṣeka*) consists of the ritual copulation between the guru and a consort, which is to be witnessed by the initiand, who then accepts into his mouth a drop of the mixture of sexual fluids thus produced, placed on his tongue by the guru. The third initiation, the so-called *prajñājñānābhiṣeka*, or the "initiation into the knowledge of wisdom/the consort (*prajñā*)," consists of the initiand's sexual union with the consort, wherein the initiand first glimpses a fleeting moment of innate bliss. (Here, unsurprisingly, many problems arose for tantric interpreters regarding whether or not monks sworn to celibacy were permitted to engage in these practices. Isabelle Onians' study in *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics* outlines these arguments in fascinating detail; suffice it to say, tantric Buddhists found ways to defend monks' participation in these rites.) The experience of innate bliss in the third initiation, however, is not fully appreciated as a liberating event that gives a

⁶⁹ For much more detail, see Sanderson's "Vajrayāna: Origin and Function," in *Buddhism into the Year 2000. International Conference Proceedings*, ed. Dhammakāya Foundation (Bangkok and Los Angeles: Dhammakāya Foundation, 1995), 89–102; Onians, *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics*; and Tanemura, *Kuladatta's Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇajikā: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translations of Selected Sections* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). The general ritual guidebooks from within a century of Ratnākaraśānti's lifetime—those of Kuladatta, Vāgīśvarakīrti, Abhayākara Gupta, et al.—differ in some respects regarding particulars, but they are more or less consistent. The issue of the fourth initiation in particular proved fascinatingly difficult for many commentators to interpret, however. See *Tantric Buddhist Apologetics*, Isaacson's "Observations on the Development of the Ritual of Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) in the Higher Buddhist Tantric Systems," and my 2016 AAR presentation on the matter in Vāgīśvarakīrti. I here summarize what I think can be called the general consensus at Vikramaśīla in Ratnākaraśānti's day.

glimpse of buddhahood, and so the “fourth initiation” (*caturthābhiṣeka*) consists of a teaching by the guru to this effect, explaining to the initiate the connections taught in the tantras between innate bliss and buddhahood. So initiated, the practitioner can undertake the post-initiatory practices outlined in the tantras, accompanied by further instructions from the guru.

As Ratnākaraśānti intimated above, these post-initiatory practices are the most advanced Buddhism has to offer insofar as they utilize the innate bliss that characterizes the nature of buddhahood for the attainment of that goal. Once the initiate has had the initial glimpse of innate bliss in the third initiation accompanied by the instructions given in the fourth, the innate is cultivated in two separate stages of advanced post-initiatory practice, the “Stage of Arising” (*utpattikrama*) and the “Stage of the Arisen” (*utpannakrama*).⁷⁰ The Stage of Arising consists of various forms of deity yoga, wherein the practitioner, concentrating upon various kinds of images, cultivates himself as a deity (*devatā*) and, in that form, cultivates bliss.⁷¹ For Ratnākaraśānti, this stage includes the cultivation of three distinct types of bliss in addition to the innate, and all four blisses arise with particular characteristics, each in its distinct moment. Indeed, the explicit teaching of these four blisses is one of the important innovations of the

⁷⁰ While this is sometimes translated the “Stage of Completion,” Harunaga Isaacson pointed out to me the imprecision of this, at least as far as Ratnākaraśānti is concerned. While it is true that this is the highest level of practice, and hence where practice comes to completion (*utpanna*) or is finally perfected (*niṣpanna*), in Ratnākaraśānti’s presentation, it is more precisely the stage where only the innate (*sahaja*), or that which is always already arisen (*utpanna*), is cultivated. Hence, “Stage of the Arisen.”

⁷¹ See Isaacson, “Ratnākaraśānti’s *Hevajrasahajasadyoga*,” 467–472, as well as Isaacson’s “Ratnākaraśānti’s *Bhramaharanāma*” and “First Yoga,” these being an edition and annotation, respectively, of Ratnākaraśānti’s independent *utpattikramasādhana*, the *Bhramahara*. Note that Ratnākaraśānti comments on the distinction with this: MuĀV^{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.25 (MuĀV^{ed} 87): *mantracihñādikrameṇa devatākaraṇiṣpattir yogina utpattiḥ. sā yasmin yoge ’sti sa utpattikaḥ kramah. utpannam sahajam eva sādhakādīnām rūpam. tad eva devatāditattva-rūpeṇādhimucya yasmin yoge bhāvyaṭe sa utpannakramah.* “Arising (*utpatti*) is the arising of the yogin with the form of the deity (*devatākāraṇiṣpatti*) in the sequence of mantra [viz. seed syllable], sign [*kapāla* or *vajra*, e.g.], and so on [there are five steps; viz. *pañcā(kārā)bhisaṃbodhi*]; the yoga in which this arising exists is the Stage of Arising (*utpattikaḥ kramah*). The arisen (*utpannam*) means just the innate (*sahajam eva*) nature of the *sādhaka* and so on; that yoga in which it is only the arisen that is cultivated (*bhāvyaṭe*)—after having had the firm conviction of it (*adhimucya*) as being the reality of the deity and so on—that is the Stage of the Arisen.”

Hevajra Tantra, and it was adopted by other *yoginītantras* as what might be thought of as one of the genre's defining characteristics.⁷²

Discerning the distinct moments of bliss is meant to give the initiate a firm handle on the phenomenology of the sexual experience cultivated at this stage: it allows him to break it up, classify it, and so to understand it. The first bliss (*ānanda*) arises at the moment of an embrace, a kiss, or other acts of foreplay—hence, it is said to be diverse (*vicitra*), and it amounts to the desire for sexual union.⁷³ The second, supreme bliss (*paramānanda*) arises after that, as a consequence of it (*vipāka*), so to speak. It is the still-conceptualized enjoyment of intercourse with the expectation of innate bliss. A glimpse of innate bliss is experienced in orgasm and, as it is in reality sky-like gnosis devoid of all defiling appearances, it is said to be blank or unmarked by appearances (*vilakṣaṇa*). The post-coital bliss of cessation (*viramānanda*) comes fourth, after the experience of innate bliss. It is characterized by exhaustion (*vimarda*) and reflection on the experience as one's own. As Ratnākaraśānti puts it, “Since the post-coital bliss of cessation has as its characteristic the destruction of the most excellent bliss, consisting of the thought, ‘I have experienced true bliss!,’ it is erroneous because it has the nature of a conceptual cognition—namely a remembrance of bliss past.”⁷⁴ Only innate bliss is real, then, while the three other blisses are technically erroneous insofar as they involve some level of appearance and

⁷² See Szántó's contribution on the *Hevajra Tantra* in Brill's *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. 1*, 334. While the precise order of these blisses was yet another topic of fascinating dispute among commentators, we will discuss here just Ratnākaraśānti's understanding. See Isaacson and Sferra, *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyañātha*, for more on this issue (esp. 96ff.), as well as MuĀv ad HT I.viii.32–34. One of the primary concerns of the work studied by Isaacson and Sferra is to defend the order of the blisses taught by Ratnākaraśānti, who was Maitreyañātha's teacher (and so Rāmapāla's grand-teacher).

⁷³ As HT I.viii.33 puts it, the first bliss consists of the desire (*ākāṃkṣā*) for the touch (*sparśa*) of the ‘lotus.’ There is a longing for or expectation for sexual union; so far, there are just other embraces. For another discussion of the four blisses I will not consider in detail here, see MuĀv ad HT II.iii.5–9.

⁷⁴ MuĀv^{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.33 (MuĀv^{ed} 90): *yasmād viramānanda utkr̥ṣṭasukhavināśalakṣaṇaḥ sat sukhaṃ mayā bhuktam iti, tasmād atītasukhasmaraṇavikalparūpatvād bhrānta ity arthaḥ.*

conceptualization (since they include either some sort of desire for or expectation of bliss, in the case of the first two, or an explicit conceptual remembrance in the case of the fourth). But Ratnākaraśānti thinks this is unavoidable: we have to begin the cultivation of innate bliss with the cultivation of bliss endowed with concepts and appearances. On the Stage of Arising, then, these erroneous blisses lead us to a glimpse of innate bliss, which itself is what is ultimately real.

iv. Contentless Consciousness and Innate Bliss:

b) The Innate Bliss of Subjective Character: *Sahajānanda* and *Svasaṃvedya*

The three erroneous blisses, however, are not cultivated on the Stage of the Arisen (*utpannakrama*) in Ratnākaraśānti's presentation. Here, one cultivates only the innate, what is always already arisen; one aims to make it pervasive, to experience it not just in a momentary flash, but continually in every moment. Ratnākaraśānti explains this distinction of the Stage of the Arisen in a summary-comment on HT I.viii.32–34, the three verses that teach why the three erroneous blisses are not to be cultivated at this stage. He does this by identifying innate bliss—and only innate bliss—with *svasaṃvedya*. He writes,

Here, bliss (*sukha*) is precisely *svasaṃvedya*, which is sky-like (*khasama*), and the goal is similar to that.⁷⁵ And what is that goal like? It is what is in accordance with reality (*yathārtha*), most excellent (*utkr̥ṣṭa*), and immediately present (*abhimukhībhūta*), for these three things are indicated by the words *sva*, *saṃ*, and *vedya*, respectively. And these three things belong to the innate alone. Therefore, that alone should always be cultivated [at this stage], not the other three blisses, for they are different in their characteristics (*vilakṣaṇa*) from the goal. This is the overall meaning (*iti*).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Note the way Ratnākaraśānti puts it here: *tatsamaṃ ca sādhyam*. This would seem to suggest that technically what is experienced in the *utpannakrama* should be *like* the goal rather than the goal itself: the glimpse of buddhahood experienced here is not quite buddhahood itself. More on this below.

⁷⁶ MuĀ_{VI}Isaacson ad HT I.viii.32 (MuĀ_Ved 89–90): *iha svasaṃvedyam eva sukhaṃ khasamaṃ, tatsamaṃ ca sādhyam. tat punaḥ katamat? yad yathārtham utkr̥ṣṭam abhimukhībhūtam svaśabdena saṃśabdena vedyaśabdena ca kramād arthatrayasūcanāt. etac ca trayam saḥajasyaivāstīti sa eva nityam bhāvya netare, sādhyavilakṣaṇatvād iti.*

The aim of the practice enjoined on the Stage of the Arisen is bliss that is *svasaṃvedya*, in both the ‘object’- and gerundive-senses, which is here specified as innate bliss alone. *Svasaṃvedya* is not the other three blisses because, as we noted a moment ago and as Ratnākaraśānti goes on to detail, the erroneous blisses are conceptual and so have no place in the non-conceptual, pre-reflective, immediate self-awareness of *svasaṃvedya*.⁷⁷ Only innate bliss is to be cultivated, for only it is *svasaṃvedya*, sky-like or contentless, and akin to the ultimate goal.

Ratnākaraśānti here details the reason that only innate bliss might be identified with *svasaṃvedya*. We are told that, in addition to meaning sky-like contentless consciousness that is to be experienced for oneself, *svasaṃvedya* might be broken into its parts, *sva-saṃ-vedya*, which mean, respectively, what is in accordance with reality (*yathārtha=sva*), is most excellent (*utkr̥ṣṭa=sam*), and is immediately present (*abhimukhībhūta=vedya*). The reason for the identity is that these three characteristics are precisely the characteristics of innate bliss. In a comment from a few verses earlier, Ratnākaraśānti expands on just what these characteristics are.⁷⁸ The root-text says that bliss being “in accordance with its principle” (*yathānyāya*) means that it is *svasaṃvedya* (that is, HT I.viii.27a: *yathānyāyaṃ svasaṃvedyaṃ*). Ratnākaraśānti comments:

⁷⁷ More precisely, as Ratnākaraśānti understands the text here, the *Hevajra* teaches that the three blisses are not the *sva* of *svasaṃvedya* in I.viii.33: since they involve conceptualization, they are not in accordance with reality (*yathārtha*); they are not the *saṃ* in I.viii.32: since they consist of less bliss than the innate, they are not most excellent (*utkr̥ṣṭa*); and they are not *vedya* in I.viii.34: since they are not to be cultivated on this stage due to their conceptual nature and inferiority, they are not immediately present (*abhimukhībhūta*). See MuĀv ad HT I.viii.32–34.

⁷⁸ This comment is actually a comment on the *Hevajra*’s own auto-commentary: HT I.viii.1 is, over the course of the first half of the chapter, interpreted according to the *utpattikrama*; I.viii.26–27 re-interpret the verse in accordance with the *utpannakrama* (it is hence underlined here, with the *Hevajra*’s citations of it also underlined). While all the specifics need not detain us here, HT I.viii.1 and 26–27 read: *khadhātau bhagam dhyātvā madhye kurvīta bhāvanām / cakram pūrvam yathānyāyam devatā | Inām yathodayam // 1 // [...] khadhātav iti padmeṣu jñānam bhagam iti smṛtam / bhāvaneti samāpattis tatsukhaṃ cakram ucyate // 26 // yathānyāyam svasaṃvedyaṃ bodhicittam tu devatā / yathodayam bhavec chakraṃ dvaividhyaṃⁱ sahaṃ tataḥ // 27 //ⁱ dvaividhyaṃ] MuĀv’s citation; MuĀved *dvaividyaṃ*. We’ll come to v.27 in a moment. Note that the possibility of a space in HT I.viii.1 between *devatā* and *nām* (rather than reading *devatānām*) is implied by Ratnākaraśānti’s comment, as we’ll see.*

What is innate bliss⁷⁹ like (*kīdrśam tatsukham*)? The Blessed One says, “It is in accordance with its principle (**yathānyāyam**).” This means it is unerroneous (*abhrānta*) and excellent (*utkr̥ṣṭa*). He explains this very thing with “Experienced in itself perfectly,” or **svasamvedyam**. Here, the word *vedya* expresses the immediate presence (*sammukhībhāva*) of the bliss that is the goal (*sādhya*), for what is not immediately present cannot be experienced (*vedya*). The word *saṃ*, whose meaning is complete (*samyak*), expresses the excellence (*utkr̥ṣṭatva*) [of the bliss that is the goal]. The word *sva* expresses that this bliss is free from error (*abhrāntatva*), understanding that bliss is experienceable (*vedya*) only with its own nature or in itself (*svenaiva rūpeṇa*), not through the superimposition of error.⁸⁰

Note what Ratnākaraśānti is doing here. It is the Buddha himself who identifies innate bliss with *svasamvedya* in the root-text of the *Hevajra Tantra*: this is not something we could get to without the Buddha’s guidance. Nevertheless, while the identification is made explicitly enough by the Buddha, the reasoning remains obscure and requires the interpretive skills of the commentator. Ratnākaraśānti’s breaking the word *svasamvedya* into its parts is not made explicit in the text,⁸¹ but is rather justified by commentarial practice. In a fashion typical of tantric commentary, Ratnākaraśānti relies on the notion that the Buddha’s speech is *coded*. Ratnākaraśānti had earlier noted that the Buddha’s words are *chandas*, which is to say a form of scriptural language that

⁷⁹ ‘Innate bliss’ is a gloss; *tatsukham* refers to “the bliss that arises from that,” where ‘that’ means cultivation (*bhāvanā*), which Ratnākaraśānti had specified means the following in this context: “[HT I.viii.26’s] ‘cultivation’ (**samāpattiḥ**) is concentrated practice (*samāhitā pratipatti*), i.e. the performance (*anuṣṭhāna*), which is to say motion or vibration (*parispanda*); that is cultivation (**bhāvanā**) [viz. I.viii.1, cited by the root-text in I.viii.26]. The result of this cultivation is the two innate blisses (*sahajānanda*).” MuĀv_{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.26 (MuĀv_{ed} 87): *samāhitā pratipattir anuṣṭhānaṃ parispandaḥ samāpattiḥ, sā bhāvanā. bhāvanāyāḥ phalaṃ saḥajānandadvayam*. We’ll come to the two-fold (or finally four-fold) nature of innate bliss in a moment.

⁸⁰ MuĀv_{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.27 (MuĀv_{ed} 88): *kīdrśam tatsukham ity āha—yathānyāyam iti. abhrāntam utkr̥ṣṭam cety arthaḥ. etad eva vyācaṣṭe—svasamvedyam iti. atra vedyaśabdena sādhyasukhasya sammukhībhāva uktaḥ, asamukhībhūtasya vedyatvāyogāt, saṃśabdena samyagarithenotkr̥ṣṭatvam, svaśabdenābhrāntatvam, svenaiva rūpeṇa vedyaṃ na bhrāntisamāropiteneti kṛtvā.*

⁸¹ Indeed, Kṛṣṇa makes no such move in his YRM. See Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra. A Critical Study* (London: Oxford University press, 1959), Vol. II, 125, where Kṛṣṇa has only this to say: *kīdrśam tatsukham ity āha / yathānyāyam iti / svasamvedyaṃ / aparapratyayaṃ pratyātmavedyaṃ svabhāva ity arthaḥ /*

may break the rules of ordinary Sanskrit grammar and metrics.⁸² But it is also language that may require creative interpretation (*nirukti, nirvacana*) even where the grammar is unproblematic.⁸³ This tradition of analysis gives the interpreter freedom to find within the phonemes of a word connections to other words and meanings that may be seen as hidden within it. The *Hevajra* itself seems to justify this sort of interpretation of its words, giving clues to the symbolism of its images and exhorting the practitioner to learn its secret, coded language (*sandhyābhāṣa*).⁸⁴ Here, Ratnākaraśānti indulges ingeniously in this form of commentary in order to explicate why *svasaṃvedya* and innate bliss should be identified.

By interpreting the Buddha’s words this way, Ratnākaraśānti shows how that same *svasaṃvedya* he has identified as contentless subjective character is also the innate bliss that is here said to be “experienced in itself perfectly.” The identity makes good sense on the reading we’ve developed thus far: the first person is immediately present (*saṃmukhībhāva, abhimukhībhūta, etc.=vedya*)—that is, it requires no observation or reflection to know, but is known immediately just through its existence. And it is free from error (*abhrānta=sva*) insofar as it is devoid of all content, anything superimposed that it is not in itself. The understanding of the *saṃ* in *svasaṃvedya* adds something new, however. We are told that it expresses the excellence (*utkr̥ṣṭatva*) of this experience. Here, we learn something about *svasaṃvedya* that we had to

⁸² MuĀV_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.4 (MuĀV_{ed} 7): *anayā prajñayeti padārthayoḥ pravibhajyajñānena. yuktyeti yogena tayor eva sāmānādhikaranyajñānena vajras cāsau sattvaś cety anena vajrasattva iti smṛta uktaḥ. chāndaso liṅgavyatyayah. āṛṣaṃ hi vacanaṃ sarvam eva cchando na vā kimcid api.* For a discussion of the uses of *chandas* and related terms in Buddhist literature, see David Seyfort Ruegg, “On the Expressions *chandaso āropema, āyataka gītassara, sarabhañña* and *āṛṣa* as applied to the ‘Word of the Buddha’ (*buddhavacana*),” in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday*, Ryutaro Tsuchida and Albrecht Wezler eds. (Reinbek: Dr. Inge Wezler Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 2000), 283–306. See John Newman’s “Buddhist Sanskrit in the Kālacakra Tantra” (JIABS 11, no.1 [1988]: 123–140) for a discussion of the significance of intentionally ungrammatical Sanskrit in Buddhist tantra.

⁸³ For a study of this kind of analysis, with particular reference to Kashmiri Śaiva tantra, see Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis: The ‘Nirvacana’ Tradition*.

⁸⁴ See HT II.iii.53–67, as well as Davidson’s recent discussion of *sandhyābhāṣā* in *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, Chapter 6, “Siddhas, Literature, and Language,” esp. 262–269.

understand by implication before. Contentless consciousness, we have seen, is the true nature of buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*. Contentless consciousness is also *svasaṃvedya*, and so it is clear enough that *svasaṃvedya* may in turn be identified as the true nature of buddhahood too. But here, Ratnākaraśānti makes the identification without appeal to the transitive property. By saying that *svasaṃvedya* is most excellent, he means to say that *svasaṃvedya* is not only the highest bliss that can be experienced. It is also that most excellent thing: buddhahood.

In his explanation of this point, Ratnākaraśānti relies on the root-text’s somewhat obscure words, which (for him at least) bring together the notions of *svasaṃvedya*, buddhahood, and innate bliss. The full verse at issue reads (where the underlined words are the *Hevajra*’s citation of its own I.viii.1):

**yathānyāyaṃ svasaṃvedyaṃ bodhicittaṃ tu devatā
yathodayaṃ bhavec chakraṃ dvaividhyaṃ sahajaṃ tataḥ // HT I.viii.27 //⁸⁵**

Literally, this says something like:

‘In accordance with its principle’ (*yathānyāya*) means *svasaṃvedya*, while *devatā*, ‘being above all things,’ [according to Ratnākaraśānti’s gloss, *sarvonnatā devatety arthaḥ*] means *bodhicitta* [or ‘the mind committed to awakening’]. *Bodhicitta* is in accordance with its arising (*yathodaya*), which is to say it is the ejaculate (*śukra*). For this reason, the innate is twofold.

We have just seen Ratnākaraśānti’s comment on the first *pāda*, *yathānyāyaṃ svasaṃvedyaṃ*. He continues:

When the Blessed One says “it [viz. *svasaṃvedya*=*sahajānanda*] is above all things” (*devatā*) in I.viii.27b, it is a repetition of *devatā nām* [in I.viii.1d, viz. “that which

⁸⁵ For HT I.viii.1, see above, fn.78.

is above all things and causes all things to bow down.”⁸⁶] And he tells us the aim by saying, *bodhicitta*. That same *svasaṃvedya* has the nature of the *dharmakāya*, which is enlightenment (*bodhi*). *Bodhicitta* is the mind (*citta*) that is the outflow of enlightenment (*bodhiniṣyanda*), which has the nature of the *sambhogakāya* because it is related to a subtle appearance (*ākāra*). The point is that it has the form (*mūrti*) of Vajradhara.⁸⁷

Here, in quick succession, Ratnākaraśānti tells us how both the essential embodiment of buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*, as well as the form-bodies (or most importantly the Sambhogakāya) are contained within this notion of *svasaṃvedya*. That *svasaṃvedya* is enlightenment, or the nature of the *dharmakāya*, is straightforward enough: both can be said to be contentless consciousness, so the simple identification of the two is not much of a stretch. Still, it helps that Ratnākaraśānti makes the point clear. That the *sambhogakāya* is also *svasaṃvedya* is less straightforward, however. As we saw above, the form-bodies are an essential part of buddhahood. Ratnākaraśānti had used the notion of a “natural outflow” (*niṣyanda*) to explain how the form-bodies, while containing appearances and so being at least a little bit erroneous, are nevertheless pure since they share in the nature of the *dharmakāya* because they naturally flow out of it. So far, Ratnākaraśānti reiterates that point, telling us that the *bodhicitta* of the verse (= *sambhogakāya*) is the natural outflow of *svasaṃvedya* (=enlightenment [*bodhi*]=*dharmakāya*).

But then the verse goes on to explain just what that *bodhicitta* is in a decidedly esoteric register. Ratnākaraśānti continues:

⁸⁶ Ratnākaraśānti had been rather clever in his gloss of *devatānām*, reading it not as single word in the genitive plural, but rather as *devatā nām*, “where *nām* means it causes everything to bow down, while *devatā* means it is above all other things. This is the idea. This is as much as to say it [viz. the result] is the blessed Vajradhara [the enlightenment of the buddhas].” MuĀV_Isaacson ad HT I.viii.26 (MuĀV_{ed} 87): *sarvaṃ nāmayatīti nām. sarvonnatā devatety arthaḥ. bhagavān vajradhara iti yāvat.* (Note that MuĀV_{ed} prints *sarvaṃ nāmayatīti nāma*, which obscures the way Ratnākaraśānti’s gloss works here.)

⁸⁷ MuĀV_Isaacson ad HT I.viii.27 (MuĀV_{ed} 88): *devatā nām ity asyānuvādo devateti. artham āha—bodhicittam iti. tad eva svasaṃvedyaṃ dharmakāyasvabhāvaṃ bodhiḥ. bodhiniṣyandaś cittaṃ bodhicittaṃ sām̐bhogikakāyasvabhāvaṃ, sūkṣmākārayogāt. vajradharamūrtir ity arthaḥ.*

In view of the question, “What is that *bodhicitta*?” The Buddha says [in I.viii.1, repeated here in v.27], “it is that which is in accordance with its arising” (*yathodayam*). This means that which has arisen in accordance with reality (*yathārtham utpannam*), because, even though the *bodhicitta* has *ākāras*, one does not cling to the object (*arthānabhiniviṣṭatvāt*). Again in view of the question, “What is *that*?” he says, “the ejaculate” (*śukra*). Because it is thus, therefore (*tataḥ*), or for that reason, the innate is twofold (*dvaividhyam sahajam*), or innate bliss (*sahajānanda*) is twofold.⁸⁸

Here, the *sambhogakāya* is equated with the ejaculate. When it is said that the *bodhicitta* is the natural outflow of *svasaṃvedya*, we have to remember that *svasaṃvedya* has been identified as innate bliss. If innate bliss characterizes orgasm, then its natural outflow, or *niṣyanda*, is the ejaculate, *śukra*. In this way, innate bliss is twofold: just as buddhahood includes both the *dharmakāya* as well as the form-bodies, so too the innate includes both innate bliss itself and its natural outflow. And the ejaculate, just like the form-bodies, is experienced through appearances—which, while not clung to as real when properly understood, are nevertheless present.⁸⁹

Ratnākaraśānti specifies the ramifications of this by commenting on the Buddha’s statement that the twofoldness of innate bliss indicated here is due to the difference between the unconcealed or ultimate truth (*vivṛti*) and the obscurational or conventional truth (*saṃvṛti*). He writes, commenting on HT I.viii.28cd, viz. “There is twofoldness due to the difference between the ultimate and the conventional” (*dvaividhyam vivṛtisaṃvṛtibhedataḥ*):

Twofoldness (*dvaividhyam*) refers to the twofoldness of bliss. In what manner is it twofold? Due to the difference between the unconcealed and the concealing (*vivṛtisaṃvṛtibhedataḥ*). The actualized, perfect, unerring [bliss] (*svasaṃvedyam*) [i.e. the *dharmakāya*] is the unconcealed [or ultimate] (*vivṛti*), because it has no obscuration insofar as it is without appearance (*nirābhāsatvena nirāvaraṇatvāt*). That which is in accordance with its arising or arises perfectly (*yathodaya*) [i.e. *sambhogakāya*=*bodhicitta*]

⁸⁸ MuĀv_{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.27 (MuĀved 88): *kiṃ tad ity āha—yathodayam iti. yathārtham utpannam sākāratve ’py arthānabhiniviṣṭatvāt. tat punaḥ katamad ity āha—śukram iti. yata evaṃ tataḥ kāraṇād dvaividhyam sahajam dvividhaḥ sahajānandah.*

⁸⁹ Compare in this regard MuĀv ad HT I.viii.49–50. There, Ratnākaraśānti again finds the two-fold *sahaja*.

of the Stage of Arising and the Stage of the Arisen. Ordinary people would seem to attain this goal all the time. Such a worry, however, misunderstands the *Hevajra*'s aim. The goal is not simply orgasm and ejaculation. Innate bliss is the experience of the *dharmakāya* and its natural outflow, the *sambhogakāya*. It is *akin to* the ordinary experience of orgasm, but it is radically different from it. So—unavoidably with the help of that worldly experience—we are told that the guru alone can teach the proper way to cultivate the experience of innate bliss as buddhahood. Further, as we would expect of something that is *svasaṃvedya* (in its gerundive-sense), we are told that one has to experience it for oneself. Ratnākaraśānti's discussion of this important point is a fascinating and clear one, so here we will cite a lengthy portion of his commentary.

***nānyena kathyate sahajaṃ na kasminn api labhyate
ātmanā jñāyate puṇyād guruparvopāyasevayā*** // HT I.viii.36 //⁹³

The innate is not taught by anyone else, nor is it found in any person [outside oneself]. It is experienced by oneself due to merit [attained from tantric practices performed in this very life] (*puṇya*) through the correct cultivation (*sevā*) of the path (*upāya*), which is a type of cultivation given by the instruction of the guru (*guruparvan*).⁹⁴ // HT I.viii.36 //

Now that innate bliss has been taught in this way, some might have the worry, “We have done what needs to be done—cultivation is useless.” For this reason, the Blessed One addresses HT I.viii.36 to them. “Not by anyone” (*nānyena*) means [the innate is taught] not even by a Buddha, Vajradhara, or anyone else. Nor is it found in any person (*na kasminn api*) [outside oneself], even in a lord of the tenth *bhūmi* [viz. the highest level Bodhisattva], for it is completely beyond the scope of language and conceptualization inasmuch as it is to be realized for oneself (*pratyātmavedya*). This is the idea. How then can it be taught or learned (*śruta*)?⁹⁵ Through a conventional mode of proclamation (*udbhāvanāsamvṛti*), not through its own nature, just as when one learns of the feelings of

⁹³ Note that Ratnākaraśānti doesn't have MuĀved's HT I.viii.35; neither does Kṛṣṇa. For ease of reference, however, I retain Snellgrove's and MuĀved's numbering.

⁹⁴ My translation of the verse follows Ratnākaraśānti's commentary; his discussion of *puṇyād guruparvopāyasevayā* is extremely interesting, but outside the scope of the current discussion.

⁹⁵ Which should call to mind *cintā-* and *bhāvanāmayīprajñā*. And note that *deśanā* might correspond to *kathyate*, *śrutam* to *labhyate*.

pleasure or suffering of gods or hell-beings.⁹⁶ But when the innate becomes manifest, then it is experienced (*vedyate*) with its nature [or as it really is, *svarūpeṇa*]. And then it is experienced (*vedyate*) by oneself, not through someone else’s speech. This is precisely what the Blessed One says, viz. “It is experience by oneself” (*ātmanā jñāyate*). Hence, cultivation is not at all pointless, for it is impossible to make the innate manifest (*tasya sāksāt kartum aśakyatvāt*) without the perfection of cultivation. As it is said [in even śrāvaka sources]:⁹⁷

I have taught you the path which cuts off the thirst that pierces you.
You yourselves are the ones who have to do it; the Tathāgatas are but messengers.⁹⁸

“Where the path is extraordinary (*alaukika*), that is an appropriate adage. However, innate bliss is *directly perceived* for ordinary people who are sexually desirous (*kāmins*). In the case of innate bliss, any instruction at all is useless—not to speak of cultivation! For [as Dharmakīrti says], ‘With regard to an object that is perceived, the instruction of someone else is not more important [than the direct perception].’” To this, the Buddha says *punṇyād* and so on. The thinking is as follows: Here, the goal is not just worldly innate bliss, because that is already established [for any ordinary person who is sexually desirous], because it is inferior with respect to the bliss of higher and higher divine realms, and because it is defiled insofar as it has karmic-inflows (*sāsravatvena*), since the faults of saṃsāra have that as their root. Rather, the goal here is only the Tathāgata’s innate bliss defined as bliss that is supremely excellent, completely pure, and permanent (*paramotrṣṭasuvīśuddhadhruvasukhalakṣaṇa*), which is 1) the innate bliss that is the *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāyasahaja*), which is to be experienced by oneself (*pratyātmavedya*) and is sky-like (*khasama*), and 2) the innate bliss that is the *sambhogakāya* (*sambhogakāyasahaja*), which is the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya*. And this goal [viz. twofold innate bliss so described]—being cultivated after having had the firm conviction of it (*adhimucya*) in precisely ordinary innate bliss according to the instructions of the guru, because there is no other way, and having become actualized when that cultivation is perfected—this goal is then known by the

⁹⁶ This instructive analogy is worth stressing: the guru’s words can give us a sense of what innate bliss is like, though they are different from the experience of it, just as we might hear of the pleasures of heaven, though we will not experience them till we experience them for ourselves. Here again, Ratnākaraśānti stresses the first-person nature of what is *pratyātmavedanīya* or *svasamvedya*. Recall the discussion above of the taste of an orange and Frank Jackson’s article, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” fn.29.

⁹⁷ Note Ratnākaraśānti’s choice here: a variant, Isaacson notes, of *Udānavarga* 12.9. This is deeply old Buddhism, and Ratnākaraśānti is here pointing out the way this most esoteric practice is compatible with teachings accepted even by śrāvakas. This is a good example of Ratnākaraśānti’s mission to synthesize tantric and non-tantric Buddhism.

⁹⁸ MuĀv^{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.36 (MuĀv^{ed} 91): *evam upadiṣṭe saḥajānande kṛtakṛtyā vayam, vyarthā bhāvaneti keṣāmcid āśaṅkā syāt. atas tān praty āha—nānyenetyādī. nānyeneti buddhavaḥradharādīnāpi. na kasmīn apīti daśabhūmīśvare ’pi, pratyātmavedyasya tasya vāgvikalpaviṣayātītātavad iti bhāvaḥ. katham tarhi tasya deśanā śrutam vā? udbhāvanāsamvṛtyā, na svena rūpeṇa, suranārakasukhaduḥkhavedanāśrutavat. yadā tu sāksāt tad bhavati tadā svarūpeṇa vedyate. tadā cātmanaiḥ vedyate, nānyasya vācā. etad evāha—ātmanā jñāyata iti. ato naiva vyarthā bhāvanā, bhāvanāpariniṣpattim vinā tasya sāksātkartum aśakyatvāt. tathā coktam—deśito vo mayā mārgas trṣṇāśalyasya kartanaḥ / yuṣmābhir eva kartavyam ākhyātāras tathāgatāḥ // iti.*

practitioner for himself, not earlier. Hence, learning (*śruta*), rational reflection (*cintā*), and cultivation (*bhāvanā*) are not useless here.⁹⁹

Ordinary sexual intercourse, then, provides an important example of the innate bliss that is here the goal. But it is far from the goal itself. The innate bliss experienced in ordinary intercourse is inescapably bound up with the suffering and delusion of *samsāra*—indeed, it is defiled and full of desire, not absolutely contentless—while the goal on the Stage of the Arisen is rather that transcendent innate bliss that characterizes buddhahood. Ratnākaraśānti concedes that there is no way aside from worldly bliss that the practitioner might be introduced to the innate, but a firm conviction in the instructions of the guru is necessary to see that worldly bliss is far removed from the true goal.

With this, we are given a picture of the phenomenology of contentless subjective character, the nature of consciousness that is also taught here to be the nature of buddhahood. It is like the experience of innate bliss, the bliss experienced in orgasm, with its natural outflow, the ejaculate. But we have to be careful here. Ratnākaraśānti is precise in this important section of his commentary, yet he is sometimes also uncharacteristically (and perhaps purposefully) obscure. Above, in his summary-comment on HT I.viii.32–34, we saw Ratnākaraśānti say that on the Stage of the Arisen, “Bliss (*sukha*) is precisely *svasaṃvedya*, which is sky-like (*khasama*), and the goal is similar to that (*tatsamaṃ ca sādhyam*).”¹⁰⁰ The goal *is similar to that*: is it that buddhahood, the true goal, is *similar* to innate bliss, or is it innate bliss itself? In his comment on

⁹⁹ MuĀv^{Isaacson} ad HT I.viii.36 (MuĀv^{ed} 92): *nanu yatrālaukiko mārgas tatraiṣa nyāyaḥ. saḥajānandas tu kāmināṃ pratyakṣa eva. tatropadeśo 'pi vyarthaḥ kiṃ punar bhāvanā. na hi pratyakṣe 'rthe paropadeśo garīyān. ata āha—**puṇyād** ityādi. evaṃ manyate—nātra laukika eva saḥajānandaḥ sādhyāḥ, siddhatvāt, uttarottarasuralokādi-sukhāpekṣayā ca hīnatvāt, sāsravatvena malinatvāt, tanmūlatvāc ca sāmśārikānaṃ doṣānām, kiṃ tarhi tathāgatānām eva yaḥ pratyātmavedyo dharmakāyasaḥajāḥ khasamas tanniṣyandabhūtaś ca sambhogakāyasaḥajāḥ paramotrṣṭasuviśuddhadhruvasukhalakṣaṇaḥ saḥajānandaḥ sa iha sādhyāḥ. sa ca gatyantarābhāvād asmīn eva laukikasahajānande yathopadeśam adhimucya bhāvyaṃ bhāvanāpariniṣpattau sākṣādbhūta ātmanā jñāyate, na prāk. tato nātra śrutacintābhāvanānām vaiyarthyaṃ iti.*

¹⁰⁰ See above, fn.76.

I.viii.36, Ratnākaraśānti tells us that the goal is the innate bliss *only of the Tathāgatas* (*tathāgatānām eva*), which again would seem to distinguish the innate bliss of buddhahood from that of the Stage of the Arisen. So do we experience buddhahood *itself* in these practices, or is our experience of innate bliss rather an *example* of what buddhahood is like—a glimpse more akin to it than any other experience, but still distinct from it in some respect?¹⁰¹ In that case, we would have a hierarchy of three experiences: the worldly experience of sex, which is an example of innate bliss; the experience of innate bliss in the ritualized sex of the Stage of the Arisen, having been thoroughly understood first on the Stage of Arising as one of four moments of bliss and having been cultivated according to the guru’s instructions as *exemplary of* (but *distinct from*) buddhahood itself; and then we would have buddhahood itself, the experience of contentless subjective character that is the *dharmakāya*. Otherwise, we have only two experiences: worldly sexual bliss and innate bliss, which, over the course of the practice of the Stage of the Arisen, gradually becomes more and more under the practitioner’s control, till it pervades every experience and buddhahood is thus attained. I believe Ratnākaraśānti holds the former position, according to which innate bliss acts as a very high-level but nevertheless exemplary glimpse of buddhahood, mediating between it and worldly bliss, similar to but distinct from both. Regardless, however, what is clear is that the phenomenology of buddhahood is given to us in these passages: either we experience it precisely in our experience of innate bliss, or

¹⁰¹ Note that Ratnākaraśānti himself brings up, in another context, the distinction between an exemplary experience of the innate (*dr̥ṣṭāntasahaja*) and that experience of the innate that is exemplified (*dār̥ṣṭāntikasahaja*); see MuĀv ad HT I.v.21. Vāgīśvarakīrti’s discussion of the exemplary nature of the *prajñājñānābhiṣeka*, as well as other debates among scholars at Vikramaśīla during Ratnākaraśānti’s time (including Ratnākaraśānti’s student Sujayaśrīgupta), lend credence to the view that Ratnākaraśānti, too, thinks that the innate bliss experienced on the *utpannakrama* is exemplary of buddhahood rather than precisely buddhahood itself. See Onians, *Antinomianism as the Norm*, for more on these authors’ positions. For another discussion of the exemplary nature of the experience of the innate in the third initiation, now in the Tibetan context, see Janet Gyatso, “Healing Burns with Fire: The Facilitations of Experience in Tibetan Buddhism,” *Journal of the Academy of Religion* 67, no. 1 (1999), passim, but especially 136–138.

(more likely) we experience something that is very close to it that nevertheless remains distinct. Either way, there is something it's like to be a buddha, and what that's like (either precisely or approximately) is innate bliss.

Much could be said about sex in tantras like the *Hevajra*. This, however, is not our primary concern here. Rather than pursuing questions of why sex became so important for Buddhists like Ratnākaraśānti (a[n intellectual-]historical question that is no doubt deeply interesting, if difficult to answer),¹⁰² or making general observations about the peculiar if unsurprising fecundity of sexual experiences for capturing the ineffable absolute,¹⁰³ I would like for us to take another point from this discussion. Whatever his reasons, Ratnākaraśānti finds clear scriptural basis for identifying the experience of contentless subjective character with that of innate bliss. When he tells us that *svasaṃvedya* is innate bliss, then, this has important philosophical consequences for his understanding of self-awareness. Other philosophers might think that the formal fact that conscious states are characterized by a peculiar first-personal for-me-ness is just that, a fact, not something we might experience. But with this identification, Ratnākaraśānti demurs: this peculiar first-personal for-me-ness really can be experienced; this experience is of utmost soteriological importance; and if we properly understand the *Hevajra Tantra*, we will see that the experience is glimpsed in sexual union when that is seen, on the basis of the guru's instructions, not just as ordinary sexual enjoyment but rather as a form of innate

¹⁰² There are countless works by astute historians one can look to in this regard. One might first consider the pioneering work of Alexis Sanderson (“Vajrayāna: Origin and Function” and “The Śaiva Age”), in addition to Onians’ dissertation referred to above; one can also look to David Gordon White’s *Kiss of the Yoginī* and André Padoux’s *The Hindu Tantric World* for more on the broader, pan-Indic context of these practices. Though more interested in the development and interpretation of other antinomian practices, one should consider too Ronald Davidson’s *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* and Christian Wedemeyer’s *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism*.

¹⁰³ Here, one avenue would be to pursue the work of Georges Bataille, avid interpreter of the erotic, and his legacy in contemporary French thought (Lacan, Nancy, etc.).

bliss that is an exemplary glimpse of buddhahood itself. This, then, would be Ratnākaraśānti's fuller understanding of the "warmth and intimacy" that characterizes the subjective character of consciousness—a form of warmth and intimacy no doubt far from James' mind when he used the phrase, but one that is phenomenologically vivid nonetheless.

v. Conclusion: On the Importance of the Phenomenology of Buddhahood

Philosophy and the practices taught in the *Hevajra Tantra* hang together with systematic consistency for Ratnākaraśānti, and it is this that allows Ratnākaraśānti to expound the meaning of contentless consciousness. When we look just at the claim that consciousness is devoid of appearances, or that it is "stainless like the clear autumn sky at noon," we learn very little about what it really means. However, by following the series of identifications we've seen Ratnākaraśānti make, we are given a much fuller picture of its characteristics and its phenomenology. Contentless consciousness is buddhahood; it is the defining characteristic of consciousness, or subjective character, something realized for oneself (the gerundive-sense of *svaṣaṃvedya*) as what is experienced when awareness is aware of itself (the 'object'-sense of *svaṣaṃvedya*)—most efficiently in the practices prescribed by the *Hevajra Tantra* for the Stage of the Arisen; when it is so realized, it is experienced as solely innate bliss (*sahajānanda*); and, to come full circle, this bliss is (at least exemplary of) the experience of buddhahood. It is wrong to think that consciousness must be intentional. The mark of the mental is rather subjective character alone, the contentless warmth and intimacy of the first person that is experienced for oneself as innate bliss in buddhahood.

This returns us to the question of the phenomenology of buddhahood raised in the introduction. Recall that Paul Griffiths argued that, for classical Yogācāra doctrine, buddhahood cannot have a phenomenology: Buddha is denied all the capacities required for there to be conscious experience, and so there must not be something it's like to be Buddha. Here, however, Ratnākaraśānti has argued this is not true. The problem of nirvāṇa being beyond all feeling but nevertheless being blissful, or the problem of buddhahood having a phenomenology at all, can be solved systematically by separating subjective character from content (an option not considered by Griffiths in his critique) and identifying this contentless subjective character with innate bliss along the lines of the practical instructions found in the *Hevajra*. From our discussion of the practices associated with the Stage of the Arisen, it should be clear that the subjective character of buddhahood is at stake in the *Hevajra Tantra*, at least as Ratnākaraśānti interprets it.¹⁰⁴ It is precisely through the series of identifications considered above that he shows the systematic philosophical ramifications of this for his view. Ratnākaraśānti takes seriously the tantric insight that buddhahood has a phenomenology, and this is inseparable from the commitment—at odds with Griffiths's widely-shared presupposition about consciousness—that subjective character is *not* ineluctably linked with phenomenal properties or appearances. Ratnākaraśānti's response to Griffiths, then, would be to explain how the phenomenology of buddhahood detailed in the *Hevajra* dovetails with the view that contentless subjective character is possible—or indeed, fills out the full meaning of that experience. There is something it's like to be Buddha, and one who

¹⁰⁴ It needn't be this way even for another tantric author interested in synthesizing the insights of tantra with philosophy: a Mādhyamika might identify the emptiness of all phenomena (*sarvadharmasūnyatā*) as the ultimate nature of things that is to be realized for oneself (thus understanding *svasaṃvedya* in only its gerundive sense) and not identify this as the manifest and ultimately real nature of one's own mind. Alternatively, a philosopher might choose to preserve a distance between philosophy and tantra, holding that tantra is of a certain soteriological use, but that it would be a mistake to deduce from that any philosophical truths. As suggested above, tantra is perhaps only a means; philosophy is best kept apart from it. We will have opportunity to consider these possibilities below.

fails to understand this not only misses the importance of the *Hevajra* but also misunderstands the nature of subjective character.

Ratnākaraśānti's interpretation of the *Hevajra*, then, is deeply connected to his philosophical position. It is not that he covers an unsystematic set of practical instructions, images, etc., with a veneer of epistemological rhetoric, a tantrika only masquerading as a logician. Rather, a systematic understanding of what is taught in the tantras is precisely what he sets out to defend. The meaning of contentless consciousness can be fully understood only by taking into account its tantric context, and the insights into the phenomenology of buddhahood given in the tantras make possible certain philosophical claims about the nature of consciousness—claims that have a rational defense, but a scriptural origin. So, with this set of intertwined presuppositions in hand, we now turn to the details of Ratnākaraśānti's philosophical position and his arguments in defense of the possibility of contentless consciousness.

Chapter 3: Having It Both Ways: A Philosophical Defense of Contentless Consciousness

i. Introduction: Not Different but Different

We have seen Ratnākaraśānti's explication of the phenomenology of buddhahood and its relation to contentless consciousness. In this chapter, we will turn to his rational defense of this idea. Building on arguments of great importance in the Buddhist tradition, Ratnākaraśānti aims to show that there is good reason to think that all mental content is incoherent and unreal (*alīka*). All consciousness *of* content is thereby erroneous (*bhrānta*), while the sheer manifestation (*prakāśamātra*) that is the nature of consciousness must be ultimately or substantially real (*paramārthasat* or *dravyasat*). Having made sense of the meaning of contentless consciousness on the basis of his reading of the *Hevajra Tantra*, Ratnākaraśānti must now defend this idea, teasing apart subjective character from appearance on the basis of reason.

This strategy poses a deep problem for him, however. As we saw above (and will see in more detail shortly), Ratnākaraśānti argues for his idealism by showing that content must share the same nature consciousness itself has for it to show up to consciousness in the first place: an object, insofar as it must have as its nature the shining-forth that allows it to manifest to consciousness *as* an object at all, shares that shining-forth that is also at the heart of consciousness. Content and consciousness, then, are not really different. So how can it be that consciousness is real while its content is not? If the two are not different, it would seem that an argument that applies to one should apply equally well to the other, or else the certainty found in

one should also be found in the other. That is, the relative success or failure of an argument against content should transfer over to consciousness, too. The argument Ratnākaraśānti uses to show that content is unreal, then, should either apply to both or to neither: if content in general can be defeated by argument, consciousness too should suffer the same fate (this is the position of the Mādhyamika¹); on the other hand, if we can show that consciousness is indubitable, then what immediately appears to consciousness should also be awarded that same privilege (this is the position of the Sākāravādin²). The Mādhyamika thinks consciousness and content are

¹ Ratnākaraśānti refers to his Mādhyamika opponents as *thams cad brdzun par smra ba* (e.g. MAV 78—277), “those who claim everything is unreal,” or those who adhere to what Ratnākaraśānti characterizes as a mere *semblance* of the Madhyamaka: *thams cad brdzun par smra ba ni dbu ma ltar snang ba yin* (MAV 78—307). “Those who claim everything is unreal” means in Ratnākaraśānti’s usage “those who claim the mind is unreal”: Ratnākaraśānti himself claims that *everything other than mind* is unreal; the great fault of the *thams cad brdzun par smra ba* is to claim that, in addition to everything other than mind, mind, too, is unreal. When I refer to Mādhyamikas here, I will principally be concerned with those who claim that the mind does not ultimately exist because it is susceptible, for one reason or another, to the neither-one-nor-many argument. These are figures like Śāntaraksita, Kamalaśīla, Haribhadra, and Jitāri: authors who apply the neither-one-nor-many argument to mental content and then to manifestation as well, thereby refuting the ultimate existence of cognition’s nature. They are the figures dealt with, e.g., in PPU 78—395–409, i.e. 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 in Katsura’s old numbering in “A synopsis of the Prajñāpāramitopadeśa of Ratnākaraśānti.” I will distinguish these Mādhyamikas from those I will refer to as the Candrakīrtians below: these figures, who also represent a brand of Madhyamaka, are in Ratnākaraśānti’s presentation less concerned with the application of the neither-one-nor-many argument and instead seek to show a) that self-awareness is inherently incoherent, and b) that buddhahood is the total cessation of consciousness. (One might say that by Mādhyamika, I refer to what would come to be known as the Svātantrika, whereas by Candrakīrtian, I refer to the Prāsaṅgika; I have chosen to avoid these appellations because they bring us into debates that are not here our concern.) Gregory Seton, *Defining Wisdom: Ratnākaraśānti’s Sāratamā* (D.Phil Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2015), 127–176, deals with the topic of Ratnākaraśānti’s doxographical usage at great length and offers ideas about who exactly his targets might have been. See also Ryo Nishiyama’s forthcoming article (and talk at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies), “Mādhyamikas in the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*,” and Daniel McNamara, “When Madhyamaka Is Not the Middle Path: Ratnākaraśānti on Yogācāra, Nāgārjuna, and the *Madhyamapratipadā*” *JiABS* 40 (2017): 189–207. We will discuss these points in more detail below.

² That is, I believe, Prajñākaragupta, who is critiqued by name in VMS 78—848, and perhaps other Sākāravādins upholding Prajñākaragupta’s position closer to Ratnākaraśānti’s day—perhaps, for instance, Jayanta, whose *Ṭīkā* on Prajñākaragupta’s PVA is cited by Jñānaśrīmitra, as we’ll see below in chapter 4. Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti, of course, will also defend this position in light of Ratnākaraśānti’s attacks; Yamāri, a student of Jñānaśrīmitra’s, is to be considered among these ranks as well; see Motoi Ono, *Prajñākaraguptas Erklärung der Definition gültiger Erkenntnis (Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra zu Pramāṇavārttika II 1–7)* (Vienna: VÖAW, 2000), xxiii–xxiv. I eagerly await the publication of the surviving Sanskrit of Yamāri’s commentary on Prajñākaragupta, which is currently being edited and studied by Li Xuezhū, Chu Junjie, Eli Franco, et al., owing to an agreement between the China Tibetology Research Center and the Institute of South and Central Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig. Fruits of this work have recently begun to appear: see Li Xuezhū and Chu Junjie, “A Diplomatic Edition of the Introductory Section of Yamāri’s *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāraṭīkā Supariśuddhā*—Folios 3a1–10a1,” *China Tibetology* no.1 (2016): 3–20; Li Xuezhū, Chu Junjie, and Eli Franco, “A Diplomatic Edition of the Introductory Section of Yamāri’s *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāraṭīkā Supariśuddhā*—Folios 10a1–14b2,” *China Tibetology* no.1 (2017): 78–87; Li Xuezhū, Chu Junjie, and Eli Franco, “A Diplomatic Edition of the Introductory Section of Yamāri’s *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāraṭīkā Supariśuddhā*—Folios 14b2–20a5,” *China Tibetology* no.1 (2018): 40–52.

identical and both can be defeated by argument. The Sākāravādin thinks that consciousness and content are identical and—whatever else might be defeated by argument—the immediate content of consciousness must be as indubitable as consciousness itself.

Ratnākaraśānti avoids either of these conclusions by arguing that each falls into absurdities. Rather (and although this will sound paradoxical), the non-difference between consciousness and content only goes one way, so to speak. Despite the fact that the content of consciousness is in its nature not different (*abheda*) from consciousness, consciousness itself is nevertheless different (*bheda*) from content: it is not defeasible by argument (it is *abādhyā*), it is ultimately real, and it must be so for buddhahood to be possible. It will be our primary concern here to see how Ratnākaraśānti thinks he can have it both ways—that is, how he defends this view that consciousness and content are both different and not different from the attacks of the Mādhyamika and the Sākāravādin. In the final section, we will consider why manifestation alone should be thought to ultimately exist regardless of these arguments about difference and non-difference. Here we will turn to the arguments of Candrakīrti, whose followers Ratnākaraśānti held in especially low regard. Having seen what contentless consciousness means in its tantric context, then, we will now see why Ratnākaraśānti thinks it is the only rational conclusion for a Buddhist to reach.

At the outset, we should note that Ratnākaraśānti's reasoned defense of this system is primarily a defense of the possibility (or indeed necessity) of contentless consciousness. It is a defense of the view that all the content of experience is fundamentally mistaken despite its being constituted by nothing but mind (despite idealism being true, in other words), and that consciousness must hence exist without content. Subjective character alone, then, rather than

contentfulness, is the defining characteristic of consciousness: *prakāśasya hi prakāśa eva nijam rūpaṃ*, as we will see Ratnākaraśānti put it in his PPU. This is the view he seeks to defend. The identification between this state and buddhahood will also have a reasoned defense, one based on arguments for the possibility of enlightenment. The identification between this and innate bliss (*sahajānanda*), on the other hand, is something only the Buddha could have taught: arguments will show contentless consciousness must exist if buddhahood is to be possible, but there are no arguments to show that the phenomenology of this experience is innate bliss in particular. That work can only be done by the *Hevajra Tantra* itself (or perhaps more precisely by the practitioner following the guru's instructions according to the *Hevajra*), and all Ratnākaraśānti can do is interpret its words. Of course, as we saw in the last chapter, his interpretation is meant to fill an important gap in his view, viz. what precisely the phenomenology of contentless subjective character might be, so that everything will hang together in a coherent system. Part of making sense of contentless consciousness is making sense of what that experience could possibly be *like*, and this is where innate bliss fits in. Nevertheless, the arguments he uses across his different works are concerned primarily with showing that all content is fundamentally incoherent and contentless consciousness, or manifestation alone (*prakāśamātra*), exists. These arguments will be our focus here.

ii. The Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument: A Metaphysical Case against Content

One of Ratnākaraśānti’s basic arguments is one with a long history among Indian Buddhists: the neither-one-nor-many argument.³ While we might trace its origins to the earliest Buddhist mereological analyses preserved in the Pali suttas, it is Vasubandhu’s use of an early iteration of the argument in his refutation of external objects that has become most renowned. Dharmakīrti uses a version of the argument as well.⁴ The argument was rejected entirely by external realists and committed atomists like Śubhagupta,⁵ while in the hands of Mādhyamikas like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, its scope was made universal: not only extended external objects but also phenomenal content and even consciousness itself are subject to its destruction. The argument

³ On this argument and its consequences in Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti, and later thinkers, see Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism* (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University Press, 1962), 59–95; Tom Tillemans, “Two Tibetan Texts on the ‘Neither One Nor Many’ Argument for Śūnyatā,” *JIP* 12, no. 4 (1984): 357–388; Matthew Kapstein’s *Reason’s Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 181–204; John Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 98–113; Dan Arnold, “Buddhist Idealism, Epistemic and Otherwise: Thoughts on the Alternating Perspectives of Dharmakīrti,” *Sophia* 47, no. 1 (2008): 3–28; Isabelle Ratié, “On the distinction between epistemic and metaphysical Buddhist idealisms: a Śaiva perspective,” *JIP* 42, nos. 2–3 (2014): 127–172; Birgit Kellner and John Taber, “Studies in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda idealism I: The interpretation of Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśikā*,” *Asia* 68, no. 3 (2014): 709–756; Birgit Kellner, “Proving Idealism in Indian Buddhist Philosophy: Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*, edited by Jonardon Ganeri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 307–326; and Birgit Kellner, “Proofs of Idealism in Buddhist Epistemology: Dharmakīrti’s Refutation of External Objects,” in *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Epistemology and Metaphysics*, ed. Joerg Tuske (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 103–128.

⁴ Commentators on Dharmakīrti’s PV locate the argument at PV III.209–211; see for instance Manorathanandin, PVV ad PV III.209: *yathā yathā yena prakāreṇa ekatvenānekatvena vārthā nīlādayo bāhyajñānātmāno vā vicintyante tathā viśīryante*. For a treatment of the subtle difference between Dharmakīrti’s version of the argument and Vasubandhu’s, see Dunne, *Foundations*, 98–113, esp. 100. For Dunne’s translation of this passage and relevant comments from Devendrabuddhi and Śākyabuddhi (including Śākyabuddhi’s explicit reference to Vasubandhu’s argument), see 402–405; cf. Christine Keyt, *Dharmakīrti’s Concept of the Svalakṣaṇa* (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1980), 248–258, where PV III.208–224 are translated in part and discussed, with the help of Manorathanandin and Prajñākaragupta. Note that Dharmakīrti’s PV III.209 is held up by some Mādhyamikas like Jitāri (cf. Kenjo Shirasaki, “The Sugatamata vibhaṅgabhāṣya of Jitāri (I),” *Kobe Joshi Daigaku Kiyō: Bungaku Bunen* 17, no. 1 [1984]: 82), or Jñānaśrīmitra’s interlocutor (SSŚ, 368–369) as well, as proof that *everything* is empty—something explicitly denied by Śākyabuddhi, who comments here, “As for [Devendrabuddhi’s] statement that begins, *dharma*s have been shown to be essenceless, total nonexistence (*thams cad med pa*) is not the essencelessness of *dharma*s because one would be forced to conclude that there is neither affliction nor purification and because the conventional is reliable in the manner explained earlier. Later, the author himself will explain that selflessness refers to the mere reflexive awareness that is devoid of conceptually constructed object and subject,” Dunne, *Foundations*, 402.

⁵ For a study of Śubhagupta’s defense of atomism and his response to Vasubandhu’s criticisms, as well as Śāntarakṣita’s and Kamalaśīla’s criticism of Subhagupta, see Margherita Serena Saccone’s very fine *On the Nature of Things: A Buddhist Debate on Cognitions and their Object* (Vienna: ATBS, 2018), 86–104, as well as BASK 32–58, edited by Saccone in Appendix 3 and translated in Appendix 4. Compare N. A. Shastri “*Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā*,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* IV (1967), 1–97; M. Gangopadhyaya, *Indian Atomism* (Calcutta: Bagchi, 1980), 98–103.

was rightly considered to be the definitive one wielded by Nirākāravādins like Ratnākaraśānti against the Sākāravādins by other 11th-century Indian Buddhists,⁶ and indeed Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti develop their complex theory of variegated mental content (*citrākāra*) in large part to counter it.

Vasubandhu’s argument is famously put forth in his terse *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhih Viṃśikā*.⁷ It shows that for external objects to exist they must be composed of atoms; however, they cannot be composed of atoms, and so external objects do not exist. More fully, Vasubandhu’s reasons that ordinary macro-level external objects are clearly divisible into their parts. This must bottom out eventually, however, for it is absurd for those objects to be infinitely divisible,⁸ so the external realist is forced to posit partless atoms as the place this divisibility comes to a halt. Vasubandhu argues that these partless atoms must be extensionless for the external realist, too, in order for them truly to serve as the irreducible simples the realist needs.⁹ Such atoms, however, cannot conglomerate to form composite things: if an atom comes into contact with two other atoms, it has at least a left and a right side—that is, two parts—and so it is no longer atomic. If the realist holds out hope and argues that atoms truly are partless and extensionless but nevertheless conglomerate together, Vasubandhu points out that all atoms would come into contact at a single point, which does nothing to explain extension—mountains,

⁶ Vāgīśvarakīrti presents it in his TRAV ad TRA 16, 141, saying it has been dealt with at length in other works (Ratnākaraśānti’s? Or Vāgīśvarakīrti’s own?). Rāmapāla presents it as characteristic of the Nirākāravāda in commenting on the second verse of the *Sekanirdeśa*, Isaacson and Sferra, *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyanātha*, 169, 264–265.

⁷ Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, 181–204, is rightly the locus classicus for contemporary understandings of the argument, but now see also Kellner and Taber, “Studies in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda idealism I.”

⁸ Vasubandhu presents (more or less compelling) reasons to think infinite—or *potentially* infinite—divisibility is absurd in verse 15 and his commentary thereon; see Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, 193–196, 200.

⁹ Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, 191–193. In other words, Vasubandhu rules out the possibility of extended simples when considering material atoms.

elephants, and trees would all coextend just a single atomic point. A coherent account of atoms is necessary for the external realist, but it cannot be given. Hence, external objects do not exist.

Just as tantric presuppositions find their way into Ratnākaraśānti's philosophizing, so too logic finds its way into his exegesis of tantric practices. And indeed, it is not on Vasubandhu's authority that Ratnākaraśānti grounds his use of the neither-one-nor-many argument. He finds the argument even in the *Hevajra Tantra* itself, which says at HT I.viii.50: "That [Blessed One, with the form of the ejaculate (*śukrākāra*),] is neither one nor many (*ekānekaviyogo 'sau*)."¹⁰ It is not the first time Ratnākaraśānti has used the argument in this commentary, however, and given the importance of it for his view, he will surely expect the reader to remember its details. In the long, fascinating digression on Yogācāra philosophy in the first chapter of his MuĀv, ad HT I.i.10–12 (MuĀved 10–16), he had already presented the argument in full. And while he cites the authority of Vasubandhu occasionally in his corpus when he presents this argument,¹⁰ unsurprisingly he prefers the authority of the Buddha, referring here to his oft-cited source, *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* 10.709. He writes:

Moreover, this blue and so on is not an external object, for it has neither a single nor a multiple nature. For it is not single because it appears with a difference among its parts. Nor is it multiple, consisting of many atoms, for atoms are unreasonable. That is, if some *x* has parts, how can that be an atom? Or if it is partless, then, because atoms that are joined together would be joined together completely, they would occupy each others' same space. Hence, every mass would become a mere atom—an elephant and a mountain, the ocean and even the earth. As it says in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* [10.709],

Just as in a mirror one sees a form is neither one nor many,¹¹
so too there is no being of beings there.

¹⁰ See for instance his commentary on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Kusumāñjali* (KA) 20—1413.

¹¹ The text has *ekatvānyatvavarjitam*, which might more literally (and in the context of the simile) mean "neither the same nor different [from the mirror]," but Ratnākaraśānti is wont to explain this compound as meaning *ekānekasvabhāvarahita*. See for instance PPU 78—378–379, 392–393; MAU 78—614–615; KA 20—1415.

Therefore, there is no object that can be apprehended external to consciousness.¹²

The reasoning repeats Vasubandhu's exactly, if in a compressed form. For there to be extended external objects, they must be composed of atoms; atoms, however, are unreasonable, since truly partless atoms could not conglomerate to form extended matter. There being no other way to account for the existence of external objects other than atoms, their existence is thus shown to be incoherent.

This argument has been characterized aptly as a *metaphysical* one: it concerns the existence, not the knowability, of external objects. Ratnākaraśānti makes clear here that this is how he interprets the argument, using “does not exist” (*nāsti*) to pick up the *Laṅkāvatāra*'s “there is no being” (*na [...] asti [...] bhāvatā*). Such metaphysical arguments for idealism can be juxtaposed with *epistemic* arguments, wherein what is shown is that there is no epistemic access to external objects, while we are left agnostic regarding their existence. As a metaphysical argument, by contrast, the neither-one-nor-many argument proves that the existence of external objects is incoherent and so establishes metaphysical idealism. Already in 1962, A. K. Chatterjee argued that the epistemic argument offered by Buddhist idealists (and we have seen one of Ratnākaraśānti's formulations of this, which we will consider again in the next section) “does not prove the idealistic thesis. To say that the realists' contention is unwarranted is one thing; to conclude from that that idealism is therefore established is quite another thing.”¹³ For

metaphysical idealism to be proven, the neither-one-nor-many argument must be leveled against

¹² Muṅgīsaacson ad HT I.i.10 (Muṅged 11): *api ca nedaṃ nīlādikaṃ bāhyo 'rthaḥ, ekānekasvabhāvavirahāt. na hi tad ekam, bhāgabhedena pratibhāsanāt. nāpy anekaṃ paramāṇuśaḥ, paramāṇor ayogāt. tathā hi yady asau sāmśaḥ sa kathaṃ paramāṇuḥ? atha niraṃśas tadā saṃyuktāḥ paramāṇavaḥ sarvātmanā saṃyogāt parasparam abhinnadeśāḥ syur iti sarvaḥ piṇḍaḥ paramāṇumātraḥ syāt, gajo 'pi, girir api, sāgaro 'pi, pṛthivy api. uktaṃ cāryalaṅkāvatāre—yathaiva darpaṇe rūpam ekatvānyatvavarjitaṃ / dṛśyate na ca tatrāsti tathā bhāveṣu bhāvatā // [LAS 10.709] iti. tasmān nāsti vijñānabāhyo grāhyo 'rthaḥ.*

¹³ Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, 48.

atoms—the existence of which, it is argued, the realist is forced to presume.¹⁴ Only then does the idealist establish the thesis that external objects do not exist. More recently, Dan Arnold has suggested that “the case for thinking we are not immediately *aware* of [the external world that impinges] upon us is not [...] the same as the case for thinking that nothing that thus impinges *exists*.”¹⁵ The existence of the external world, that is, can be bracketed for epistemic arguments: they are committed to neither the existence nor the non-existence of external objects, for they concern only the possibility of our *knowledge* of them. Only the neither-one-nor-many argument gets the Buddhist idealist to metaphysical idealism.¹⁶

But external objects are not Ratnākaraśānti’s primary concern when he avails himself of this argument. He is concerned rather to prove that *all* mental content—whether an external object (*bāhyārtha*) or a mental image (*ākāra*)—is in its nature metaphysically incoherent and unreal. He thus extends the scope of Vasubandhu’s argument: once the neither-one-nor-many argument has refuted external objects, we are left with the mental images that appear to us, consisting of nothing more than cognition showing up as a series of contentful cognitive events. Those images, Ratnākaraśānti stipulates, are susceptible to *the same mereological analysis Vasubandhu leveled against external atoms*: whether they are macro-images or a compound of

¹⁴ Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, developed this point over the course of his third chapter.

¹⁵ Arnold, “Buddhist Idealism, Epistemic and Otherwise,” 15.

¹⁶ All this is to say nothing of the varieties of phenomenologies, naturalist and otherwise, that have been called upon to explain what the Buddhist epistemic argument for idealism establishes in lieu of a full-fledged metaphysical idealism. See for instance Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun* (London: Routledge, 2002); Coseru, *Perceiving Reality*; and Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, 189–193. Kellner and Taber, “Studies in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda idealism I,” and Kellner, “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither? Making sense of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda arguments against external objects,” critique these presentations of the Yogācāra.

many images divisible into rationally posited image-atoms, in either case, Vasubandhu's argument against external atoms applies equally well.¹⁷

Notice that this move is predicated on a tenuous assumption: that the mereological analysis of supposedly extended mental images works the same way as the analysis of spatial extension in the external, physical world. Indeed, the idealist might defend the reality of mental images by saying that Vasubandhu's argument only applies to things that have *physical form*, whereas mental images have no such form and are thus not susceptible to the argument. The c. 12th-century philosopher Mokṣākaragupta makes explicit the response Ratnākaraśānti might offer: what is under discussion isn't so much *physical form* as simply *extended shape*, and the images that show up to us—even if they have no physical, mind-independent reality whatsoever—still show up as having extended shape.¹⁸ In his introductory textbook on Buddhist logic, Mokṣākaragupta summarizes the point nicely:

It is very clear that being neither one nor many applies to contentful consciousness (*sākāre jñāne*) just as it applies to external objects, for that which ordinary people refer to as an external object is just consciousness to the Sākāravādin, and therefore precisely the same argument that acts as a defeater (*bādhaka*) for an external entity also acts as a defeater for an internal entity.¹⁹

In other words, it is assumed that the neither-one-nor-many argument, unpacked (as per Vasubandhu) as a mereological argument against the possibility of atomic simples, works the same way regardless of whether it targets physical matter or mental content. A symmetry

¹⁷ Compare Mokṣākaragupta's exposition of this argument, translated in Kajiyama's *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, 149–151. Mokṣākaragupta takes a more careful look than most at how exactly the reasoning transfers over from external to internal objects, but it is still rather cursory.

¹⁸ Compare again Mokṣākaragupta, Kajiyama, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, 151, TBh, 75–76. More precisely, the response here is that *mūrti* really means in this context just a spatially extended image: *deśavitānavān ākāro mūrtir iti*. We will see below that Jñānaśrīmitra does indeed argue Vasubandhu's use of the neither-one-nor-many argument applies only to external objects, not to direct appearances, though he does so for far more complicated reasons than those noted here by Mokṣākaragupta.

¹⁹ Kajiyama, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, 150. Translation modified; cf. TBh, 75.

between physical and mental extension, which grounds the argument's mereological analysis, is assumed at the start.

Jñānaśrīmitra criticizes this assumption at length in his SSS, as we will see in the next chapter, and it is worth noting that the famous generalization of the neither-one-nor-many argument in Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamaka* is not dependent upon this same symmetry. Still, Ratnākaraśānti avails himself of this assumption in many places in his work.²⁰ In the *Yogācāra* digression in the first chapter of his *MuĀv*, it flashes by with little comment. When he turns to mental content, having summarily refuted external objects, he writes:

Therefore, things ought to be investigated critically in the following manner: What appears as mental content (e.g., blue or yellow) is neither an external nor an internal thing, because of being free of a single or multiple nature, *as above [in our refutation of physical atoms a moment ago]*. The mind only appears as this or that non-existent mental content to foolish beings who are disturbed by the habituations of repeated and practiced beginningless ignorance. And mental content, having been transformed into a sign and into an object, is every being's dual construction and dual subject, setting in motion the cause of all objects. But insofar as mental content appears, the ultimate is not seen, just as floating hairs and gnats are seen by people with eye-diseases, despite the emptiness of those hairs and so on. Having thus critically investigated mental content, all names and all signs are abandoned. Therefore, one who is abiding in an ineffable, contentless concentration that has as its object all phenomena sees the emptiness of all phenomena,²¹ without concepts and without appearances, due to the destruction of all signs of conceptual elaboration by no longer suffering the ripening habituations of past activity—for that one, seeing the emptiness of all phenomena is transcendent gnosis, like the sky: simple, stainless, and unending.²²

²⁰ See for instance PPU 78—390–391; MAU 78—612–613 (Vasubandhu's *Viṃśikā* 12 is cited on 613); KA 20—1412–1413 (*Viṃśikā* 12 is cited again on 1413).

²¹ Emptiness, we should note, refers to emptiness of duality (*dvayaśūnyatā*), not emptiness of, say, essence (*svabhāva*), as it would for a *Mādhyamika*. See *MuĀv* 11–12.

²² My emphasis. *MuĀv*_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.10 (*MuĀv*_{ed} 12): *tata evam upaparīkṣeta. yo 'yam nīlapītādir ākāraḥ khyāti, na sa bāhyam āntaram vā vastu, ekānekasvabhāvavirahāt, pūrvavat. kevalam anādyavidyābhyāsa-vāsanābalaviplutānām bālānām buddhir asataiva tena tenākāreṇa khyāti. tam eva cākāraṃ nimittīkr̥tyālabhanīkr̥tya lokasya dvayakalpanā dvayagrāhakaś ca sarvānarthanidānabhūtaḥ pravartate. yāvac cāyam ākāraḥ khyāti tāvat paramārtho na dr̥śyate, keśamaśakādīdarśibhis taimirikaiḥ keśādīśūnyatāvad iti. sa evam upaparīkṣya sarvanāmāni sarvanimittāni ca parivarjayati. tatas tasya sarvadharmāmbane samādhou nirjalpe nirābhāse sthitasya pūrvaprayogavāsanābalād anābhogato 'nabhisamskārataḥ sarvaprapañcanimittānām astaṅgamād avikalpam anābhāsaṃ sarvadharmāśūnyatādarśanam, kevalavimalānantagaganopamaṃ lokottaram jñānam.*

Ratnākaraśānti uses variations of this argument in every work of his that deals with philosophy, however obliquely. Either external objects are first shown not to exist using the neither-one-nor-many argument, and then mental content is subjected to the same kind of mereological analysis (as in, for instance, his PPU, MAU, or KA),²³ or else (as in the MAV) the argument is presented formally in an explicitly generalized way, such that it applies to *any* cognition of content, regardless of whether that content is purported to be physical or mental.

Ratnākaraśānti’s discussion of the argument in his MAV is particularly interesting, for here, as Shinya Moriyama has shown in his very fine article on the topic,²⁴ he juxtaposes his use of the argument with the use of a Mādhyamika like Śāntarakṣita or Kamalaśīla. As

Ratnākaraśānti puts the argument in verses 23–24 and his auto-commentary:

Consciousness of something that is neither one nor many has an unreal nature, like, for instance, someone deluded by sleep seeing an elephant in rut. [23]

It’s perfectly clear that this very consciousness is of something neither one nor many, when a waking person, too, sees a body, trees, ponds, and so on. [24]

Listen now to how we prove the selflessness of phenomena! Wherever there is awareness of something that is neither one nor many, it has a nature that is unreal, as for example a person deluded by sleep who sees a rutting elephant. Since this [waking] awareness is also neither one nor many, [it too is unreal] when it sees a body, trees, ponds, and other things. The reason here is a *svabhāvahetu*.²⁵

²³ See above, fn.11 and fn.20.

²⁴ See Shinya Moriyama, ‘Ratnākaraśānti’s Theory of Cognition with False Mental Images (**alīkākaravāda*) and the Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument,’ *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (2014) 42: 339–351.

²⁵ MAV 78—280: *gcig dang gzhan las nges bral ba’i / shes te brdzun pa’i bdag nyid can / ji ltar gnyid kyis log pa yis / glang chen myos pa mthong ba bzhin // gcig dang du ma las grol ba’i / shes pa de nyid yongs su gsal / lus dang ljon shing mtshe’u la sogs / sad pa rnam kyis mthong ba bzhin // zhes bya ba ni kho bo cag gi chos la bdag med par sgrub pa nyon cig // gang zhi gcig dang du ma dang bral ba yang dag par rig pa de ni brdzun pa’i bdag nyid can yin te / dper na gnyid kyis log pas glang chen myos pa mthong ba bzhin no // yang dag par rig (rig P : rag D) pa ‘di yang gcig dang du ma dang bral ba’i phyir lus dang ljon shing dang rdzings bu la sogs pa mthong ba bzhin no zhes bya ba ni rang bzhin gyi gtan tshigs so // Cf. Moriyama, “Ratnākaraśānti’s Theory of Cognition with False Mental Images,” 341, and his discussion that follows.*

The site (*pakṣa*) of the inference here is our ordinary waking awareness of things in the world; the reason (*hetu*), of course, having neither a single nor a multiple nature. The reason being established in the site shows the desired conclusion: that mental content that appears to awareness is unreal (*alīka*). The structure of this inference, and the role of awareness in both the subject and the conclusion, is complicated, for it sounds as if Ratnākaraśānti means to target awareness itself here. But as Moriyama convincingly shows, it rather has to do with Ratnākaraśānti’s opposition to the Mādhyamika: the subject is *content-that-appears-to-awareness*—not awareness itself, but content that appears and so has awareness as its nature.

This lets Ratnākaraśānti avoid a fallacy committed by the Mādhyamika. As Moriyama writes,

Since the Madhyamaka opponent presupposes that all cognitions are false, he cannot establish the subject of the proof through his direct experience or perception. In order to avoid this fallacy [viz. the fallacy of *āśrayāsiddha*, or a reason having an unestablished basis], it is necessary to take a truly existent entity as the proof’s subject. It is for this reason that Ratnākaraśānti formulates [his proof] with the subject term “awareness”: only the mental image as the nature of the awareness is concluded to be false.²⁶

Ratnākaraśānti goes on to defend his inference against various other fallacies, which need not detain us here.²⁷ We might note, however, that he spells out just why the body is neither one nor many not with reference to Vasubandhu’s critique of atoms, but rather by critiquing part-whole relations.²⁸

For our purposes, it is enough to see the prevalence of this argument in Ratnākaraśānti’s work. Whether grounded on the authority of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Hevajra*, the *Viṃśikā*, or presented as an independent inference, Ratnākaraśānti uses the neither-one-nor-many argument

²⁶ Moriyama, “Ratnākaraśānti’s Theory of Cognition with False Mental Images,” 342.

²⁷ Again, see Moriyama’s insightful discussion.

²⁸ MAV 78—281; cf. Moriyama, “Ratnākaraśānti’s Theory of Cognition with False Mental Images,” 344 fn.15.

and its mereological reasoning to show that atoms (or part-whole relations in the MAV)—whether external, physical atoms or internal, ‘mental’ atoms—are incoherent, and so mental content, whether external or internal to awareness, is unreal. The reasoning is even alluded to in Ratnākaraśānti’s *sādhana*s, his short, practical texts devoted to tantric technique. Where he directs the practitioner in his *Bhramaharasādhana* (158–159) or his **Nairātmyasādhana* (incorporated into the MuĀv, 81–86; see 82) to realize that all *ākāras* of blue and yellow, etc., are erroneous (*bhrānti*) or unreal (*alīka*) and that only *prakāśamātra* remains, he means to call to mind this proof, which will have been internalized so as to let the practitioner see with conviction the truth of this realization.²⁹ All this, then, shows the importance of the neither-one-nor-many argument for Ratnākaraśānti’s view: it is because of this argument that mental content is unreal and so must be absent from the transcendent gnosis of buddhahood.

iii. The Epistemic Argument for Idealism and the Mādhyamika’s Objection

This has a corollary that is of utmost importance for Ratnākaraśānti’s position: the susceptibility of mental content to the neither-one-nor-many argument shows decisively that it cannot be part of the fundamental nature of consciousness. As Ratnākaraśānti puts the point in an especially important passage from his PPU:

Manifestation is proven to be a real entity because the awareness of it is immediately evident (*pratyakṣa*) since it cannot be erroneous. For manifestation is the innate nature of manifestation; hence, it does not result from some malfunction due to which awareness of it might be erroneous. But mental content (lit. “blue”), because it is a different thing, can

²⁹ For some consideration of these *sādhana* contexts, see Tomlinson, “The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti’s Philosophy of Mind.”

result from some malfunction; hence, awareness of it might be erroneous. Thus, the defeater (*bādhaka*) bears on mental content, but not manifestation.³⁰

Mental content like blue is susceptible to the neither-one-nor-many argument (the *bādhaka* at issue here); it is, in other words, defeasible (*bādhya*). The contentless nature of consciousness, however, is simply manifestation—“manifestation alone is the innate nature of manifestation”—and the awareness of that is immediately evident and unerroneous, so there is no room for the defeater to befall manifestation the way it does mental content. The innate nature of consciousness is indubitable, it is not defeasible by this or any other argument (it is *abādhya*), and so it ultimately exists while defeasible content does not.

But a question quickly arises: why is manifestation not defeasible, while content is? This is an especially serious problem for Ratnākaraśānti, for his Mādhyamika forebears would turn his own arguments against him here. Ratnākaraśānti had argued for idealism in the first place using not the *metaphysical* but rather the *epistemic* argument. Recall what we saw in chapter 2: to be an object of consciousness is to be evident to consciousness, and to be evident is to consist of the manifestation, or the mere shining forth (*sphuṭam eva*), that is the nature of consciousness.³¹ Insofar as the object is evident, then, it is not different from consciousness itself: both are really manifestation. Ratnākaraśānti uses similar reasoning in the Yogācāra digression in the first chapter of the MuĀv, where, just before leveling the neither-one-nor-many argument against external atoms, he writes:

³⁰ See Katsura’s 2017 “Mahidol Handout” (cf. PPU 78–393 and Jñānaśrīmitra’s citation of this passage at the beginning of his SSS, 368): *prakāśasya tu vastutvasiddhis tatsamvedanasya bhrāntatvāyogena pratyakṣatvāt. prakāśasya hi prakāśa eva nijaṃ rūpam iti na tat tasya viplavopanītaṃ yena tadvedanaṃ bhrāntiḥ syāt. nīlaṃ tu rūpāntaratvād viplavopanītaṃ api syād iti syāt tadvedanaṃ bhrāntiḥ. tato ’sti nīlādau bādhakasyāvātāro na prakāśe.*

³¹ See chapter 2, section iii.

Now, this is the Mahāyāna, and in the Mahāyāna all phenomena consist of only cognition (*viññapti*), for, as it is said in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, “This triple world is mind only.” Now, manifestation (*prakāśa*) is the nature of cognition, for it would be contradictory for that which does not have manifestation as its nature to be manifest. Therefore, blue and yellow and so on, as they are manifesting, cannot be an object external to consciousness. Why? Because appearance (*pratibhāsa*), i.e. appearance (*ābhāsa*), i.e. mental content (*ākāra*), is of the nature of consciousness alone, and thus all the various contents of consciousness arise from the mind which is misled by past habituations (*vāsanā*) that are left by conceptualizations of the same kind, as in a dream. And as it is said in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (10.154):

There is no external object as imagined by fools. The mind, stirred up by habituations, engages with the appearance of an object.³²

The crux of this epistemic argument for idealism is the *non-difference* between consciousness and its object. An external object, by nature different from cognition, would therefore have to lack the manifestation or shining-forth that is the nature of cognition and that would make the object evident. Something truly external, in other words, would simply remain inaccessible to cognition. The objects of cognition must be no different from cognition itself for them to show up to cognition at all.

This argument is fundamental to Ratnākaraśānti’s proof of idealism, and it, like the neither-one-nor-many argument, has a long history. It is a variation on Dharmakīrti’s so-called *sahopalambhaniyama*-argument. The *sahopalambhaniyama* is an argument to the effect that, because objects of awareness are characterized by the constraint (*niyama*) that they can only be apprehended (*upalambha*) together (*saha*) with the awareness (*dhī*) of them, there is no

³² MuĀv_{Isaacson} ad HT I.i.10 (MuĀv_{ed} 10–11): *nanu mahāyānam idam, māhāyāne ca viññaptimātraśarīrāḥ sarvadharmāḥ, uktaṃ cāryadaśabhūmike cittamātram idam yad uta traidhātukaṃ iti. prakāśo hi viññapteḥ svarūpam, yasyāsau svabhāvo na bhavati na sa prakāśate, virodhāt. tasmāt prakāśamānaṃ nīlapītādi na viññānabāhyo ’rithaḥ. kiṃ tarhi? viññānasyaivātmabhūtaḥ pratibhāsa ābhāsa ākāraḥ, sajāṭīyavikalpāhita-vāsanopahatāc cittād eva nānākārasya viññānasyotpatteḥ tadyathā svapne. uktaṃ cāryalaṅkāvatāre — bāhyo na vidyate hy artho yathā bālairvikalpyate / vāsanāluḥitaṃ cittam arthābhāsam pravartate // iti (10.154). Note Ratnākaraśānti’s citation of the LAS here in the context of his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*. He is indeed fond of this verse, citing it in many important places.*

difference (*abheda*) between the two: all we apprehend when we are conscious of something is an aspect of that conscious state itself, not something independent of consciousness.³³ (In what follows, we will refer to this argument as the co-apprehension argument, or simply co-apprehension.) Ratnākaraśānti’s variation on this argument is akin to one that was also already formulated by Dharmakīrti in his PVin, in what Takashi Iwata (and Birgit Kellner following him) calls the *saṃvedana-*, or awareness-inference.³⁴ After showing that external objects can play no role in our discussion of how knowledge arises—whether a causal role, a role of resemblance, or a combination of the two—Dharmakīrti stipulates in his PVin that our awareness just has the nature of appearing-thus-and-so (*tathāprathana*).³⁵ “This awareness is not of anything other than awareness, just like self-awareness,” Dharmakīrti writes, and so “it is not possible that awareness is of an object different from it.”³⁶ Awareness appearing one way or another is just awareness doing what awareness does: *appear*. This appearing is, as Kellner puts it, *intransitive*: “when there is a cognition of an object there is just a cognitive episode arising from its causes with

³³ On this argument in Dharmakīrti and its afterlife in other thinkers, see the works cited above, viz. Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, 59–95; Arnold’s “Buddhist Idealism, Epistemic and Otherwise” and *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 175–183; Ratié’s “On the distinction between epistemic and metaphysical Buddhist idealisms: a Śaiva perspective”; and Kellner’s “Proving Idealism in Indian Buddhist Philosophy: Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti,” “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither?,” and “Proofs of Idealism in Buddhist Epistemology.” In addition, see Shirō Matsumoto, “Sahopalambhaniyama,” *Sōtōshū Kenkyūin Kenkyūsei Kenkyū Kiyō*, 12 (1980): 1–34; Takashi Iwata, *Sahopalambhaniyama: Struktur und Entwicklung des Schlusses von der Tatsache, daß Erkenntnis und Gegenstand ausschließlich zusammen wahrgenommen werden, auf deren Nichtverschiedenheit (2 Vols.)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991); and John Taber, “Kumārila’s Buddhist,” *JIP* 38, no. 3 (2010): 279–96. The most cited instance in Dharmakīrti’s work is his PVin I.55ab: *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoḥ /*

³⁴ Iwata, *Sahopalambhaniyama*, 9–15; cf. Kellner, “Proving Idealism in Indian Buddhist Philosophy: Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti” and “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither?”

³⁵ See Kellner “Proving Idealism in Indian Buddhist Philosophy: Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti,” 316–317, and Kellner, “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither?,” 18.

³⁶ PVin 1 42, 3-6: *saṃvedanam ity api tasya tādātmyāt tathāprathanam. na tad anyasya kasyacid āmasaṃvedanavat. tato 'pi na tad arthāntare yuktam.* The translation is that of Kellner, “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither?,” 18, with minor changes. Arnold also discusses this passage: *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 181–183.

awareness-qua-appearance for its nature.”³⁷ Our awareness of appearances is no different from self-awareness (Dharmakīrti’s example [*dr̥ṣṭānta*] in the awareness-inference) in this respect: just as pre-reflective self-awareness does not take an object, so too our awareness of appearances in the first instance does not take an object. One may determine for oneself an object when analyzing awareness or when we have need for something in particular, thereby bringing false duality into awareness by introducing an object (*grāhyākāra*) on the one hand and subject (*grāhakākāra*) on the other. Nevertheless, intransitive, simple awareness-qua-appearance is most basic, and so there is really no difference between awareness and appearance.

This epistemic argument is basic to Ratnākaraśānti’s proof of his idealism, despite his use of the neither-one-nor-many argument against external objects and internal mental content. We’ve seen it at work in his PPU (in chapter 2, section iii) and in the first chapter of his MuĀv (just above). His *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (VMS), too, is concerned precisely with the use and scope of the awareness-inference. The text is introduced as settling a disagreement in the literature regarding just how idealism is to be established. “Yogācāras consider this triple world to be nothing but consciousness,” he begins, “but since there are some misconceptions regarding this, the proof will be illustrated here.”³⁸ Immediately we see that the argument Ratnākaraśānti thinks is characteristic of the Yogācāra is the awareness-inference. This is how Ratnākaraśānti presents it: “Whatever is cognized by something is not different (*tha dad pa ma yin*) from that

³⁷ Kellner, “Proving Idealism in Indian Buddhist Philosophy: Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti,” 316; Kellner “Phenomenology, idealism, both or neither?,” 18–19. Cf. Uriah Kriegel, “Consciousness as Intransitive Self-Consciousness: Two Views and an Argument,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2003): 103–132, for a detailed discussion of intransitive self-awareness, which he argues is one of the distinguishing characteristics of consciousness. Those “causes” Kellner mentions are past cognitions. Without a particular object to act as the cause of cognition, it is rather the ripening of seeds (*bījas*) and karmic traces of past habituation (*vāsanās*) that determine how awareness appears in its ever-changing series of transformations.

³⁸ VMS, 106–842: *rnal ’byor spyod pa pa rnams khams gsum po ’di dag ni rnam par rig pa tsam mo zhes bya bar smra ba la ni [...] de la log par rtogs pa las sgrub par byed pa ’di ston te.*

cognition—just like the nature of cognition [viz., self-awareness]. The color white, a song, perfume, sweet tastes, rough textures—these too are awareness because they are cognized. This is a *svabhāvahetu*,³⁹ or it is a reason derived from the very nature of cognition. Content is not different from cognition, for were the content of my experience in fact independent of that experience, there would be no experience of that content. It would not be the content of *experience* were it by nature different from experience; it would simply and forever be independent of experience. He echoes this point in his KA and MAU: “What is not manifestation cannot manifest, and it cannot be made to manifest by anything else.”⁴⁰

The non-difference between content and the manifestation or shining-forth that is the nature of consciousness, then, should amount to the identity between content and manifestation. This is what the epistemic arguments for idealism, viz. co-apprehension and the awareness-inference, are meant to prove. But if we are then willing to use the metaphysical neither-one-nor-many argument against the content of experience once that has been understood to consist of manifestation by nature, this should imply that manifestation itself is as susceptible to the neither-one-nor-many argument as content is. The epistemic arguments for idealism show that

³⁹ VMS, 106—842: *gang zhig gang gis rtogs pa de ni de las tha dad pa ma yin te, dper na rtogs par byed pa 'i rang gi ngo bo bzhin no. dkar po dang glu dang dri zhim pa dang mngar ba dang rtsub pa la sogs pa 'di dag kyang shes pa de 'i rtogs par byed pa yin pa 'i phyir shes bya ba ni rang bzhin gyi gtan tshigs so*. Takanori Umino and Tsultrim Kelsang “The Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi of Ratnākaraśānti” *Meijō daigaku jinbun kiyō* (1982): 19, translate the proof without comment: “(Pakṣa) What is cognized by *x* is nothing but the very *x*. (Drṣṭānta) Just like what is possessed of a cognizing agency as its inherent property. (Linga) Because these things (objects of sense organs) such as white color, a singing voice, a nice smell, a sweet taste, the tactile data of roughness, and so on, are also what are cognized by the cognizer.” Iwata, *Sahopalambhaniyama*, 198, renders the proof a bit more clearly: “Wenn eine [Erkenntnis (Y)] etwas (—> Objekt-Faktor (X)) bewußt macht, ist dieses (X) von ihr (Y) nicht verschieden (*tha dad pa ma yin*), wie die Bewußtseinsnatur (*bodhasvarūpa* (?)) [der Erkenntnis, die ja ebenfalls bewußt wird, von der Erkenntnis nicht verschieden ist]. Da die Erkenntnis auch diese [Objekt-Faktoren, sc.] Weißes (*sita*), Gesang, Wohlgeruch, Süßigkeit, Hartes (*khara*) usw., bewußt macht[, sind diese Faktoren von der Erkenntnis nicht verschieden]. [Der] so [formulierte Grund ist] ein Grund, der im Eigenwesen besteht (*svabhāvahetu*).” Iwata’s comments in this whole section on Ratnākaraśānti’s understanding of the *sahopalambhaniyama* are very helpful; see *Sahopalambhaniyama*, 190–202.

⁴⁰ KA 20—1412: *snang ba min pa snang mi 'gyur / gzhan gyis kyang ni snang mi nus / [...]* Cf. MAU 78—612: *gsal ba min pa gsal mi 'gyur / gzhan gyis kyang ni gsal mi nus / [...]*

the two are identical, so how could content be susceptible to the neither-one-nor-many argument and consciousness not be? The two should be equally unreal. This is one line of reasoning advanced by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in their Mādhyamika critique of the ultimate reality of cognition. As Kamalaśīla puts the point, “If one holds that these are unreal phenomenal aspects manifesting themselves, then it follows that cognition is unreal, too, since cognition is not essentially distinct from its content; for there is no other nature of cognition apart from its having the nature of illuminating itself.”⁴¹ The Mādhyamika argues that, because content has been shown to be identical to manifestation and because content has been shown to be unreal, manifestation itself must be unreal too. The two are identical, and so the susceptibility of one to defeat by the neither-one-nor-many argument transfers over to the other.

iv. The Establishment of Difference
a) Ratnākaraśānti’s Predicament

Were it the case that the identity between manifestation and content means both are unreal, Ratnākaraśānti’s system would fall to pieces. Contentless subjective character is supposed to be the nature of consciousness, and this ultimately exists and is experienced by Buddha. If it were really unreal, buddhahood itself would be lost, and with it Ratnākaraśānti’s idealism and his complex theory of *svasaṃvedya*, innate bliss, and the phenomenology of buddhahood. He is keenly aware of this. And so, in an effort to avoid the conclusion the Mādhyamikas reach while

⁴¹ Dan Arnold, “Pushing Idealism Beyond its Limits: The Place of Philosophy in Kamalaśīla’s *Steps of Cultivation*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*, ed. Jonardon Ganeri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 391. Cf. Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts* (Rome: IsMEO, 1956), Part 2, 203. Compare, too, Śāntarakṣita’s polemic against the Nirākāravādin in his MA(Ś), 52–60.

also maintaining that the neither-one-nor-many argument shows that mental content is unreal, Ratnākaraśānti *allows for a slight difference between consciousness and content*—despite the fact that the epistemic argument for idealism has shown content to be no different from consciousness.

To see this, we can return to the important passage of the PPU we considered at the beginning of the last section. This is part of Ratnākaraśānti’s positive statement of his view in the section of his PPU concerning *yathāvadbhāvīkacintāmayī prajñā*, or the wisdom that consists of rational reflection on what reality is like,⁴² and Jñānaśrīmitra, who cites it as his *pūrvapakṣa* early in his SSS, clearly took it to be a definitive statement of the Nirākāravāda’s rationale. Ratnākaraśānti tells us here that, while appearances are *defeasible (bādhyā)* by the neither-one-nor-many argument, there is no chance for any defeater to befall manifestation, for it has as its innate nature nothing but manifestation (*prakāśasya hi prakāśa eva nijaṃ rūpaṃ*). The awareness of manifestation is thus immediately evident (*pratyakṣa*) and *indefeasible (abādhyā)*. *This* is enough to make the difference between it and content. While we might think that the epistemic arguments for idealism should establish the identity between content and consciousness, Ratnākaraśānti stipulates that this identity only goes so far. As he says later in his PPU: “Since blue is defeasible (*bādhyā*), manifestation, which is not defeasible (*abādhyā*), is different from it.”⁴³

⁴² *Yathāvadbhāvīka-* is juxtaposed with *yāvadbhāvīka-*: while the latter is an investigation into what exists, the former is a more thoroughgoing investigation into just *how* what exists exists, what precisely it consists of, etc. The important sub-section we are considering here, where Ratnākaraśānti gives his positive statement of the Nirākāravāda, was labeled 4.3.1 in Katsura’s old synopsis. In his “A New Synopsis of the Prajñāpāramitopadeśa,” delivered at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, this is section 2.2.1.1.2.

⁴³ SSS, 370: *tato bādhyān nīlād abādhyāḥ prakāśo bhinna ev[a]*. Cf. PPU 400: *de dag kyang gnod pas sngon po la sogs pa’i rang bzhin sgro btags pa tsam nyid du grub po. de dang bral ba’i gsal ba’i rang bzhin la ni gnod pa ma yin no.*

This means that the identity itself between manifestation and content is unreal as well.

The epistemic arguments for idealism indeed show that the content of experience must consist of manifestation for it to show up to us in the first place. That said, this does not mean that content is truly identical to manifestation: when we realize that content is unreal, we realize its purported identity with manifestation is unreal as well. Ratnākaraśānti establishes this point with reference once again to *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* 10.154 and 709. He writes,

As it is stated in the *Laṅkāvatāra*,

Just as in a mirror one sees a form is neither one nor many,
so too there is no being of beings there. [10.709]

And this *ākāra* like blue and so on, though it belongs to awareness, is *unreal* (*alīka eva*), not a real entity (*vastu*), for—even though it consists of awareness—[the *ākāra* is unreal] because it is in a state that is neither one nor many and because [as we’ve already seen the *Laṅkāvatāra* say in 10.154] the phrase “stirred up by habituations” (*vāsanāluṭhita-*) states that [the *ākāra*] is the erroneous mark born from [the mind] that is struck [by those habituations]. You may ask: How then does this unreal *ākāra* manifest (*katham asāv alīkaḥ prakāśate*)? Because its having the nature of manifestation is really unreal (*alīkenaiva prakāśātmatvena*). To explain: consciousness itself, manifesting because it has the nature of manifestation, is erroneous due to the affliction of habituations of beginningless error, and so it appears with unreal *ākāras* like blue, as in a dream. [Consciousness appears as blue and so on] because the manifestation of blue is established, since without consisting of manifestation, blue could not be joined with appearance [that is, it could not appear]. Because there is a defeater for blue *even though it is manifesting*, it is proven to be unreal. Given the proof of that, its identity [viz. its consisting of manifestation] is proven to be unreal.⁴⁴

The picture we’re given here is this: the mind is all there is (at this point in Ratnākaraśānti’s discussion, we can take idealism for granted); consciousness appears with this or that content,

⁴⁴ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. PPU 78—392.20–393.15): *uktam cāryalaṅkāvatāre—yathaiva darpaṇe rūpam ekatvānyatavarjitaṃ / dṛśyate na ca tatrāsti tathā bhāveṣu bhāvātā // iti. sa caiṣa jñānasyāpy ākāro nīlādir alīka eva na vastu. jñānātmakatve ’py ekatvānekatvavirahatādavasthyāt. vāsanāluṭhitagrahaṇena copaghātajabhrāntinimittatvābhīdhānāt. katham asāv alīkaḥ prakāśate? alīkenaiva prakāśātmatvena. tathā hi vijñānam eva prakāsarūpatvāt prakāśamānam anādibhrāntivāsanopaplavād bhrāntam alīkair nīlādibhir ākāraiḥ prakhyāti svapnādivat. nīlādirprakāśasya siddhatvāt. prakāśātmatām antareṇa tadayogāt. prakāśamānasyāpi nīlāder bādhakād alīkatvasiddheḥ. tatsiddhau tādātmyasyāpy alīkatvasiddheḥ. Cf. Jñānaśrīmitra’s citation of the sentence, *vijñānam eva ... svapnādivat* at SSS, 373.15–16.*

but its content is unreal because it is caused by the unenlightened mind's habituation to error; consciousness, then, is both *manifesting* as this or that content and is *erroneous* precisely for manifesting in that way. Blue or any other unreal content that appears to consciousness must have an identity (*tādātmya*) with manifestation insofar as it appears, for otherwise it could not show up to consciousness in the first place (that is, the epistemic argument for idealism holds). But because content can be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument, it is unreal despite the fact that it manifests, and so the identity between manifestation and content must be an unreal one too. Why? Because, as Ratnākaraśānti goes on to say in the important PPU passage we considered above, "manifestation is proven to be a real entity because the awareness of it is immediately evident (*pratyakṣa*) since it cannot be erroneous." It is just the nature of manifestation to manifest: there is no room for error here, and the neither-one-nor-many argument has no scope against manifestation. Despite the fact that content must consist of manifestation for it to appear, content is really unreal and so its being manifestation, too, is unreal. Since manifestation is real, then, it is different from content.

This all may seem rather arbitrary and unsatisfying (we will see just how unsatisfying it might be when we consider Jñānaśrīmitra's critique in chapter 4). For it would seem that Ratnākaraśānti has said (if we may unsympathetically caricature his view): manifestation itself just *cannot* be wrong. But, despite the fact that you might think that the content that immediately manifests is *not* erroneous insofar as it *manifests* and so consists in some important sense of precisely manifestation, it *is* erroneous since it can be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument and is caused by beginningless ignorance. Hence, content and manifestation are *different*, the *identity* between content and manifestation is as *unreal* as content is, and the view

that *manifestation alone is real* makes perfect sense. (The italics in this paragraph represent Ratnākaraśānti's caricatured *insistence*.)

There are two basic ways to account for why this view may seem so unsatisfying: the objection of the Sākāravādin and that of the Mādhyamika. First, the Sākāravādin will ask: why think that content that is immediately manifest is mistaken? Why not accept that the identity between content and consciousness that is established by the epistemic arguments for idealism is a real one and explain the omnipresence of error in unenlightened consciousness some other way? Second, the Mādhyamika will wonder: why remain so committed to the ultimate reality of manifestation? That is, why think that content *can* but manifestation *cannot* be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument in the first place? What if the identity between the two holds and manifestation is as erroneous as Ratnākaraśānti takes appearances to be? Either way, Ratnākaraśānti's argument seems circular to his opponents: manifestation is real because it cannot be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument, it cannot be so defeated because it is different from content, and it is different from content because it is real—but it is real only because it is different from content since it cannot be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument. Hence the problem.

But while Ratnākaraśānti's view may seem unsatisfying when we consider only his positive statements of it (like what we've seen here in this sub-section of his PPU), it is made stronger in light of his responses to the Sākāravādin's and Mādhyamika's objections and the *reductio ad absurdum* he levels against these opponents.⁴⁵ In other words, Ratnākaraśānti's

⁴⁵ In Katsura's new numbering (in his "A New Synopsis of the Prajñāpāramitopadeśa"), the Sākāravādin is refuted at 2.2.1.1.3, the Mādhyamika at 2.2.2.1, and the Candrakīrtian at 2.2.2.2. Again, see Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 127–170, for a helpful, detailed discussion of Ratnākaraśānti's doxography of his opponents.

commitment to the difference between content and consciousness is not only, and perhaps not even in the first place, a result of the positive arguments he gives to establish this difference. Rather, it is a position he argues for in part on the basis of the absurdity of rival Buddhist views.

iv. The Establishment of Difference

b) The Manifestation of Unreal Content: Versus the Sākāravādin

We can consider first the Sākāravādin's critique of this notion of a false, superimposed identity, and Ratnākaraśānti's defense. The Sākāravādin is committed to what he thinks the epistemic arguments for idealism were supposed to show all along: the *real identity* between manifestation and content that directly manifests to consciousness. Further, due to this identity, content is as real as manifestation; the neither-one-nor-many argument—whatever its effectiveness against external objects—cannot defeat content that is immediately manifest.⁴⁶ As Ratnākaraśānti presents this view:

Some Yogācāras and some Mādhyamikas who maintain the position that consciousness has content (*sākārajñānavāda*) say the following to this: “It is unreasonable for there to be identity between blue, which is unreal, and manifestation, which is real, because there would be the imposition of contrary qualities. But in the absence of an identity, blue would not manifest. Therefore, blue is precisely the nature of manifestation. Further: blue

⁴⁶ Ratnākaraśānti does not here lay out this part of the Sākāravādin's position, for he has other arguments to level against him. We will see something of this in our consideration of Jñānaśrīmitra's *citrādvaita* below, where he makes it explicit that Vasubandhu's argument is meant to target external objects, not *ākāras*—and indeed, that metaphysical idealism itself is superfluous once epistemic idealism has been properly understood.

is a real thing (*vastubhūta*) or else it is un-superimposed (*anāropita*), because it is not different from manifestation, which itself is either a real thing or un-superimposed.”⁴⁷

The Sākāravādin argues, in other words, that an appearance like blue must consist of manifestation for it to manifest (that is, a quick restatement of the epistemic arguments from above). Ratnākaraśānti’s supposed superimposed identity between the two, however, cannot do the explanatory work he needs it to, for two things (obviously) cannot be *identical* if they are *different*, or if they are characterized by contradictory properties (reality and unreality, for instance). Insofar as blue is unreal and manifestation is real, then, the two cannot be identical. However, they must be identical for blue to manifest, and so the Sākāravādin concludes that Ratnākaraśānti cannot be right in his presentation of the superimposed identity but ultimate difference between content and consciousness. Instead, the Sākāravādin takes himself to have shown that the two are not different—and both must be real.

There are a few general points to note about Ratnākaraśānti’s response to this criticism. First of all, it will be of special importance for our purposes later: having dealt with the positive statement of Ratnākaraśānti’s view in the first chapter of the *Sākārasiddhiśāstra* (SSŚ), Jñānaśrīmitra cites this response almost in its entirety at the beginning of the second chapter, and it would seem to motivate (at least in part) his theory of error and the formation of conceptual content. Following his teacher, Ratnakīrti also responds to it at length in his

⁴⁷ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. PPU 78–394.1–7): *keci tu yogācārāḥ keci ca mādhyaṃikāḥ sākārajñānavādināḥ tam āhuḥ—alikānalīkayor nīlaprakāśayor tādātmyānupapattir viruddhadharmādhyāsāt. tādātmyābhāve ca na nīlam prakāśeta. tasmāt prakāśasyātmaiva nīlam, vastubhūtaṃ ca nīlam anāropitaṃ vā, vastubhūtād anāropitād vā prakāśād avyatirekād iti.* It would seem that the *vastubhūta/anāropita* disjunction refers to the Sākāravādin Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, respectively: the Yogācāra, in other words, thinks blue and manifestation are both real things (*vastubhūta*), while the Mādhyamika, while he might think both are not ultimately real, nevertheless thinks both are not superimposed (*anāropita*). This Sākāravādin Mādhyamika, then, would be juxtaposed with the likes of Śāntarākṣita and Kamalaśīla, whom Ratnākaraśānti labels Nirākāravādin Mādhyamikas, and who target *ākāras* with the neither-one-nor-many argument and would say that they are indeed superimposed. We’ll come to Ratnākaraśānti’s response to these Mādhyamikas in the next section.

Citrādvaitaprakāśavāda (CAPV).⁴⁸ These philosophers, then, thought it a significant objection worthy of detailed response. (We will come to these responses in chapter 4, section iii.) Second, Ratnākaraśānti offers here another line of argument against the existence of content, one that is subtly but importantly different from his use of the neither-one-nor-many argument. Any Buddhist will admit that we unenlightened beings must be in error all the time, for otherwise there would be no need for the Buddha’s teaching and the attainment of nirvāṇa. Ratnākaraśānti’s claim is that for error to be possible, not just *some* mental content (conceptualization, for instance) but *all* mental content (including immediate manifest appearances) must be erroneous, for there is no clear way to differentiate between the two. The Sākāravādin’s attempts to separate erroneous conceptualization from real appearances fails, Ratnākaraśānti will argue here. Third and following from this, we can note that Ratnākaraśānti’s argument takes on a particularly buddhological flavor here, though it does not concern the buddha-bodies per se. Rather, he assumes with his opponent that buddhahood is possible, and then he shows that the opponent’s view in fact rules out the possibility of buddhahood, thus reducing it to absurdity. This form of *buddhological argument*, as we’ll call it, will come up again below in our consideration of certain Mādhyamika objections to Ratnākaraśānti’s view, especially Candrakīrtian objections, and we will have the opportunity to comment on its structure and implications in the conclusion of this chapter.

Ratnākaraśānti begins his response by raising the issue of the possibility of enlightenment. If manifest appearances like blue were real, he writes, “there could be no error at

⁴⁸ Note that almost the entirety of the Sanskrit of this passage was thus accessible in these sources even before the recent discovery of two incomplete Sanskrit manuscripts of the PPU (fragments of which are to be found in Luo Hong’s 2014 “The Opening Verses of Ratnākaraśānti’s Prajñāpāramitopadeśa” and in Katsura’s 2017 “Mahidol Handout”). In what follows, I’ll refer to the SSS and CAPV in addition to Katsura’s handout.

all because all instances of manifestation would be aware of their own nature unmistakably (*aviparīta-*). Therefore, all beings would *always* be liberated and would *always* be completely awakened.⁴⁹ This is an untenable consequence, of course. Buddhists start with the assumption that there is suffering that can be removed, that this suffering is caused by error or ignorance, and that the total removal of error is an essential part of enlightenment. Ratnākaraśānti suggests here that, if his opponent really thinks that ordinary beings are not mistaken about what immediately appears to them, then just insofar as one is conscious of such appearances all the time, one must always already be enlightened.

This, of course, is built on a caricature of the Sākāravādin’s position. The Sākāravādin quickly corrects the picture: “Error [is not just the manifestation of appearances, but] is a conceptual cognition (*vikalpikā buddhiḥ*), because that is the determination of an object (*arthādhyavasāya*) with regard to what is not an object but is [awareness’s] own appearance (*svapratibhāsa*).”⁵⁰ The Sākāravādin maintains, in other words, that what immediately manifests to consciousness is not erroneous; however, ordinary unenlightened beings cannot help but engage with appearances through the determination of an actionable object out in the world. Here, the Sākāravādin lays claim to the tradition of Dharmakīrti, referring to the definition of error in his PVin. Dharmakīrti tells us there that error is due to “apprehending *x* with regard to what is not *x*,”⁵¹ and he glosses this line with precisely what the Sākāravādin has cited here:

“there is error due to the engagement with the determination of an object with regard to what is

⁴⁹ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSS, 387.7–8; CAPV, 136.7–8; PPU 78—394.7–10): *eṣāṃ sarvair eva prakāśair aviparītasvarūpasamvedanād bhrānter atyantam abhāvaḥ syāt. tataś ca sarvasattvāḥ sadaiva muktāḥ sadaiva samyaksambuddhā bhavyeṣuḥ.*

⁵⁰ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSS, 387.8–9; CAPV, 136.9; PPU 78—394.11–12): *vikalpikā buddhir bhrāntiḥ, svapratibhāse ’narthe arthādhyavāsyād iti cet?*

⁵¹ *Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇaviniścaya, Chapters 1 and 2*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Beijing/Vienna: China Tibetology Publishing House/Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2007), 46.6: *atasmimś tadgrahād bhrāntir.*

not an object but is [awareness's] own appearance."⁵² Determination (*adhyavasāya*)⁵³ projects a conceptually constructed object where no such object appears to consciousness—either something like a universal that is unreal (on the Buddhist account) but nevertheless allows us to draw useful inferences, or an object taken to be distinct and out there in the world (like a blue pen) towards which we might act to satisfy a particular need (to write a note). Error, then, is engagement with such a determined object. This determined object is opposed to a manifest appearance. An appearance is what an unenlightened being is immediately and indubitably conscious of. On the Sākāravādin's account (and on Dharmakīrti's too, the Sākāravādin avers), one is wrong to think that one sees a blue pen out in the world—that is a determined object. One is not wrong, however, that consciousness arises with an appearance that looks like a blue pen—that much is undeniable.

The Sākāravādin thus views our ordinary conscious states as twofold: there is both an indubitable-appearance component and a mistaken determined-object component. To consider the pedestrian example more fully: I cannot be mistaken that a blue pen appears to me. How could I be? It makes no sense for you to say to me, “No, you're wrong, a blue pen doesn't appear to you at all.” You might be right that there *is* no pen, or maybe it is really red, but that does not mean it didn't seem to me like a blue pen. There is nothing wrong with the manifest appearance.

The error that makes us not buddhas, Ratnākaraśānti's opponent asserts, is that I cannot help but

⁵² PVin 45.7: *svapratibhāse 'narthe 'rthādhyavasāyena pravartanād bhrāntir*. Note that this, as well as the verse portion this glosses, is not the full sentence in Dharmakīrti's work. Dharmakīrti, rather, is making a point about how error can still function as a means of knowledge in inference. However, I am purposely isolating just these remarks about error and determination, as they were separated out from the PVin's context by Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra, and Ratnakīrti, as we see here and will see below.

⁵³ On this term of art, see McCrea and Patil, “Traditionalism and Innovation: Philosophy, Exegesis, and Intellectual History in Jñānaśrīmitra's *Apohaprakaraṇa*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (2006) 34:303–366, and McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 16–20; for Jñānaśrīmitra's discussion of it in the *Apohaprakaraṇa*, see 87–91. We'll have opportunity to return to this when we consider Jñānaśrīmitra's view in chapter 4, section iii.

determine those appearances, a blue pen out in the world, for which I may have some instrumental need and towards which I may act. And when I think or say that I need that pen over there, it is the unreal determined object that I am concerned with rather than the real manifest appearance. All this allows for a response to Ratnākaraśānti’s objection that is left implicit here: we are all not buddhas because, despite the fact that we cannot be mistaken about appearances, we all act with respect to the determined objects we project outside ourselves. Enlightenment would indeed be the experience of only what manifests immediately, devoid of the error of determination.⁵⁴

Ratnākaraśānti seeks to show that this bifurcation will not work. The determined-object component of our cognition, he argues, must really be manifest: otherwise, the Sākāravādin will make the same sorts of mistakes that the epistemic argument for idealism is meant to correct. Ratnākaraśānti asks, “How could the object that is being determined by conceptual cognition not be made manifest (*prakāśyate*)? Or how could the object that is being made manifest [by conceptual cognition] (*prakāśyamāno*) not manifest in that conceptual cognition?”⁵⁵ That is, I can only be aware of how I’m conceiving something insofar as the conceived object is manifest to my awareness in the first place. After all, how else could it be present to me? But if the determined object manifests, then—given the opponent’s commitment to the reality of any manifest appearance—that object must in fact be real, not erroneous, and the opponent’s attempt

⁵⁴ This response is made explicit in characteristically succinct terms in CAPV, 138–139, where Ratnakīrti responds to Ratnākaraśānti’s critique. As he puts it, saṃsāra exists due to the possibility of mistaken positing even given that awareness is of something whose nature cannot be defeated, since all mental content is phenomenally present; liberation follows the cessation of the mistaken superimposition of an actionable object (which superimposition is acceptable only so long as it is left unanalyzed) where there is no such thing. CAPV 138.26–27: *tasmād avicāraramaṇīyo ’tasmīṃs tadgraha eva bhrāntir āropāparanāmā, tatkṣayaś ca mokṣa iti yuktaṃ*. CAPV 139.13–14: *sarvair eva prakāśair aviparītasvarūpasamvedane ’pi bhrāntivyavasthāsambhavād iti saṃsāraḥ*.

⁵⁵ See the next footnote for the citation of the whole passage.

to explain error has failed. As Ratnākaraśānti continues, “If [the determined object] is indeed manifest, then there is the unwanted consequence that the [determined] object has [manifestation] as its identity (*arthasya tādātmya-*), and there could be no thought about a non-existent object.”⁵⁶ That is, if the determined object manifests—and so has manifestation as its identity, per the epistemic argument for idealism—then determined objects that are decidedly unreal for Buddhist philosophers (past and future entities, the Self, the concept of permanence, and so on) must manifest to consciousness when we think them over in conceptual cognition; but insofar as they manifest, they must (absurdly) be real. For instance, when one thinks of a long-dead monarch like the legendary king Māndhātṛ, he must be real insofar as he manifests as the content of cognition in order to be part of that thought in the first place. But past monarchs, like other past objects, are no longer real. The Sākāravādin’s position is hence absurd.

Ratnākaraśānti continues in this same vein, turning his attention to the determined objects of ordinary experience. He writes, “Further, [the object of the conceptual cognition, ‘This is] a cow,’ would manifest vividly as a particular (*svalakṣaṇa*); [this, however, is absurd,] because that cognition would then not be conceptual at all since there can be no conceptualization with regard to a particular.”⁵⁷ That is, if the determined object in fact manifests—and we assume with the opponent that manifest appearances are by definition real—then conceptually constructed objects would manifest to consciousness as real particulars. But then, insofar as they manifest to consciousness as particulars, we could no longer consider them to be conceptually constructed

⁵⁶ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSŚ 387.9–12; CAPV 136.9–13; PPU 78—394.12–18): *katham avasīyamānas tayā so ’rtho na prakāśyate. prakāśyamāno vā katham asau tasyām na prakāśate. atha prakāśata eva tadārthasya tādātmyaprasaṅgaḥ. asati cārthe sā na syāt. abhūn māndhātā, bhaviṣyati śaṅkhaḥ, asty ātmā, nityaḥ śabda iti. sarvātmanā ca niścayaḥ syāt.*

⁵⁷ See the following footnote for the entire passage. Note that I am glossing *śabdasaṃketa-* here with simply ‘conceptualization’ for the sake of a more fluid understanding of this passage. More literally, it might be rendered “[...] because there cannot be conventional linguistic agreement with respect to a particular.”

objects at all, because, for Buddhist philosophers in Dharmakīrti’s text-tradition, it is axiomatic that a particular is not bound up with concepts.

Ratnākaraśānti then goes on to explain how he thinks the process must really work. “Therefore,” he writes, “the [conceptual] cognition, ‘cow’—insofar as it is [bound up with the unreal universal] ‘cow’ that is common to every instance of a cow—manifests with a nature that is unreal and conceptual due to a distortion. Thus, the cognition of a cow’s manifesting in such a way [that is, its appearing with an unreal nature] just is the determination of the object, ‘cow.’”⁵⁸ When we have the conceptual cognition of a cow, in other words, what’s happening is that an unreal thing—the universal cow-ness—*is in fact manifesting to cognition*; indeed, it is a *cow* that manifests only because it is inseparable from the manifestation of *that universal*. Similarly with external objects in general: they *appear as external* insofar as they are inseparable from externality. This is not a problem for Ratnākaraśānti’s idealism, for he is happy to admit that the appearance of something (of externality, the universal ‘cow-ness,’ etc.) does not make it real; rather, unreal things appear to us every time determined objects appear. The opponent, however, is in trouble: if he wants to say that what immediately manifests is real, then he would have to accept that unreal things like externality, universals, or long-dead legendary monarchs are real

⁵⁸ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSŚ 387.12–17; CAPV 136.13–17; PPU 78—394.19–395.4): *gaur iti spaṣṭena ca svena lakṣaṇena prakāśeta. svalakṣaṇe ca śabdasaṃketāyogād vikalpikaiva sā buddhir na syāt. tasmād aśeṣagovyaktisādhāraṇena gotvena gobuddhir alīkena sābhilāpeṇa rūpeṇa viplavāt prakhyātīti tathāprakhyānam asyā gavārthādhyaśāya ity eṣṭavyam. evaṃ hy ete doṣā na syuḥ. apratibhāsamānasyāpi svalakṣaṇasya bhrāntyādhyaśāyāt.* Note that, while Jñānaśrīmitra continues his citation of the PPU, Ratnakīrti breaks his off here.

insofar as they manifest. Ratnākaraśānti does not think his opponent will be willing to accept this.⁵⁹

Ratnākaraśānti then goes on to formulate a precise definition and defense of the superimposed identity that is at stake here, extending the argument from determined objects to all mental content. He writes,

Just as unreal ‘cow-ness’ appears in our cognition of a cow and is identical with it, yet it is not the case that it is a real thing or is not superimposed due to its non-difference from manifestation,⁶⁰ so too unreal appearances like blue in the manifestation of blue are established to be identical with manifestation just by the establishment of manifestation, because unreality and reality, insofar as they are located in separate natures (*nānārūpaniṣṭha*), are not contradictory even in a single thing (*vastu*).⁶¹

Just as the unreal universal ‘cow-ness’ manifests in our cognition of cows but is nevertheless unreal, so too appearances manifest but are unreal. In each instance, the identity between the unreal content and manifestation is only a superimposed one. It cannot be a total identity, for the two things have opposed properties, viz. reality and unreality, and opposed properties are only

⁵⁹ He is, however, wrong about this: Jñānaśrīmitra does indeed accept that unreal things like universals are real *insofar as they are manifest to consciousness* and treated as what is known through self-awareness. We will consider his discussion of this point in the second chapter of the SSS in the next chapter. The case of externality is slightly different: rather than accept that externality is real insofar as it is experienced by self-awareness, we will see that Jñānaśrīmitra redefines externality as something that cannot even so much as appear: rather than an appearance superimposed onto external objects, externality is merely an incitation to externally directed activity that seeks the satisfaction of some particular need. More on all this below.

⁶⁰ As noted above in fn.47, Ratnākaraśānti is dealing here with a Sākāravādin who thinks both consciousness and mental content are real things (the Sākāravādin Yogācārin, as Ratnākaraśānti puts it) and a Sākāravādin who thinks both are not superimposed (the Sākāravādin Mādhyamika). His point here is that the mere fact that something is not different from manifestation—the universal cow-ness, e.g.—does not make it real (in the Sākāravādin Yogācārin’s reckoning) or not superimposed (in the Sākāravādin Mādhyamika’s). The stakes of this difference between *vastutva* and *anāropitva* need not concern us here.

⁶¹ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSS 387.17–20; PPU 78—395.14–19): *yathā cālīkasya gotvasya gobuddhau prakāśas tādātmyaṃ ca, na ca tadavyatirekād vastutvam anāropitvatvaṃ vā tathā nīlādīprakāśe nīlādīnām alīkānām prakāśasiddhyaiva tādātmyasiddhiḥ. nānārūpaniṣṭhayor alīkatvānalīkatvayor ekatrāpi vastuny avirodhāt*. Note that Ratnākaraśānti then goes on to consider two objections: “And if mere identity were a valid reason for a target that is real or un-superimposed, then it is inconclusive due to cow-ness and so on. Or if you suggest an un-superimposed identity is the reason, that is unestablished [in the *pakṣa*].” (See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” [cf. SSS 387.20–22; PPU 78—395.19–396.1] *yadi ca vastutve nāropitvatve vā sādhye tādātmyamātram hetus tadā gotvādibhir anekāntah. athānāropitaṃ tādātmyaṃ hetus tad asiddham*.) Since these are dealt with in more detail when we turn to the Mādhyamika, I refrain from commenting on them here. Note too that Jñānaśrīmitra leaves out a passage from the PPU in his citation here, viz. PPU 78—395.4–14 (cf. Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout”).

acceptable in separate natures of a single thing. Ratnākaraśānti's claim for difference, then, is given this further justification: despite there being a single thing in the manifestation of blue, say, the blue and the manifestation remain distinct insofar as one is unreal while the other is real, and the identity between them is as unreal as the identity between the universal 'cow-ness' and its manifestation when a cow appears to us. If the Sākāravādin does not accept this point, he cannot explain error, the need for the Buddha's teaching, or the possibility of enlightenment.

But why acquiesce to the thought that "unreality and reality, insofar as they are located in separate natures, are not contradictory even in a single thing"? In the first place, Ratnākaraśānti would seem to think that his account of how universals manifest to cognition forces this conclusion: he takes it that he and his opponent agree that manifestation is real and universals are not, and so the Sākāravādin should accept that the manifestation of a universal in cognition is proof that a single thing contains reality and unreality. While "located in separate natures" (*nānārūpaniṣṭha*) is an obscure justification of this view, it seems to me that the intuition behind it is straightforward enough: the unreal nature of the universal (or of appearances like blue) and the real nature of manifestation are separate; nevertheless, when the former manifests, there is a superimposed identity between them "in a single thing" (*vastuni*), or with respect to the manifest, conceptually-determined cow or a blue appearance. The two separate things remain separate despite this superimposed identity, and so, though their properties would seem to be opposed, there is no contradiction.

The Sākāravādin, then, should accept that the epistemic arguments for idealism establish only a superimposed identity between manifestation and manifest content. This makes sense, Ratnākaraśānti contends, because it is precisely the same as the superimposed identity between

manifestation and determined objects in conceptual cognition, and the Sākāravādin has to accept this on pain of not being able to account for error. With all this, Ratnākaraśānti take himself to have defended the view that the identity between consciousness and content is an unreal superimposed one.

iv. The Establishment of Difference
c) What Can Non-Difference Prove?: Versus the Mādhyamika

But why should this mean that the neither-one-nor-many argument cannot target manifestation itself? Ratnākaraśānti seeks to answer this question when he turns to the Mādhyamika's position. Given that this view is rather close to his own insofar as both use the neither-one-nor-many argument to target both external objects and appearances, Ratnākaraśānti is precise in his critique. However, he introduces this section of his PPU by noting how close he and the Mādhyamika really are. In fact, he chastises the Mādhyamikas, writing:

This much is the difference [between us]: the Yogācāras say that *prakāśamātra*, which is the innate nature of phenomena, is substantially existent (*dravyato 'sti*); the Mādhyamikas say that that, too [viz. in addition to *ākāras*], is not substantially existent. The Mādhyamikas' quarrel with the Yogācāras is baseless—shame on their vulgar foolishness!

The quarrel our friends the Mādhyamikas have
with their brothers the Yogācāras,
by whom all that is undertaken while reality is not realized is so alike,
and who, when reality has been realized,
have one and the same gnosis, wherein darkness has vanished—

this quarrel of our brothers is really quite bad!⁶²

Mādhyamikas and Yogācāras agree on a great deal, in other words: both show (“while reality is not realized”) that external objects and appearances are unreal on the basis of the neither-one-nor-many argument, and both attain (“when reality has been realized”) a gnosis that is one and the same from the ultimate perspective. Why should such close friends quarrel?

Despite this conciliatory tone, however, Ratnākaraśānti immediately begins his critique of the Mādhyamika (whom he refers to here as the Nirākāravijñaptimātravādin Mādhyamika).⁶³ How is manifestation unreal on their view? Ratnākaraśānti presents their argument with this: “Because it is not different (**avyatireka*) from [something that is] unreal, like the appearance of blue and so on.”⁶⁴ In other words, the Mādhyamika explicitly makes the claim we’ve seen Ratnākaraśānti try to resist: the epistemic arguments for idealism show that content and consciousness are not different, and so the neither-one-nor-many argument will target both if it is permitted to target one. Once content is shown to be unreal, manifestation is defeated as well.

Non-difference is the reason (*hetu* or *sādhaka*) the Mādhyamika uses: the Mādhyamika’s inference is warranted if this feature is present, if manifestation and content are in fact non-different. Building upon his arguments against the Sākāravāda, Ratnākaraśānti seeks to show this property is not in fact present, and so the Mādhyamika’s inference is unwarranted. In other words, he seeks to show that the identity between manifestation and content is not the sort of

⁶² See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. PPU 78—397.19—398.7): *iyāms tu viśeṣaḥ, yat tat prakāśamātram dharmānām nijaṃ rūpaṃ tad dravyato ’stīti yogācārāḥ. tad api dravyato nāstīti mādhyamikāḥ. so ’yaṃ yogācāraiḥ saha mādhyamikānām amūlakaḥ kalaha iti dhik pārthagjanyam. āha ca—tattvādṛṣṭau sadṛśam akhilaṃ ceṣṭitaṃ yair amiśāṃ dṛṣṭe tattve galitatasamaṃ jñānam apy ekam eva / yogācāraiḥ saha bhavati dhig bandhubhir bāndhavānām tair apy eṣāṃ kim iti kalaho madhyamāvallabhānām //*

⁶³ See Ryo Nishiyama’s forthcoming “Mādhyamikas in the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*.”

⁶⁴ PPU 78—398: *rnam pa med par smra ba’i sems tsam pa ’ba’ zhiḡ lus par ’gyur te, de dag kyang ci’i phyir gsal ba brdzun pa yin par ’dod do. sngon po la sogs pa’i rnam pa brdzun pa dang tha mi dad pa’i phyir, sngon po la sogs pa bzhin no zhe na.*

identity that would allow the Mādhyamika to claim that both are equally unreal. In the precise (though often laconic) language of Buddhist logic, Ratnākaraśānti raises two faults with the Mādhyamika’s reason: it is *asiddha* and *anaikāntika*. A reason is unestablished (*asiddha*) if it is not in fact a feature of the locus or site in question (the *pakṣa*): one cannot establish the presence of fire on a mountain if smoke, the valid reason that would otherwise establish it there, is not present on the mountain. A reason is inconclusive (*anaikāntika*) if it strays into dissimilar cases (viz. if it is present in the *vipakṣa*): the presence of wood on the mountain is not a sufficient reason to prove the presence of fire because wood is often seen without fire.

With respect to the case at hand, Ratnākaraśānti has already shown that the epistemic arguments for idealism establish an unreal (*alīka*) or superimposed (*āropita*) identity between manifestation and unreal content, and that this is not a valid reason to conclude that manifestation and content suffer the same fate. Indeed, he concluded his criticism of the Sākāravādin by suggesting that reality and unreality are not contradictory when the identity at stake is a superimposed one. So what other sort of non-difference does the Mādhyamika mean to advance? If he means an *un-superimposed* non-difference (*anāropitam avyatiriktatvam*), this, Ratnākaraśānti claims, is unestablished: the Mādhyamika has not proven that there is such an un-superimposed non-difference between manifestation and content, and Ratnākaraśānti takes himself to have shown in his argument against the Sākāravādin that the epistemic arguments for idealism establish only a *superimposed* non-difference.⁶⁵

In response the Mādhyamika might claim that the *mere* non-difference (*avyatiriktamātra*, “non-difference *in general*”) between manifestation and content is a valid reason to think that

⁶⁵ PPU 78—398: *sgro ma btags pa’i tha dad pa med pa ni ma grub la*.

manifestation is as unreal as content is shown to be by the neither-one-nor-many argument. Here, Ratnākaraśānti claims that this mere non-difference is inconclusive, for it is present in dissimilar cases. Mere non-difference, or non-difference in general, is present in superimposed identity insofar as it is the genus, so to speak, of which superimposed identity is a species. Further, we've seen that superimposed identity is not a sufficient reason for thinking that the two terms of a relation (appearances and manifestation, for instance) must *both* be real or *both* be unreal. As Ratnākaraśānti explains it here (with reference back to his discussion of Sākāravāda): “a superimposed identity between something that is not real and something that is real is possible, as for instance [there is a superimposed identity] between [universals] like cow-ness or permanence and the cognitions of those [universals].”⁶⁶ When we are conscious of universals, consciousness takes on the form of the universal. As we saw above, however, Ratnākaraśānti claims that no self-respecting Dharmakīrtian would argue that the identity between the universal and consciousness in such a case means that the universal is as real as consciousness is.⁶⁷ Rather, the identity between consciousness and the universal when consciousness manifests with such unreal content is a superimposed identity, one that's really false. It is precisely the same with manifestation and appearances: the fact that the identity between the two is superimposed lets us maintain that one is real while the other is not. The mere non-difference between manifestation and unreal content, then, is not a sufficient reason for showing that manifestation is unreal, for mere non-difference is also present in superimposed identity, which latter allows for the ultimate

⁶⁶ PPU 78—398: *'on te tha mi dad pa tsam nyid yin na ni, mi mthun pa'i phyogs las ldog pa la the tshom za ba'i ma nges par 'gyur ro. yang dag pa ma yin pa dang yang dag par 'gyur ba dag la sgro 'dogs pa'i bdag nyid srid de, ba lang nyid dang bdag nyid la sogs pa dang de dag gi blo bzhin no.*

⁶⁷ Again, so Ratnākaraśānti claims. We will see that, contra Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra accepts that insofar as a universal directly manifests to consciousness, it is indeed as real as manifestation is.

reality of manifestation. Since the Mādhyamika is here trying to prove that manifestation is not ultimately real, the reason strays into a dissimilar case and is hence inconclusive.

Further, Ratnākaraśānti suggests that the Mādhyamika would be driven to absurdity by his commitment to this reason. As he continues: “Moreover, [mere non-difference] is inconclusive [as a reason] because it is present, too, with emptiness. Should you admit that that too is unreal, then the experience of emptiness would also be erroneous, just like the experience of blue and so on.”⁶⁸ That is, if the Mādhyamika accepts that the non-difference between content and manifestation is a valid reason to conclude that manifestation must be unreal, he would have to contend that even the manifestation of emptiness on the path to buddhahood—an unsuperimposed and veridical form of cognition if ever there was one—must in fact be unreal. Because such transcendent gnosis cannot be erroneous, Ratnākaraśānti considers this a fair *reductio ad absurdum* of his opponent’s position, and the non-difference between manifestation and unreal content is shown not to have been established.⁶⁹ Without this non-difference, then, the opponent has no basis to simply transfer over the success of the neither-one-nor-many argument from unreal content to consciousness. The argument, then, only targets mental content.

Ratnākaraśānti concludes from his discussion thus far that he is right to affirm the ultimate existence of manifestation and its difference from content. Citing as proof part of a

⁶⁸ PPU 78—398: *yang na stong ba nyid kyis* [P *kyis*; D *kyi*] *'khrul pas kyang ma nges par 'gyur ro. de nyid kyang brdzun no zhe na, sngon po la sogs pa mthong bzhin du, stong ba nyid mthong ba'i ye shes kyang 'khrul bar thal bar 'gyur ro.*

⁶⁹ We will see in a moment, however, that not all Mādhyamikas would consider this a *reductio*.

verse of Nāgārjuna's he is especially fond of, viz. *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* (YŚ) 34cd, he confirms that the founder of Madhyamaka intended the same form of idealism he has defended.⁷⁰ Then, he writes,

It is proven that the non-existence of what is being cognized is pervaded by superimposition [viz. the pervader (*vyāpaka*)]. Hence, by the non-apprehension of the pervader (**vyāpakānupalabdhi*) [viz. the non-apprehension of superimposition], there is the rejection of the non-existence of manifestation; therefore, there is proof of its existence. Moreover, [manifestation has] a nature that is not defeated and an apprehension (**upalabdhi*) that is not defeated. Both these are proven to exist for manifestation, and so its existence cannot be negated. Both these are defeated for blue and so on, however, because the defeater is established for what is superimposed, and so it is reasonable that they do not exist.⁷¹

Whereas the neither-one-nor-many argument befalls only superimposed mental content, manifestation is proven to exist by both perception and inference (viz. the *vyāpakānupalabdhi* mentioned here). While the Mādhyamika might claim that there is no reason to think the neither-one-nor-many argument *can* defeat content but *cannot* defeat manifestation, Ratnākaraśānti has shown on the contrary that there is no reason to think the argument can apply to manifestation in the first place: the supposed non-difference the Mādhyamika uses to prove this point is in fact

⁷⁰ PPU 78—399: *ye shes kyis ni de 'bral na / log par rnam brtags cis ma yin* // Note that this differs from the canonical translation (Christian Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna* [Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982], 110), *de shes pas ni 'bral 'gyur na / log pas rnam brtags ma yin nam* // (*tajjñāne vigamaṃ yāti nanu mithyā vikalpitam* //). Ratnākaraśānti cites and discusses this verse often at important moments in his work, and it had already been cited in the PPU (viz. Katsura's new 2.1.2). For a discussion of it in the MuĀv, see Isaacson, "Yogācāra and Vajrayāna according to Ratnākaraśānti," 1041–1043; for a discussion of the verse's role in the MAV, see Daniel McNamara's "When Madhyamaka Is Not the Middle Path: Ratnākaraśānti on Yogācāra, Nāgārjuna, and the *Madhyamapratipadā*," JIABS 40 (2017): 189–207. Jñānaśrīmitra picks up on this verse as well, citing it in his SSS, 405, and SSSū, 545. Note that it is also cited by Śāntarakṣita in commenting on an especially famous verse from his MA(Ś), v.92; see Ichigō, *Madhyamakālamkāra*, 302.

⁷¹ PPU 78—399: *de bas na grags pa 'i yul med pa la ni, sgro btags pas khyab pa grub pas na, khyab pa mi dmigs pas gsal ba 'i med pa bkag par 'gyur la, de bas na yod pa grub po. gzhan yang ngo bo dang dmigs pa la yang gnod pa med pas, gsal ba la de gnyi ga yod par grub pas 'di yod pa dgag pa ni mi nus la, sngon po la sogs pa ni gnyi ga la gnod pa yod pas sgro btags par grub pa 'i phyir, de dag med pa ni rigs pa yin no.*

too weak to prove anything. Ratnākaraśānti's position, then, would seem to be safe, and the difference between consciousness and content is established.⁷²

v. **The Establishment of the Ultimate Existence of Manifestation**
a) **Turning to the Candrakīrtian**

Ratnākaraśānti's work is still not finished. So far he has defended the view that the neither-one-nor-many argument defeats content but not consciousness and that there is hence a superimposed identity but ultimate difference between the two. However, another more straightforward line of attack will quickly come to mind, especially for readers of Madhyamaka. What if, regardless of whether consciousness and content are different, and regardless of the scope of the neither-one-nor-many argument, whatever you might call the nature or intrinsic being (*svabhāva*) of consciousness—manifestation, self-awareness, subjective character—simply doesn't exist? What if consciousness has no *svabhāva*? This is the tack taken by those Mādhyamikas whom we may call Candrakīrtians—and whom Ratnākaraśānti labels “the worst of the worst.”⁷³

⁷² I should note that the Mādhyamika has more to say in the PPU than we are considering here: after Ratnākaraśānti has shown that he cannot target manifestation with the neither-one-nor-many argument, the Mādhyamika tries to target manifestation, now qua causal efficacy, with other arguments against the ultimate existence of causal efficacy. This leads to an interesting discussion of Dharmakīrtian themes of our knowledge of causal relations and the efficacy of inference that would take us too far afield here. Again, Shinya Moriyama has begun to study this topic with characteristic rigor: see Moriyama “Ratnākaraśānti's criticism of the Madhyamaka refutation of causality.” Greg Seton has also explored causality in Ratnākaraśānti's system (*Defining Wisdom*, 88–126), particularly in relation to the three natures and the buddha-bodies in the *Sāratamā*. Future consideration of this would need to consider both the rest of the section of the PPU Katsura now labels 2.2.2.1 as well as the arguments of the MAV.

⁷³ I'll justify this designation, “Candrakīrtian,” over the course of this section. There has been much debate over just who the various Mādhyamikas criticized in the PPU are: see Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 150–171, for a summary of these discussions and another stab at identifications. Katsura's most recent synopsis simply labels those I'm calling Mādhyamikas, critiqued in 2.2.2.1, the Nirākāravijñaptimātravādin Mādhyamikas, while those critiqued in 2.2.2.2 “a certain Mādhyamika (Bahirarthavādin).” Ryo Nishiyama, in a paper at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies entitled “Mādhyamikas in the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*,” considers the Nirākāravijñaptimātravādin Mādhyamika to be Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, while the Bahirarthavādin Mādhyamika is Candrakīrti. I'll say something below about why I prefer “Candrakīrtian” to “Candrakīrti,” though otherwise I think this characterization is in all likelihood quite right.

These are Mādhyamikas of a very different sort from those we have been considering. First, they are uninterested in the neither-one-nor-many argument, and so Ratnākaraśānti's consideration of the ultimate difference between manifestation and mental content no longer serves as a defense of his view; second, they deny the reality of self-awareness *tout court*, seeing it as in principle flawed; finally, they explicitly deny that buddhahood is a conscious state—a crime, in Ratnākaraśānti's estimation, that there is no coming back from (and one that, we should note, he does *not* accuse the other Mādhyamikas of committing).⁷⁴ Ratnākaraśānti takes his time refuting the Candrakīrtian in his PPU, MAU, and MAV, not because, as with the Mādhyamika, the Candrakīrtian's view is close to his own, but rather because it presents a particularly dangerous misunderstanding of consciousness and the Buddhist path.

v. The Establishment of the Ultimate Existence of Manifestation
b) Defending the Ultimate Existence of Self-Awareness: Versus the Candrakīrtian (1)

The Mādhyamikas we've considered so far do not doubt the possibility of self-awareness. They only doubt that it exists *ultimately*, for consciousness cannot ultimately withstand analysis since it is defeasible by the neither-one-nor-many argument, and so self-awareness qua the nature of or defining fact about consciousness cannot exist ultimately either. The Candrakīrtian, however, thinks that the very notion of self-awareness is absurd, whatever level of reality we're dealing with. As Ratnākaraśānti presents this argument in the PPU, the Candrakīrtian says:

⁷⁴ This would seem to imply that the Mādhyamika, who targets manifestation with the neither-one-nor-many argument and who shares so much with Ratnākaraśānti when it comes to the realization attained in the four *yogabhūmis*, does not conclude from the ultimate non-existence of mind that buddhahood is not a conscious state. Whether this is in fact the case and, if so, how exactly this works for the Mādhyamika would require further study of this view—and, indeed, more precise identification of just whom Ratnākaraśānti has in mind with these criticisms.

Just as a sword does not cut itself and a finger does not touch itself, so too the mind does not see (**paśyati*) itself, for acting upon oneself is contradictory. Hence, there is no self-awareness. As it is said in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (10.568):

As a sword does not cut its own blade
or a finger does not touch its own tip—
so too the mind, when seeing itself (*tathā cittam svadarśane*).⁷⁵

Compare in this regard Candrakīrti's comment on the *Madhyamakāvātāra* (MAv) in his *Bhāṣya* (MAvBh), where he cites this verse of the LAS to the same end. There, we see the reasoning fleshed out more fully.⁷⁶ Acting upon oneself is contradictory, he says, “since there must be an agent of that action of knowledge, the account of that action [viz. of self-awareness] would make no sense, since it would follow absurdly that the agent, action, and object would be identical. [...] For this reason,” he concludes before citing the LAS as scriptural proof, “we can see that there is no self-awareness, and that we do not become aware of a cognitive state through that state itself.”⁷⁷ Candrakīrti, then, assumes self-awareness to be a *transitive action*, and according to Sanskrit grammatical analysis (or so it is here claimed), such action should consist of a

⁷⁵ PPU 78—406: *ci ste yang ral gri'i sos rang mi gcod pa dang, ji ltar sor mo'i rtse mos rang la mi reg pa de bzhin du rang rang byed par 'gal ba'i phyir, sems kyis rang mthong ba med pas rang rig pa med de, de skad du 'phags pa lang kar gshegs pa las, ji ltar ral gri rang so dang / ji ltar sor mo'i rtse mos rang // gcod pa min zhing reg pa min / de bzhin sems kyis rang mi mthong //* Note that, in order to understand Ratnākaraśānti's hermeneutic intervention here, we should read not with the Tibetan translation but with the underlying Sanskrit of LAS 10.568d: *svadhāraṃ hi yathā khadgaṃ svāgraṃ vai aṅgulir yathā / na cchindate na sprśate tathā cittam svadarśane //* Cf. Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 85–86. The Candrakīrtian does indeed interpret the verse to mean something like what is given in the Tibetan translation: “So too the mind, with respect to seeing itself, *cannot in fact see itself*, just as the sword doesn't cut its own blade and the finger doesn't touch its own tip.” Ratnākaraśānti will change the meaning completely with his insertion, as we'll see in a moment.

⁷⁶ The reasoning would have been familiar to Ratnākaraśānti's readers. See Arnold's forthcoming “Should Buddhists Deny that we are Conscious?,” 5–6, for more on this, with reference to Kumāri's use of the same line of argument.

⁷⁷ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, 143. Compare C. W. Huntington and Geshe Namgyal Wangchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 245 fn.105. See MAvBh ad 6.76 (La Vallée Poussin ed., 172.7–173.3); the whole passage, with 6.76, reads: *de'i phyir rang rig yod pa ma yin na / khyod kyi gzhan dbang gang gis 'dzin par 'gyur / byed po las dang bya ba gcig min pas / de nyid kyis de 'dzin par rigs ma yin / bdag rig par byed do. zhes rig par bya bzin pa'i bdag nyid las kyi dngos por 'gyur la, ri par bya ba de nyid kyang byed pa po yin zhing, de'i bya ba yang tha mi dad pa nyid yin pas byed pa po dang las dang bya ba gcig tu thal bar 'gyur na, 'di dag gcig pa nyid du ni ma mthong ngo. 'di ltar gcod pa po dang zhing dang gcod pa'i bya ba gcig pa ni ma yin no. 'di las kyang rang rig pa yod pa ma yin pas de nyid kyis de 'dzin pa ma yin no. 'phags pa langkar gshegs pa las gyang, ji ltar ral gris rang gi so / gcod par mi byed sor mo ni / [173] rang la reg par mi byed ltar / rang rig sems kyang de bzhin no / zhes gsungs so.*

separate agent and patient.⁷⁸ In self-awareness, it is averred, agent and patient are the same, and so self-awareness makes as little sense as a sword cutting itself or a fingertip touching itself.

Referring to “reflexivity” or “reflexive awareness” rather than our “self-awareness,” Jay Garfield—whom I think we can fairly call a modern-day Candrakīrtian—draws out the consequences of this line of argument:

If it is in virtue of reflexivity that a state is conscious, the state that is the object of the reflexive awareness must already be conscious, since it is identical with the awareness that makes it conscious. But if that is so, reflexive awareness is awareness of an *already conscious* state, and so cannot be that which makes it conscious. The very idea of reflexivity thus presupposes the very property it is meant to explain. An unconscious state directed upon itself would hardly make itself conscious.⁷⁹

A conscious state must *act* upon itself, must be conscious of itself, if it is to be a conscious state, the proponent of self-awareness is here presumed to assert. But to this, the Candrakīrtian rightly objects that insofar as a conscious state is hence acting upon a state that is *already conscious*, consciousness is in fact *presupposed*, not established. That is, the proponent of self-awareness would seem to accept that a conscious state is already a conscious state—insofar as it is that which self-awareness is *of*—before self-awareness has even come into the picture. If he does not accept this, the Candrakīrtian continues, he is in trouble, for it makes no sense to say that an unconscious state aware of an unconscious state somehow makes the latter conscious.

⁷⁸ Proponents of self-awareness who wanted to retain something of the action-model of self-awareness could retort, for instance, that a lamp illuminates objects but also illuminates itself in the process. The transitive action of illuminating (*prakāśa*), then, would not be susceptible to Candrakīrti’s analysis, and insofar as this is akin to the action of self-awareness, it is not a counterintuitive notion after all.

⁷⁹ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, 143–144. This is a variation of what Robert Pippin calls “the iteration problem”: “If consciousness and self-consciousness are treated as separate aspects of any consciousness, then the arguments that showed why consciousness of X must be accompanied by consciousness of consciousness of X would all apply to the latter too, since self-consciousness [...] would also be an instance of consciousness and so subject to its conditions,” *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 46–47. See Arnold “Should Buddhists Deny that we are Conscious?,” 13.

One response to this line of argument is clear enough: *self-awareness is not an action and it does not take an object*.⁸⁰ That is, the Candrakīrtian has misunderstood consciousness. The proponent of self-awareness does not mean to assert that awareness *acts* on itself, or that every conscious state in fact consists of two states, viz. consciousness of an object and a higher-order perception of or thought about that object-consciousness. Self-awareness is not the same sort of thing as ordinary object-directed consciousness. In addition to being Ratnākaraśānti’s view, this point is made even by a Mādhyamika like Śāntarakṣita, who accepts the existence of self-awareness conventionally (at least as Ratnākaraśānti understands this position).⁸¹ Śāntarakṣita stipulates that self-awareness should be understood as the *criterion* of consciousness:

“Consciousness is distinct from inanimate things; it is just this self-awareness which is consciousness’s *not* being an inanimate thing.”⁸² As Dan Arnold unpacks the point: “Śāntarakṣita explicitly emphasizes [...] that as thus denoting simply a *fact about* what it is for anything to count as a cognition, self-awareness is not vulnerable to critiques that exploit grammatical analyses of the structure of action.”⁸³ Self-awareness is just what it means for there to be consciousness: it refers to the subjective character or first-person nature of a conscious state, not

⁸⁰ We saw one version of this response above in Chapter 2, section iii, where we considered Sartre’s response to the view that any conscious state must be an object-directed act: pre-reflective self-awareness is precisely a conscious state that is *not* such an act. In addition to the sources considered above, one might compare Robert Pippin’s treatment of Hegel in *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). There, Pippin is at pains to make sense of self-consciousness in Hegel given that “we misunderstand all dimensions of self-consciousness, from apperception in consciousness itself, to simple, explicit reflection about myself, to practical self-knowledge of my own so-called identity, by considering any form of it as in any way observational or inferential or immediate or any sort of two-place intentional relation. However we come to know anything about ourselves (or whatever self-relation is implicit in attending to the world), it is not by observing an object, nor by conceptualizing an inner intuition, nor by an immediate self-certainty or direct presence of the self to itself,” 15.

⁸¹ As Ratnākaraśānti puts it, “the Yogācāras say that *prakāśamātra*, which is the innate nature of phenomena, is substantially existent (*dravyato ’sti*); the Mādhyamikas say that that, too [viz. in addition to *ākāras*], is not substantially existent.” See above, Chapter 3, section iv, c).

⁸² Arnold, “Should Buddhists Deny that we are Conscious?,” 14; cf. Arnold, “Is *svasaṃvitti* transcendental?”

⁸³ Arnold, “Should Buddhists Deny that we are Conscious?,” 14.

to a special reflective act of consciousness or anything of the sort. As such a criterion, it must be only conventionally real for the Mādhyamika, since conventional reality is “acceptable so long as there is no analysis” (*avicāraramaṇīya*), as Śāntarakṣita defines it in part, and consciousness, he holds, is susceptible to the neither-one-nor-many argument. But nevertheless, the idea of self-awareness makes at least provisional sense.

Ratnākaraśānti responds to the Candrakīrtian’s objection by pointing out what he takes the epistemic arguments for idealism to have definitively shown. In order to show up to experience at all, an object of experience must consist of the manifestation (*prakāśa*) or shining-forth (*sphuṭa*) that is at the essence of anything’s being evident (*aparokṣatva*) to consciousness. To that extent, the object consists of the same thing consciousness consists of, viz. manifestation, and so any cognitive event on this analysis really consists of the manifestation of manifestation. And, akin to Śāntarakṣita’s point, this sort of self-awareness is not the same as ordinary object-directed consciousness. It is just manifestation. Ratnākaraśānti interprets the verse from the LAS cited by Candrakīrti to make precisely this point. He writes,

We say here that this verse [viz. LAS 10.568] denies the object-subject relation (**grāhyagrāhakabhāva*) in the mind’s self-awareness, for that relationship depends on difference, just like cutting and touching depend on difference. However, self-awareness itself is not negated, for self-awareness has the nature of manifestation, since self-awareness makes things manifest.⁸⁴ So, because self-awareness would be contradictory if there were difference [since in that case it would indeed parallel the cutting and touching examples], it is here restricted to non-difference [by LAS 10.568]; it is not negated.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ That is, just as *prakāśa* has as its nature the shining-forth (*sphuṭam*) intrinsic to being evident, self-awareness, too, is the condition of the possibility of content manifesting to cognition, so it, too, can be said to have that nature.

⁸⁵ PPU 78—406: *'dir brjod par bya ste, tshigs su bcad pa 'di'i don ni sems rang rig pa'i gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i dngos po dgag pa yin te, de ni bcad pa* [em. Kapstein] *dang reg pa bzhin du tha dad pa las gyur pa'i phyir ro. gsal ba'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir myong ba'i ngo bo dgag pa ni ma yin te, gang gi phyir gsal ba ni rang rig pa yin la, de yang tha dad pa 'gal te, tha mi dad pas nges pa'i phyir dgag par 'os pa ma yin no.* See Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 86; Karl Brunnhölzl, *Prajñāpāramitā, Indian “gzhan stong pas”, And the Beginning of Tibetan gzhan stong* (Vienna: ATBS, 2011), 145.

The verse, that is, tells us that self-awareness is devoid of the differentiation that is at the root of the distinction between subject and object. It is not like other object-directed consciousness. It is simply the undifferentiated nature of consciousness. Ratnākaraśānti completes his commentarial task by saying, “For just this reason, when the verse says, ‘So too the mind, when seeing itself, ...’ we must supply ‘does not grasp itself.’”⁸⁶ In other words, LAS 10.568 should conclude not, “So too the mind, when seeing itself,” but rather, “So too the mind, when seeing itself, *does not grasp itself*.” On Ratnākaraśānti’s interpretation, the Buddha is not saying here that self-awareness makes no sense just as a sword cutting itself makes no sense. Rather, he is saying that the mind’s self-awareness does not work the way cutting or touching work: those actions depend upon the sort of subject-object/agent-patient difference that allows for Candrakīrti’s interpretation, while self-awareness does not work that way. The mind does not grasp itself when it sees itself; rather, when the mind experiences itself in self-awareness, there is sheer manifestation.⁸⁷

v. The Establishment of the Ultimate Existence of Manifestation
c) Defending the Ultimate Existence of Buddhahood: Versus the Candrakīrtian (2)

⁸⁶ PPU 78–406: *de bas na, de bzhin sems kyi rang mi mthong / zhes bya ba der ngar ’dzin pa ma yin no zhes bya ba lhag ma yin no*. See Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 86; Brunnhölzl, *Prajñāpāramitā*, 145.

⁸⁷ One might fruitfully compare in this regard Jñānaśrīmitra’s response to the Candrakīrtian—or to Prajñākaramati (c. 950–1030) in particular—in the fifth chapter of his SSS. There, finally in basic agreement with Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra seeks to show that self-awareness is not an action susceptible to the Candrakīrtian’s critique, but is rather simply the ultimately existent nature of consciousness. Jñānaśrīmitra appeals to Śāntaraksita’s definition of self-awareness in this regard (see JNĀ 471.7–8, where he cites *Tattvasaṃgraha* 1999cd and 2000ab). Compare Ikkō Arai, *Jñānaśrīmitra kenkyū* (“Study of Jñānaśrīmitra”) (Tokyo: Sankibō, 2016), where a substantial portion of this important chapter is reedited and Prajñākaramati is shown to be the principal opponent. We will make some further yet brief comments about this chapter of the SSS in Chapter 4, section i.

All this, however, only scratches the surface of Ratnākaraśānti’s critique of the Candrakīrtian.

While it is true that the Candrakīrtian misunderstands self-awareness on Ratnākaraśānti’s account, the real problem is that the Candrakīrtian misunderstands buddhahood itself. In full, this is how Ratnākaraśānti first introduces the view of the Candrakīrtian in his PPU. He says that “some Mādhyamikas” say the following:

What is known in the world is convention, and since it is known in the world that there are external objects, they exist according to convention, just like mind and mental factors. But mind and mental factors are erroneous, for ultimately there is a contradiction with regard to self-awareness, just as [there is a contradiction] in the case of a sword cutting itself. And because the awareness of other things, too, is a mere distortion, it is the same for both [that is, both are erroneous]. Therefore, the cessation of error that is the buddhas’ realization of the ultimate is nothing but the cessation of mind and mental factors. For when they [viz. mind and mental factors] are totally non-existent, then the ultimate, which is the total non-existence of phenomena, is known by them [viz. by the buddhas] through their attaining conformity with that state [viz., also being totally non-existent]. And non-abiding nirvāṇa arises due to the realization of the ultimate, after having posited through benediction the form body due to compassion for the sake of the world.⁸⁸

On the basis of this clear pronouncement, we can further justify the use of the appellation

“Candrakīrtian” for this view. We have seen that the Mādhyamika Ratnākaraśānti refers to here uses an argument very much like Candrakīrti’s against self-awareness, citing the same verse of the LAS used by Candrakīrti as scriptural authority. In this passage, we see that argument again:

“there is a contradiction with regard to self-awareness, just as [there is a contradiction] in the case of a sword cutting itself.” This critique of self-awareness is one of the hallmarks of the Candrakīrtian, as it is of Candrakīrti’s own work.

⁸⁸ PPU 78–404: *gang yang dbu ma pa kha cig na re, 'jig rten la grags pa ni kun rdzob yin te, phyi rol gyi don yang 'jig rten la grags pas, sems dang sems las byung ba bzhin du, de yang kun rdzob tu yod pa yin la, don dam par ni ral gri 'i sos rang mi gcod pa bzhin du sems dang sems las byung ba rnam rang rig par 'gal la, gzhan rig pa yang bslad pa tsam du 'u cag gnyi ga 'dod do. de bas na 'khrul pa zad bas don dam pa rtogs pa 'i phyir, sangs rgyas rnam kyi sems dang sems las byung ba zad pa nyid de, gang gi tshe de rnam mi skye ba de 'i tshe, chos thams cad skye ba med pa 'i don dam pa rjes su byed pa thob pas myong bar bzhag go. mi gnas pa 'i mya ngan las 'das pa ni sems can gyi don rna tshogs bya ba 'i phyir gzugs kyi sku byin gyis brlabs te bzhags nas don dam par mngon du byed do zer ba.* Compare MAU 78–616–617, which would seem to borrow this whole passage directly from the PPU.

But Ratnākaraśānti seems to have considered the picture of buddhahood on offer here to be Candrakīrti's as well, and we have good reason to believe that Ratnākaraśānti considered it an important part of his project to refute those who followed such a view. In his colophon to the Tibetan translation of the MAU,⁸⁹ Ratnākaraśānti's student Śāntibhadra (c. 990–1050) suggests that his teacher thought that Candrakīrti's Mādhyamika works were a nihilistic perversion of Nāgārjuna's (and so Aśaṅga's and Maitreya's) intention, and that Candrakīrti himself recognized the error of his ways later in life when he began commenting on tantra.⁹⁰ Śāntibhadra goes on to bemoan certain people who came along later, perhaps in his and Ratnākaraśānti's day, who took Candrakīrti's nihilistic works seriously—despite the author himself having abandoned them. It is these authors, he suggests, whom Ratnākaraśānti is targeting when he refutes those I'm calling the Candarkīrtians.⁹¹

Despite the fact that there is no mention of Candrakīrti's name in Ratnākaraśānti's works themselves, there is good reason to think that the “some Mādhyamikas” who claim that enlightenment is the cessation of mind and mental factors are followers of Candrakīrti's middle way. John Dunne and Anne MacDonald have argued in recent years that Candrakīrti may be interpreted to have advocated a position on buddhahood in his works on Madhyamaka that is

⁸⁹ Dan McNamara first showed me, in conversation and in a conference paper, that this colophon is the composition of Ratnākaraśānti's student Śāntibhadra (perhaps with the translator dGe slong Śākya 'od [also the sole translator of MAV]), and I thank him for his persuasive arguments to this effect. More recently, Greg Seton (from whom I've borrowed the dates for Śāntibhadra and the Paṇḍita Amogha) has shown the same; see *Defining Wisdom*, 21–33. I take Ratnākaraśānti's student, however, to be accurately reflecting his teacher's opinions when he identifies followers of Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka for critique, as will become clear.

⁹⁰ Note that the tantric Candrakīrti, then, whom we consider to have been a different person living centuries after the Mādhyamika author, is here thought *not* to be the Mādhyamika per se, but rather the mature phase of one and the same author's life. Candrakīrti's Mādhyamika works and his tantric works, then, are here held *not* to have the same intention.

⁹¹ See MAU 78—622–623; Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 21–33. Note that the revisor Paṇḍita Amogha (eleventh/twelfth century?), whom Seton suggests may also have been a student of Ratnākaraśānti (31), composes a second colophon verse that seems to be, in the tradition of Ratnākaraśānti's *Vīdagdhavismāpana*, a riddle naming Candrakīrti as the target of Ratnākaraśānti's critiques.

akin to the annihilationist position Ratnākaraśānti presents here as that of his opponent.⁹²

Appropriating the epistemologists' theory of perception for his own ends, Candrakīrti argues that, upon realizing the ultimate nature of phenomena—viz. non-arising—the mind of Buddha takes on the form of that content—which is to say it too no longer arises. “Since reality is unarisen and thought too is free of arising,” Candrakīrti writes,

it is as if one's mind takes on the form of reality and in so doing realizes reality. [According to the standard theory of ordinary perception,] the mind takes on the form of its object; so too, relying on that convention (*tha snyad nye bar rten nas*), it's reasonable for perfected awareness [to take on the form of its object, viz. non-arising, and so no longer to arise].⁹³

Further, as Kevin Vose and Georges Dreyfus and Drongbu Tsering have shown, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there were certainly those who thought of themselves as inheritors of Candrakīrti's tradition who defended a strictly annihilationist view.⁹⁴ Indeed, it would seem that

⁹² See Dunne “Thoughtless Buddha, Passionate Buddha.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 3 (1996): 525–556, and Anne MacDonald, “Knowing Nothing: Candrakīrti and Yogic Perception,” in *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco, 133–168. Note that Dan Arnold (*Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*, 184, 204) argues against Dunne's characterization of Candrakīrti's view of buddhahood, though it seems to me that Dunne's and MacDonald's interpretation of Candrakīrti in this regard is supported at least by Ratnākaraśānti.

⁹³ MAvBh 357.20–358.3: *gang tshe skye med de nyid yin zhing blo yang skye ba dang 'bral ba / de tshe de rnam rten las de yis de nyid rtogs pa lta bu ste / ji ltar sems ni gang gi rnam pa can du 'gyur ba de yis yul / de yongs shes pa de bzhin tha snyad nye bar rten nas rig pa yin*. See MacDonald's discussion (“Knowing Nothing,” 155ff.) of this and related passages from Candrakīrti's commentaries on the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* and the *Śūnyatāsaptati*. Note, however, that MacDonald seems to hedge this position somewhat, writing: “The cessation of all consciousness in the face of no objects is pivotal for the realization of emptiness, the true nature of things; it does not, however, fully define it. The coming to rest of consciousness merely serves as the necessary condition for the experience of the ultimate. As stated, it is a completely different type of awareness, viz., gnosis (*jñāna*), that knows it. Unlike ordinary consciousness, gnosis does not take a thing, or as Candrakīrti sometimes terms it, a mark (*nimitta*), as its object” (162). Were the cessation of mind and mental factors just the cessation of contentful consciousness, say, leaving room for some sort of non-dual “experience” or “gnosis (*jñāna*),” Ratnākaraśānti would have no problem at all with the view. But because Ratnākaraśānti does not attempt any exegesis of Candrakīrti's works, constructing instead his own *pūrvapakṣa*, we cannot know for sure whether he would have accepted this reading. I refer to his opponent as the Candrakīrtian, then, in part to leave open the possibility that Ratnākaraśānti might have found this saving grace in Candrakīrti's own works; in any case, I suspect it is Ratnākaraśānti's *contemporaries* resurrecting Candrakīrti's works for annihilationist ends that are his real target.

⁹⁴ See Vose, *Resurrecting Candrakīrti: Disputes in the Tibetan Creation of Prāsaṅgika* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009) on Jayānanda and Dreyfus and Tsering, “Pa tshab and the origin of Prāsaṅgika,” *JIABS* (2009 [2010]) 32: 387–418, on Pa tshab Nyi ma grags and Mahāsumati. I believe Prajñākaramati's interpretation of the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is in accord with these views—we will come to him in a moment.

an especially hard-line position on enlightenment as the cessation of mind was characteristic of many of the resurrectors of Candrakīrti in this period. It was part of Candrakīrti’s appeal. And so it is fair to suggest that the resurrectors of Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamaka* (if not also Candrakīrti himself) were Ratnākaraśānti’s target in these and similar passages.

It is possible that in particular Prajñākaramati (c. 950–1030), a colleague of Ratnākaraśānti’s at Vikramaśīla, is one of the principal Candrakīrtians targeted here.⁹⁵ Prajñākaramati cites Candrakīrti’s MAv favorably; indeed, as Vose has shown, Prajñākaramati is “the earliest Indian author that we know of to express overt enthusiasm for Candrakīrti’s [Mādhyamika] writings.”⁹⁶ He picks up on Candrakīrti’s characterization of the ultimate as outside the sphere of all consciousness, as well as his refutation of self-awareness. His interpretation of certain verses of Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA), especially 9.2 and 9.36–38, may be seen to support an annihilationist view of enlightenment, and his attack on self-

⁹⁵ Because they are nowhere named in Ratnākaraśānti’s works or these colophons, who exactly these Candrakīrtians were remains a matter of speculation. As Kevin Vose has demonstrated, it was very near or during Ratnākaraśānti’s lifetime that the *Mādhyamika* works of Candrakīrti began to be cited in India after centuries of apparent neglect (for the late Indian history of Candrakīrti’s resurrection, see Chapter 1 of Vose’s *Resurrecting Candrakīrti*). In addition to Prajñākaramati, Atiśa, one-time (and perhaps wayward) student of Ratnākaraśānti, makes occasional reference to Candrakīrti. Ratnākaraśānti’s probable teacher, Dharmakīrtiśrī of Suvarṇadvīpa, cites Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamakāvatāra* favorably (and as a teaching more profound than Aśaṅga’s!) in his commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, the *Durbhodāloka*, as Seton notes. (See Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 172–173, for the English, Tibetan, and Sanskrit of this passage.) A deeper study of this work would be highly desirable. But if I may offer a hypothesis: a close study of the *Durbhodāloka* in addition to Dharmakīrtiśrī’s two *piṇḍārtha*-texts on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* may reveal a Candrakīrtian affinity with Prajñākaramati’s work on Śāntideva, suggesting that it was in particular *interpreters of Śāntideva* in this period (which of course included Atiśa, who also famously studied with Dharmakīrtiśrī) who tended toward the annihilationism of Candrakīrti—which is arguably a fair interpretation of Śāntideva’s buddhology as expressed in that work. For more, including a list of BCA verses cited in Dharmakīrtiśrī’s two works, see Eimer, “Suvarṇadvīpa’s Commentaries on the Bodhicaryāvatāra,” in *Studien Zum Jainismus Und Buddhismus: Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf*, ed. Klaus Bruhn and Albrecht Wezler (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1981). Finally, note that if this characterization of Dharmakīrtiśrī were shown to be correct, Ratnākaraśānti’s most immediate opponent here in the PPU as well as in his MAU may be (in addition to his colleague, Prajñākaramati) *his own teacher*, who commits two cardinal sins: thinking Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamaka* is the proper interpretation of Nāgārjuna, and thinking that this interpretation of Nāgārjuna is superior to the view of Maitreya and Aśaṅga. See Seton, *Defining Wisdom*, 173.

⁹⁶ See his *Resurrecting Candrakīrti*, 21–23. Note that references to Candrakīrti come up frequently in the discussion of Śāntideva’s seeming denial of the efficacy of thought with respect to the ultimate in 9.2. Cf. BCAP 352–367, where Candrakīrti’s MAv is cited at 353 (twice), 361, and 365. In his edition of the BCAP, La Vallée Poussin also notes places in this important passage where Prajñākaramati follows Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā* in his interpretation of verses from Nāgārjuna’s MMK.

awareness in his commentary on BCA 17–25 (especially ad 20cd) puts him squarely at odds with Ratnākaraśānti’s view. That Prajñākaramati would have been a worthy opponent is evidenced by the fact that Jñānaśrīmitra, though opposed to Ratnākaraśānti in so many respects, joins his colleague in critiquing Prajñākaramati’s view of self-awareness and his interpretation of Śāntideva. SSS 5 is devoted to a defense of the existence of self-awareness in light of Mādhyamika (or in our categorizations, especially Candrakīrtian) critique; here, Prajñākaramati is cited and criticized a number of times, as Jñānaśrīmitra seeks to save Śāntideva from the faulty annihilationism of his famous commentator.

Whoever his precise opponent may have been, Ratnākaraśānti begins his response to the Candrakīrtian in clear terms: “Those Mādhyamikas who say such things are the worst of the worst.”⁹⁷ They are so bad not because of their misunderstanding of how self-awareness works, but because of the buddhological consequence of that misunderstanding: their annihilationist view of enlightenment. Ratnākaraśānti’s criticism is characteristically clear and decisive, so we may cite it with little annotation. He continues:

Those Mādhyamikas are the worst of the worst because such an absence of mind and mental factors due to their being natureless is not enlightenment. How then could that be the realization of the ultimate? “That is indeed the realization,” you might respond. But that realization is nothing but the mind, and that does not exist without mental factors, so how [can that realization of the ultimate] be the absence of mind and mental factors?⁹⁸ Moreover, if [the realization of the ultimate] is the awareness of an ultimate that is distinct, [405] there is the unwanted consequence that there is error [in that realization, for it would contain difference]. And if it were not separate, there would be the unwanted consequence [for you, the Candrakīrtian] that it would be self-awareness. Should you say, “Not even the word ‘blue’ exists,” then [you must think that] there is no ultimate nor any awareness of the ultimate. You may continue: “Further, the ultimate is the total non-arising of all phenomena—that is the thing to be known (*prameya*, *gzhal bya*); and the

⁹⁷ PPU 78—404: *zer ba de dag ni sdig pa can las kyang sdig pa can du gyur pa yin te*.

⁹⁸ That is, a *rtogs pa* (*bodha*) is by definition a mental thing, which is to say it is *sems* (*citta*), and so it doesn’t make sense in the total absence of *sems* (*citta*).

means of knowing (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*) is the non-arising precisely of various things associated with mind and mental factors, cultivated over a long period conventionally.” How can that [sort of realization] resemble [non-arising]? “It is the same mere non-arising.”⁹⁹ But then the non-arising of mind and mental factors that are [on your view simply] destroyed and unborn is always the case for everyone; hence, all beings would *always* realize the ultimate. But it is not so. Therefore, the cessation of mind and mental factors is not the realization of the ultimate.¹⁰⁰

Buddhahood must be a conscious mental state because it takes conscious mental effort at meditative cultivation to achieve, and such conscious work leads to a conscious goal. Perhaps, the Candrakīrtian may retort, since the ultimate thing to be known is simply the non-arising of all phenomena, the means to know that is just the non-arising of awareness. To realize non-arising—to really bring it into being, in other words—one’s awareness must not arise.¹⁰¹ But in that case, since the Candrakīrtian thinks awareness *never* ultimately arises, why aren’t we all always already enlightened? After all, on his view my awareness at this moment is ultimately non-arisen. The Candrakīrtian may respond that I have not yet realized this fact, but this doesn’t really help: enlightenment cannot even be a *realization* on his account, for no realization ultimately exists. Enlightenment for the Candrakīrtian is just the fact of the non-arising of the mind, and a realization cannot exist without mind. Further, this must be how he understands it, for he surely

⁹⁹ Note the resonance here with the verse from the MAv referred to a moment ago, MAvBh 357.20–358.3.

¹⁰⁰ PPU 78—404—405: *de dag ni sdig pa can las kyang sdig pa can du gyur pa yin te, gang gi phyir 'di ltar sems dang sems las byung ba 'di dag med pa'i phyir byang chub nyid kyang med na, don dam rtogs pa'i byang chub lta ga la yod, ci ste yang 'di ni rtogs pa kho na yin no zhe na, de nyid sems yin mod. de yang sems dang sems las byung ba med na, mi srid pas sems dang sems las byung ba med pa ma yin no. gzhan yang don dam pa de bzhin du gyur pa myong na ni 'khrul par [405] 'gyur la, tha mi dad na ni rang gi rig par 'gyur ro. ci ste yang sngon po zhe bya ba'i ming tsam yang med do zhe na, de 'i tshé don dam pa dang don dam pa rtogs [D: rtog] med pas grags pa las 'das par 'gyur ro. gzhan yang don dam pa ni chos thams cad ni rtag tu shin tu skye ba med pa ste, gzhal bya yin la sems dang sems las byung ba ni, kha cig tsam zhig yun ring por kun du skyes nas phyis skye ba med pa ste, tshad ma [em.: -ma] yin na ji ltar de dag gi rjes su byed, skye ba med tsam du mtshungs so zhe na, sems dang sems las byung ba 'gags pa dang med skyes pa'i skye ba med pa yang thams cad la yod pas, rtag tu sems can thams cad kyi don dam pa'i bden pa rtogs par 'gyur ba zhig na, de ltar yang ma yin no. de bas na sems dang sems las byung ba 'gags pa ni don dam pa'i bden pa rtogs pa ma yin no.*

¹⁰¹ Again, note that Dunne, “Thoughtless Buddha, Passionate Buddha,” and MacDonald, “Knowing Nothing,” argue that this is precisely Candrakīrti’s own understanding of how the ultimate is realized, based on his conventional adoption of a Sautrāntika theory of perception. See especially MacDonald, “Knowing Nothing,” 149–158.

cannot accept that enlightenment is a form of awareness of an object over and above the subject (such dichotomizing is the reason we're all in saṃsāra, after all), and were enlightenment simply self-awareness, his commitment to the absurdity of this notion would be contradicted. The total cessation of mind and mental factors is the only way the Candrakīrtian can explain enlightened 'awareness' (now in scare-quotes), but this is nonsense; hence, Ratnākaraśānti concludes, his view is absurd.

The Candrakīrtian's problems do not stop here, however, and nor does Ratnākaraśānti's critique. In the passage above, the Candrakīrtian is made to say that "non-abiding (**apraṭiṣṭhita-*) nirvāṇa arises due to the realization of the ultimate, after having posited through benediction (**adhiṣṭhāya, byin gyis brlabs te bzhag nas*) the form body (**rūpakāya*) due to compassion for the sake of the world." A buddha's enlightenment is the total non-arising of mind and mental factors, and yet the form-bodies still manifest. How can the Candrakīrtian account for this? The explanation can be found in Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, where, as Dunne shows, Candrakīrti advocates a thoughtless, mechanical notion of buddhahood wherein the form-bodies manifest due to the inertia of previous practice.¹⁰² As a potter's wheel keeps spinning after the potter has gotten up to leave, so too the form-bodies manifest in the world after the Buddha's mind has ceased thanks to his previous cultivation of merit. Prajñākaramati takes Śāntideva to make the same point. In the ninth chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva writes (with Prajñākaramati's glosses in brackets):

Just as a wish-fulfilling gem or a wishing tree completely fulfills wishes, so to the reflection of the Buddha is seen because of the disciples [i.e., because of the ripening of their past virtuous action] and because of his resolution [i.e., because of resolutions the

¹⁰² See MAvBh 360.5–361.9, on MAv 12:6–7. Compare Dunne's "Thoughtless Buddha, Passionate Buddha," 549–550 for his translation.

Buddha made in the past, when he was still a bodhisattva]. Just as a snake charmer, having empowered a post [with magical healing powers], perishes and yet that post continues to cure snake bites even though he died long ago, so too the ‘post’ of the Buddha does everything that needs to be done for sentient beings because he is empowered by the appropriate activity of awakening—even though the bodhisattva [the Buddha once was] has passed into nirvana.¹⁰³

Prajñākaramati makes the connection to Candrakīrti’s potter’s wheel explicit in his comment to the first of these verses,¹⁰⁴ suggesting that he thinks we’re dealing with a mechanical Buddha here, one who is analogous to a post or a wheel, despite—or better, because of—the magnificent and incomprehensibly dedicated bodhisattva he once was.

However, Ratnākaraśānti argues that it is absurd for the Candrakīrtian to hold that such a buddha could manifest form-bodies. There is nothing but a buddha’s *mind* for those form-bodies to be, and the Candrakīrtian has denied that this exists. The Candrakīrtian insists that a buddha undertakes prolonged efforts out of compassion for the sake of the world. But if a buddha’s mind and mental factors cease, how do these form-bodies manifest? It makes no sense at all to say that the efforts of the mental continuum that once belonged to a buddha bear fruit in *my* continuum when I hear the teachings or were I to see the appearance of the form-bodies, just as it makes no sense to say your karma ripens for me. Mental continua just don’t work that way. And the Candrakīrtian cannot say that the form-bodies are not mental entities at all, but simply physical ones, because Ratnākaraśānti has already proven the truth of idealism—there is no extra-mental stuff for the form-bodies to be composed of. Indeed, it is here that Ratnākaraśānti offers the

¹⁰³ BCAP 418ff.: *cintāmaṇiḥ kalpatarur yathecchāparipūraṇaḥ / vineyapranidhānābhyām jinabimbaṃ tathekṣyate // 36 // yathā gāruḍikaḥ stambhaṃ sādhayitvā vinaśyati / sa tasmiś ciranaṣṭe ‘pi viṣādīn upaśāmayet // 37 // bodhicaryānurūpyeṇa jinastambho ‘pi sādhitāḥ / karoti sarvakāryāṇi bodhisattve ‘pi nirvr̥te // 38 //*

¹⁰⁴ BCAP 419.4–7: *prañidhānavaśāc ca, yatpūrvaṃ bodhisattvāvasthāyām anekaparakāraṃ bhagavatā sattvārthasampādanam prañihitam tasyākṣepavaśāt, kulālacakrabhramaṇākṣepanyāyenānābhogena pravartanāt, sarvasattvahitasukhasampādanam upapadyate.*

proof of idealism via the epistemic argument that we considered in chapter 2 and again in more detail above in chapter 3.¹⁰⁵ He concludes this proof by bringing it to bear on his critique of the Candrakīrtian:

Therefore it is proven that no external object that is apprehended, apart from cognition. Due to the absence of that, non-abiding nirvāṇa mentioned above—[which was said to be] due to the positing the form body through benediction—is unreasonable. So, again, perfect enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*) is not the absence of mind and mental factors.¹⁰⁶

There is nothing but mind and mental factors for the form-bodies to be. Further, an unenlightened being's mind and mental factors does not emanate the form-bodies since the unenlightened mind is not properly conditioned to do so. A buddha's mind must exist, then, because otherwise there would be nothing to emanate the form-bodies.

Note how well this fits with how Ratnākaraśānti understands the form-bodies as the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya*. The *dharmakāya* provides the mental material, so to speak, or the sheer manifestation out of which the form-bodies are formed. Indeed, the *dharmakāya* is the *dharmakāya* in part because it is the basis (*kāya*) for the form-bodies qua the buddha-qualities (*dharmas*). As ever, Ratnākaraśānti is extraordinarily consistent. He finally drives his point home by reiterating how buddhahood must really work:

Further, the non-destruction of the buddha-qualities, the nature of which is mind, is due to the propulsive power of the accumulation of the provisions [of merit and gnosis]; therefore again, the destruction of mind and mental factors is not reasonable. And further, the basis, defined as a continuum of mind and mental factors, is not destroyed; when the seeds of phenomena with inflows (*sāsrava*) have not perished, it is called the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), and when the seeds have perished, it is called the element

¹⁰⁵ See chapter 2, section iii, a, and chapter 3, section iii.

¹⁰⁶ PPU 78—406: *de bas rnam par shes pa ma gtogs pa'i gzung ba phyi rol gyi don ci yang med par grub bo. de med pas gzugs kyi sku byin gyis brlabs nas mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das par smra ba de yang rigs pa ma yin te, 'di'i phyir yang sems dang sems las byang ba med pa ni yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub ma yin no.*

without inflows (*anāsravadhātu*), the *vimuktikāya*, and the *dharmakāya*. Therefore again the destruction of mind and mental factors is not reasonable.¹⁰⁷

Buddhahood is a mental attainment, finally achieved (as we saw in chapter 2, section ii) through the transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*): when the mental continuum continues on, having been destroyed qua the *ālayavijñāna*, or the subtle consciousness that stores the seeds of karma that keep one bound in saṃsāra, and having been generated as the *dharmakāya*, the sky-like contentless consciousness that is the basis from which the form-bodies (here referred to as “buddha-qualities”) naturally flow—then and only then has buddhahood been achieved. Without a mental continuum, there is no buddha; hence, the mind must ultimately exist.

vi. Conclusion: Buddhological Argument

This series of arguments against the Candrakīrtian further bolsters Ratnākaraśānti’s philosophical defense of his view. With all that we’ve seen here, he takes himself to have shown that for buddhahood to be possible, manifestation alone must ultimately exist. As he puts this transcendental point in his commentary on the *Mahāmāyā Tantra*, the *Guṇavatī*: “If it were not so [viz. if the mind did not have luminosity or manifestation as its nature (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara*)], then no one could be enlightened, [...]. Therefore, the mind’s natural luminosity is the cause of enlightenment, and enlightenment is the result.”¹⁰⁸ Were consciousness not ultimately real and

¹⁰⁷ PPU 78—407: *tshogs bsags pa’i ’phen shugs kyis rig pa’i rang gi ngo bo’i sang rgyas kyi chos rnams mi zad pa’i phyir yang, sems dang sems las byang ba zad par mi rigs te, sems dang sems las byung ba’i rgyun gyi mtshan nyid zag pa med pa de nyid ni gnas zhes bya la, zad ba dang bcas pa’i chos thams cad kyi sa bon ma zad pas de srid du ni kun gzhi zhes brjod do. zad nas ni zad pa med pa’i dbyings dang rnam par grol ba’i sku dang chos kyi sku zhes kyang brjod de, de’i phyir yang sems dang sems las byung ba zad par mi rigs so. Cf. the KT passage cited in chapter 2, section ii.*

¹⁰⁸ GT, 8: *yady evaṃ na syāt tadā na kasyacid bodhiḥ syāt, [...] tasmāt prakṛtiprabhāsvaratvaṃ cittasya bodher hetuḥ, bodhiḥ phalam.*

were it not by nature manifestation, buddhahood would not be possible. This is reason enough to be confident that the neither-one-nor-many argument cannot possibly target consciousness: defeating consciousness with this argument would be defeating buddhahood itself. On the other hand, *ākāras* cannot be real, he argued against the Sākāravādin, for otherwise the omnipresence of error in unenlightened experience and the need for nirvāṇa could not be explained. For buddhahood to be possible, then, all content must be erroneous, consciousness must ultimately exist, and the identity between them established by the epistemic arguments for idealism can only be an unreal superimposed one. Q.E.D.

Or at least it is demonstrated for a Buddhist. Here we come to an important point, with which we can conclude our discussion of Ratnākaraśānti's philosophical defense of his view. While certain of Ratnākaraśānti's arguments may hold up for a philosopher with no Buddhist commitments, they are in service of defending a system that is also defended by what we might call *buddhological arguments*. These arguments are not arguments regarding buddhology (e.g. What are the buddha-bodies? How many are there? How is the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* to be interpreted? etc.), though that hermeneutical task certainly has a place in a cogent defense of any Mahāyāna philosophical system. Rather, buddhological arguments are arguments that presuppose that buddhahood is possible.

In this way, we may consider buddhological arguments analogous to transcendental arguments. Derived from Kant but somewhat transformed in contemporary discussions, transcendental arguments are most generally those that claim, as Robert Stern puts it, “‘For y to be possible, x must be the case’, where y is some indisputable fact about us and our mental life (e.g. that we have experiences, use language, make certain judgments, have certain concepts,

perform certain actions, etc.).”¹⁰⁹ Stern goes on to draw up an admittedly incomplete list of four classes of transcendental argument depending on what x is specified to be. A transcendental argument might be *truth-directed*, then, where x is some state of affairs that is claimed to be a necessary condition for the possibility of y ; *belief-directed* where x is a belief; experience-directed where x is “a way things must be experienced as being or appear to be”; *concept-directed* “where x is specified as a context in which a concept-user must have acquired the capacity to employ the concept c , as a necessary condition for acquiring the capacity to apply the concept c at all.”¹¹⁰ A buddhological argument, then, is analogous to a truth-directed transcendental argument in particular: it is not the claim that one must believe such and such to be the case, experience the world in such and such a way, or have acquired such and such a concept for buddhahood to be possible; rather, it is the stronger claim that for buddhahood (y) to be possible, some state of affairs (x) must obtain.

However, this makes buddhological arguments different in kind from transcendental ones in an important respect: y is not, in this case, “some indisputable fact about us and our mental life,” as it should be in a properly transcendental argument. Rather, it is an indisputable fact *for Buddhists*. A buddhological argument might work for those who accept that buddhahood is possible, but a Naiyāyika or a secular humanist cannot be expected to be convinced on such

¹⁰⁹ Stern, *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism: Answering the Question of Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6. Note, as Stern discusses there, that in Kant’s original understanding of transcendental knowledge, y would have to be *that we have experiences*. Kant, it would seem, was less interested in generalizing this form of argument than philosophers are today. Suffice it to say that, in accordance with modern usage, I use ‘transcendental’ here to refer to the conditions for the possibility of y in general, rather than of experience in particular.

¹¹⁰ Stern, *Transcendental Arguments*, 10–11. For an application of two of these types (*viz. concept-directed* and *experience-directed*) to Klong chen pa’s style of argumentation, see David Higgins, *The Philosophical Foundations of Classical Rdzogs Chen in Tibet*, 133–139. For a critique of certain aspects of this classification, see Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*, 192–200. I was inspired by both these works in thinking about buddhological arguments. Note that, though determining Ratnākaraśānti’s influence in Tibet is far beyond the scope of this dissertation, Higgins’ very fine discussion is especially relevant to the study of Ratnākaraśānti.

grounds alone. In this respect, buddhological arguments presume the *axiological arguments* Matthew Kapstein outlines in his essay, “Indra’s Search for the Self.” There, axiological arguments are those arguments that presuppose a particular value and conclude that some state of affairs that instantiates that value is the case: freedom from suffering, for instance, ought to be realized, and so whatever a given cosmological system thinks is required for that freedom to be realized must be the case. Kapstein considers an Upaniṣadic version of this form of argument:

(1) If one ought to value above all freedom from saṃsāra’s defects, then it must be the case that one’s true identity is that supreme self that instantiates such freedom. (2) Indeed, one ought to value above all such freedom. Therefore, (3) one’s true identity is that supreme self that instantiates such freedom.¹¹¹

Of course, Buddhists would disagree with the consequent of (1) and with (3). However, they (like most of humankind, Kapstein suggests¹¹²) would accede to the antecedent of (1) and to (2): a Buddhist is unlikely to think buddhahood is possible but not worth striving for.

A buddhological argument, then, already presumes that buddhahood is of value and that it is possible: it is on the basis of an implied axiological argument that the buddhological argument’s *y* is established. Borrowing Kapstein’s formulation (see *Reason’s Traces*, 67–69), we might fill out the background of a buddhological argument thus:

(1) If, given the accepted cosmology, one ought to value freedom from saṃsāra, then, given that same cosmology, it must be possible to realize that freedom.
(2) Indeed, one ought to value above all such freedom.
Therefore, (3) it must be possible to realize that freedom.
(4) The realization of that freedom is, given the accepted cosmology, buddhahood.
Therefore, (5) buddhahood is possible.

¹¹¹ Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, 67.

¹¹² Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, 68.

Only with this much implied is it possible to state a buddhological argument: for buddhahood to be possible, x must be the case. As one can see, given (4) and (5) of the implied axiological background, such an argument will hence be useful only in persuading other Buddhists.

But even this is not specific enough: what constitutes buddhahood is by no means uncontested in the Buddhist tradition. The bare fact that buddhahood is possible is indisputable for Buddhists; what exactly buddhahood *is*, however, was always a matter of dispute. Perhaps the Candrakīrtian could come up with a cogent picture of enlightenment that responds to and undercuts Ratnākaraśānti's attacks; certainly, we will see that Jñānaśrīmitra defends the Sākāravāda in part by elaborating a very different notion of buddhahood. The y of buddhological arguments, then, is not only something peculiar to Buddhists, it is a moving target even within the Buddhist tradition—indeed, even when we are considering two authors at the same time and at the same university like Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra. This makes buddhological arguments especially difficult to track. When Ratnākaraśānti says that for buddhahood (y) to be possible, contentless consciousness (x) must exist, Jñānaśrīmitra's response, we will see, is two-pronged: first, contentless consciousness (x) is incoherent; second, buddhahood (y) is not really as Ratnākaraśānti says it is. Both agree that buddhahood is worth striving for and that it is possible. But for Jñānaśrīmitra, not only is the conclusion (x) incoherent for various reasons we will come to in chapter 4, the particulars of the premise (y), as understood by Ratnākaraśānti, are unestablished and so cannot act as a reason for proving Ratnākaraśānti's x in the first place. This will structure our presentation of Jñānaśrīmitra's critique in what follows: a consideration first of Jñānaśrīmitra's criticisms of contentless consciousness in chapter 4, and then of his defense of a different picture of buddhahood in chapter 5.

Still, Ratnākaraśānti's position is given a much firmer basis by these buddhological arguments. His concerns are primarily intra-Buddhist,¹¹³ and so he expects his opponents to be swayed by these arguments—and we, too, should consider their value when considering his position systematically. It is not immediately clear, for instance, how a Candrakīrtian might respond to the buddhological arguments presented above, even without reference to the arguments concerning self-awareness. This is significant: the Candrakīrtian is a Mahāyāna Buddhist, and so if his position cannot make sense of basic Mahāyāna commitments, as Ratnākaraśānti argues it cannot, this is a problem. Ratnākaraśānti's system, on the other hand, hangs together well. The notion of buddhahood we explored in chapter 2 clearly dovetails with the view that consciousness and content have an unreal superimposed identity, insofar as content is defeasible by the neither-one-nor-many argument and consciousness is not. The non-buddhological arguments we considered here for this notion of an ultimate difference between consciousness and content may or may not convince the non-Buddhist reader; they were meant, however, for a Buddhist audience, and such an audience would have been moved (if not necessarily convinced) by buddhological arguments advanced alongside non-buddhological ones. Indeed, Jñānaśrīmitra was impelled to defend a very different notion of buddhahood in direct response to Ratnākaraśānti.

This is not to say that the modern non-Buddhist reader will gain nothing from Ratnākaraśānti's philosophy of mind if she refuses at the start the validity of any buddhological

¹¹³ As we had opportunity to note in chapter 1, Ratnākaraśānti very rarely deals with non-Buddhist philosophers. Kei Kataoka dealt with the most prominent example, a short discussion of Naiyāyika and Mīmāṃsaka criticisms of *prakāśa*, in a paper at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, "Ratnākaraśānti on Prakāśa." As noted in chapter 1, this is in stark opposition to Jñānaśrīmitra, who devotes many of his works to refuting non-Buddhists.

argument. Rather, it is to say that the insights into philosophy of mind that Ratnākaraśānti has to offer—or those of Jñānaśrīmitra, for that matter—may be fully appreciated only alongside a certain buddhology and the arguments that rely upon it. We will have opportunity to reflect on this again in the conclusion. For now, we move on to Jñānaśrīmitra’s defense of the Sākāravāda.

Chapter 4: Jñānaśrīmitra's Philosophy of Non-Difference: A Response to Ratnākaraśānti

i. Introduction: The Proof that Consciousness Has Appearances

We turn now to Jñānaśrīmitra's *Sākārasiddhiśāstra* (SSŚ): *A Treatise Proving Sākāravāda*, or *A Treatise Proving that Consciousness and Buddhahood Have Appearances*. As we discussed in chapter 1, this voluminous work is built around a refutation of Ratnākaraśānti's view: his arguments are cited and critiqued, and possible responses he might give are imagined and refuted. Jñānaśrīmitra then systematically constructs his Sākāravāda in light of Ratnākaraśānti's objections to the view. Finally, as we will see in chapter 5, certain aspects of Ratnākaraśānti's buddhology are criticized as well, and Jñānaśrīmitra's own buddhological view, the view that buddhahood has appearances (it is *sākāra*) is developed at length and is grounded in traditional authorities.

Because the study of the SSŚ is still in its infancy, it is worth summarizing the text in broad strokes here. In this work, Jñānaśrīmitra defends a thoroughgoing Buddhist non-dualism. Idealism is agreed upon on page one: the Buddhist disputants all agree there are no mind-independent objects. But while this view is developed as stemming from Yogācāra tradition—that is, as tracing its heritage back to canonical Yogācāra works Jñānaśrīmitra attributes to Maitreya and Asaṅga, in addition to Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta—Jñānaśrīmitra does not adopt Yogācāra terminology as frequently as Ratnākaraśānti does: he makes only passing reference to, for instance, the three natures (*trisvabhāva*), the transformation of the basis

(*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), the store-house consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), and so on. This terminology is present, especially in SSS 6, but it is not foregrounded as conspicuously as in Ratnākaraśānti's work.

Jñānaśrīmitra is also explicit in his endeavor to synthesize Madhyamaka sources. Nāgārjuna, Śāntarākṣita, and Śāntideva all contribute insights to Jñānaśrīmitra's view—Nāgārjuna above all, when he is properly understood as most basically espousing non-dualism. The Mādhyamika is both an ally and an adversary in the SSS. In SSS 1, as we will see below in section ii of this chapter, Ratnākaraśānti's position is brought up as a response to the Mādhyamika who would apply the neither-one-nor-many argument to appearances and to manifestation, given their identity established by the epistemic arguments for idealism. To this, as we have seen, Ratnākaraśānti demurs by arguing for a difference between appearances and manifestation. Jñānaśrīmitra refutes this position over the course of SSS 1. His concluding verse is telling:

*nākāracakramⁱ avadhūya dhiyo 'sti vṛttis
tadbādhanēⁱⁱ balini madhyanaye jayaśrīḥ /
no ced anindyam idam advayam eva citraṃ
ceto nirākṛtimatasya tu ko 'vakāśaḥ //*

ⁱ -*cakram* em. Isaacson] om. MS, *bhedam* JNĀ; ⁱⁱ -*bādhanē* MS_{pc}] -*bādhanē* MS_{ac}, JNĀ.

There is no operation of cognition without the circle of appearances.
If that view is defeated [and appearances are denied],
victory goes to the stronger Madhyamaka.
If that view is not defeated (*no cet*),
this faultless variegated mind is really non-dual.
But what room is there for the Nirākāravāda?¹

¹ JNĀ 386.1–4. Compare Udayana's version of this verse from his *Āmatattvaviveka*, adapted to critique Jñānaśrīmitra from a Naiyāyika perspective, as well as Śāṅkaramiśra's commentary: *Udayanācārya Āmatattvaviveka with the commentaries of Śāṅkaramiśra, Bhagīratha Ṭhakkura and Raghunātha Tārkaśiromaṇī*, ed. Dvivedin and Dravida, 529: *na grāhyabhedam avadhūya dhiyo 'sti vṛttis tadbādhanē balini vedanaye jayaśrī / no cet anindyam idam īdṛśam eva viśvaṃ tathyaṃ tathāgatamatasya tu ko 'vakāśaḥ //*

Harunaga Isaacson has observed (personal communication) that many passages in SSS 1 may indeed be spoken by the Mādhyamika (or at least by Jñānaśrīmitra temporarily adopting the Mādhyamika’s position that the neither-one-nor-many argument targets appearances), whose arguments are then shown to refute Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of difference. That is, Jñānaśrīmitra himself thinks manifest appearances are indubitably real and cannot be defeated by argument; but if an opponent wants to say they are not real, then the Mādhyamika, who at least accepts an *identity* between appearances and manifestation, is better off than Ratnākaraśānti, who argues for *difference*. This drama plays out in SSS 1, entitled “The Refutation of the Nirākāra” (*nirākāra-nirākaraṇapariccheda*), where Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of difference is laid to rest.

In SSS 2, as we will see in chapter 4, section iii, Jñānaśrīmitra responds to Ratnākaraśānti’s criticisms of the Sākāravāda, constructing a theory of error and of constructed mental content in light of them. The chapter is entitled “The Conditional Establishment of Defilement and Purification” (*saṃkleśavyavadānavyavasthāpariccheda*): the theory of error and constructed mental content constitutes the proper account of defilement, the ignorance at the root of saṃsāra Ratnākaraśānti thinks the Sākāravādin cannot account for. Then, toward the end of the chapter, Jñānaśrīmitra makes a first pass at his view of buddhahood, which he understands from a non-dualist perspective. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and Nāgārjuna’s *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, favorite sources for Ratnākaraśānti’s own understanding of buddhahood, are cited here in favor of the Sākāravāda, and Jñānaśrīmitra presents his enigmatic view of the embodiments of buddhahood for the first time. This we will discuss in detail in chapter 5.

SSŚ 3 delves into the meaning of the middle way (as per its title, “The Descent into the Middle Way” (*madhyamāvatārapariccheda*). We may imagine that this way of phrasing things—*madhyamā-avatāra* rather than *madhyamaka-avatāra*—is intentional: while Jñānaśrīmitra does indeed think the Madhyamaka, when properly understood, should be viewed as a non-dualist position first of all, his benchmarks here in his discussion of the middle way (*madhyamā*) are primarily Yogācāra sources and Dharmakīrti. He uses arguments based on these authorities to show that the relation of cause and effect is not ultimately real. (Nāgārjuna’s absence in this particular discussion is conspicuous: it is not the first chapter of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* that Jñānaśrīmitra refers to here, but rather Dharmakīrti’s enigmatic statements in the third chapter [*pratyakṣapariccheda*] of the *Pramāṇavārttika* [PV].²) He also introduces here the issue of the *citrādvaita*, the non-duality of variegated appearances,³ which he will return to in detail in SSŚ 4, and he returns again to the buddhological issues we will consider below in chapter 5.⁴

SSŚ 4, “The Non-Duality of Wondrously Variegated Cognition” (*citrādvaitapariccheda*), continues the discussion begun in SSŚ 3, returning to the issue of the ultimate scope of logic and, in great depth, the non-duality of variegated appearances. Here, some twenty pages (JNĀ 444.11–465.5) are spent debating the meaning of two verses from Dharmakīrti’s PV on the topic, viz. PV 3.220–221. A provisional translation of SSŚ 4 is presented in the appendix, and we will discuss its contents below sections iv and v of this chapter. Jñānaśrīmitra also gives here his most sustained positive proof of non-difference, grounding his non-dualism on logic.

² On PV III.4, see JNĀ 419; cf. the discussion of this verse and PV III.3, see too *Kṣaṇabhaṅgādhyāya*, JNĀ 7. Compare too the remarks in Eli Franco and Miyako Notake, *Dharmakīrti on the Duality of the Object: Pramāṇavārttika III 1–63* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), 38–42.

³ See especially the discussion beginning on JNĀ 420.3.

⁴ See JNĀ 423.4–17, JNĀ 429.13–436.2.

SSŚ 5, “Self-Awareness” (*svasaṃvedana-pariccheda*), goes on to defend self-awareness from critique, largely focusing on the Candrakīrtian Mādhyamika view espoused by, for instance, Prajñākaramati.⁵ It begins with a straightforward objection: “It may be objected: ‘Earlier and at length, you have said that all of this [viz. every appearance] is the playful manifestation (*vilāsa*) of self-awareness, but this self-awareness *does not exist at all*, for it is assailed by both logic and scripture.’”⁶ This view is refuted, now with special attention to Śāntarakṣita’s definition of self-awareness and Śāntideva’s supposed refutation of it.⁷ Finally, the especially intellectual-historically rich SSŚ 6 explores the unified philosophical and buddhological view of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, with detailed reference to and commentary on canonical works attributed to Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Nāgārjuna. We will discuss aspects of the aims of SSŚ 6 below in chapter 5.

Here in chapter 4, we will focus on Jñānaśrīmitra’s response to the arguments of Ratnākaraśānti’s we considered above in chapter 3. First, we will consider Jñānaśrīmitra’s most explicit arguments against Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of sheer manifestation devoid of content, that is, Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of difference, which are developed in SSŚ 1. There is no epistemic warrant (*pramāṇa*) that establishes contentless consciousness, Jñānaśrīmitra seeks to show, no evidence at all of its supposed *not being defeasible* (*abādhyatā*), and so no means of knowing the all-important *difference* (*bheda*) between content (*ākāra*) and manifestation (*prakāśa[-mātra]*)

⁵ Recall our discussion of the Candrakīrtian above, chapter 3, section v. On SSŚ 5, see Arai’s aforementioned edition and study (in Japanese), *Jñānaśrīmitra kenkyū*. Arai notes various parallels between Jñānaśrīmitra’s *pūrvapakṣa* and Prajñākaramati (as well as Candrakīrti himself), 34–54, in addition to a near citation of Prajñākaramati’s BCAP, JNĀ 471.10, 471.23; see Arai’s edition, 80–81.

⁶ JNĀ 466.2–3: *nanu svasaṃvedanavilāsaḥ sarvo ’yaṃ pūrvō vistarah, svasaṃvedanam ca nāma nāsty evaitat, yuktyāgamanigrhītatvāt.*

⁷ Śāntarakṣita’s definition of self-awareness (TS 1999cd–2000ab = MA(Ś) 16cd–17ab) is cited at JNĀ 471.7–8; Śāntideva’s BCA 9.21–22 (or in La Vallée Poussin’s edition, following Minaev’s numbering, 9.22–23) are discussed following their citation at JNĀ 471.16–19, while BCA 9.25 (or again, 9.26 in La Vallée Poussin’s edition) is discussed following its citation at JNĀ 476.13–14.

that Ratnākaraśānti thinks must be inferred. Manifestation is always and in essence the manifestation *of content*, and the epistemic arguments for idealism show definitively that there is no difference of any kind between consciousness and what is immediately present to it.

In light of this, Jñānaśrīmitra will have to respond to two separate concerns raised by Ratnākaraśānti. First, as we saw Ratnākaraśānti say against the Sākāravādin in the PPU, how is the ignorance at the root of saṃsāra possible if whatever content immediately manifests is real just insofar as it manifests? When I reach for external objects or ponder the concept of a creator-god, those unreal things manifest to cognition, Ratnākaraśānti had objected—surely that does not make them real. And second, if contentful manifestation is supposed to be real for the Sākāravādin, how is it exactly that the neither-one-nor-many argument (employed by Ratnākaraśānti and the Mādhyamika alike against appearances) does not target it? To solve these problems, in SSS 2 Jñānaśrīmitra critiques Ratnākaraśānti’s theory of error (and with it, the idea that something unreal might manifest in the first place), replacing it with his own Dharmakīrti-inspired theory of error in an effort to explain the ignorance at the root of saṃsāra. He does this again by citing Ratnākaraśānti at length and refuting him point by point. Then, he argues with great care in SSS 4 that in fact *no difference of any kind ever manifests to cognition*, and that the nature of manifest mental content is such that, despite protests from Ratnākaraśānti and Mādhyamikas alike, *it exists even though it is neither one nor many*. In this context, we will be prepared to appreciate the full extent of Jñānaśrīmitra’s non-dualism—that is, his theory of *citrādvaita*, or the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition—and the radical import of his understanding of epistemic idealism.

This, then, is a sketch of the arguments we will trace in this chapter. Jñānaśrīmitra's rich work in his SSS is difficult, protracted, and detailed, so we will only scratch the surface here. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that, as Jñānaśrīmitra himself admits in the opening verses to the SSSū (see chapter 1, section iv), the SSS was written "as if standing in a debate," turning first toward one opponent, next toward another, often circling the same points in different ways, all in an effort to carry the day. Tracking Jñānaśrīmitra's own position through all of these twists and turns can be difficult (to say the least), and I hope that what I present here does it some justice. Still, over the course of this chapter, we will come to a basic understanding of Jñānaśrīmitra's criticisms of Ratnākaraśānti's philosophical position. Then, with this as our foundation, we will move on to consider Jñānaśrīmitra's criticisms of Ratnākaraśānti's buddhology, as well as his faith.

**ii. Refuting Ratnākaraśānti's Notion of Difference: On SSS 1
a) Difference or Representationalism?**

Jñānaśrīmitra cuts straight to the heart of Ratnākaraśānti's view in the opening of the SSS. He introduces Ratnākaraśānti's position on the second page of his work not in a vacuum, but rather (and insightfully) as a response to the Mādhyamika. As we saw above in chapter 3, section iii, the Mādhyamika suggests that the neither-one-nor-many argument targets both appearances *and consciousness* insofar as the epistemic arguments for idealism show that they are not different. If one wants to use the neither-one-nor-many argument against mental content, then how can one stop it from targeting consciousness, too? Arguments—especially arguments as powerful as

neither-one-nor-many—are not afraid of manifestation.⁸ It is as a doomed response to this objection that Jñānaśrīmitra first cites Ratnākaraśānti’s PPU and his supposed saving-grace: despite the fact that they are identical in a certain respect, there is nevertheless a difference between content and consciousness.

Jñānaśrīmitra thus quickly identifies the bind Ratnākaraśānti is trying to escape. Content and consciousness are the same, but only to an extent: one is defeated by argument while the other just cannot be, and so ultimately they must be different. He recognizes that Ratnākaraśānti is driven to this uncomfortable different-and-not-different position by giving equal weight to the neither-one-nor-many argument and the epistemic arguments for idealism. And, while at the end of the day he thinks it is wrong to say that the neither-one-nor-many argument targets appearances at all, he begins the SSS with an exhaustive refutation of Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of difference, provisionally accepting the efficacy of the neither-one-nor-many argument against appearances.

Jñānaśrīmitra’s criticism begins with unassuming simplicity. “What exactly is this manifestation that is distinct from content?,” he asks, “for if manifestation were not distinct”—if there were no difference between manifestation and content—“there would be no end to its fear of defeat.”⁹ This is precisely Ratnākaraśānti’s thinking: there must be a difference between

⁸ JNĀ 367.21–368.5: *bhavantu sitaśātādayaḥ prakāśaikasvabhāvāḥ, svabhāvasūnyatām tu nātivartitum īsate. yā hi yuktir ekānekavira- halakṣaṇā bāhyam asambhavi sambhāvayitum upanīyate, sā na vijñānasvabhāvatām ābibhrāṇebhyaḥ śubhrādibhyo bibheti. tasmāt sarvadharmasūnyataiva jyāyasī yathā prathitam āgame bahuśaḥ. vārtike 'pi, yathā yathārthaś cintyante viśīryante tathā tathā iti. samvṛtimātram tu vijñānanītir iti. i yā hi] MS; yadi, JNĀ. “Let it be that colors and pleasures and so on have as their sole nature manifestation; still they cannot overcome emptiness of essence (*svabhāvasūnyatā*). For the neither-one-nor-many argument that shows that external objects are impossible is not frightened by mental content (e.g., colors), which have consciousness as their nature. Therefore, the emptiness of all things is the best, as various scriptures state. Even [Dharmakīrti’s] *Vārtika* says, ‘Insofar as objects are analyzed, they are broken down.’ (PV 2.209cd) The position that everything is consciousness is mere convention.”*

⁹ JNĀ 368.11–12: *ko 'yaṃ prakāśo nāma nīlādibhyo vyatiriktaḥ? avyatireke bādhābhayānivrteḥ. i -bhayānivrteḥ] MS; -bhayanivrteḥ, JNĀ.*

consciousness and content to preserve the ultimate existence of consciousness despite the defeasibility of content. And so Jñānaśrīmitra asks how exactly Ratnākaraśānti thinks this might be established: if this difference exists, after all, it must be established by either perception or inference, the two means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*) Buddhists accept. However,

There is no means of knowledge whatsoever with respect to what is separate from content: not perception, first of all, because it is impossible to apprehend anything other than the content that is presently manifesting (*prakāśamānarūpa*); nor inference, because it is impossible to grasp the connection [i.e. pervasion (*vyāpti*)] of something which is not experienced as being perceived at some time [viz. manifestation] with something else [viz. mental content].¹⁰

In the first place, we never perceive manifestation divorced from content, for all we ever apprehend is just *content that is presently manifesting*. Jñānaśrīmitra, that is, denies outright that manifestation alone is ever immediately evident. It is only ever manifest *content* that is immediately evident, not manifestation alone. Though this will be detailed further later on, in the first place he takes this to be established by the epistemic arguments for idealism. Indeed, just conceding the co-apprehension argument's reason—because consciousness and content are always apprehended together (*sahopalambhaniyamāt*)—would seem to prove Jñānaśrīmitra's point in this respect: Ratnākaraśānti might think manifestation that is different from content nevertheless exists, but since they are at least always *perceived* together, it is not perception that establishes this difference.¹¹

Nor can inference establish contentless manifestation, Jñānaśrīmitra argues, for it makes no sense to say that there is an invariable relation (*vyāpti*) between two things when one of those

¹⁰ JNĀ 368.12–14: *na ca vyatirikte kiñcit pramāṇam asti. na tāvat pratyakṣam, prakāśamānarūpān nīlād aparasyopalambhāsambhavāt. na cānumānam, kadācid api pratyakṣatām ananubhavataḥ kenacit saṃbandha-grahaṇānupapatteḥ.*

¹¹ We will come to the most obvious buddhological response to this line of attack from Jñānaśrīmitra—viz. that the *dharmakāya* is precisely such an apprehension of manifestation alone—and Jñānaśrīmitra's response in the next chapter. Jñānaśrīmitra does not consider this response in SSS 1.

things is never perceived. There is an invariable relation between smoke and fire, Buddhist logicians will all agree. We can establish this because we can have separate perceptual cognitions of smoke and of fire. But it would be absurd to say there is an invariable relation between smoke and unicorns (or a ghost [*piśāca*], to use a common example of something in principle imperceptible), for one of those things is never experienced. So too in our case: if we never have a separate perceptual cognition of manifestation alone, we can never establish an invariable relation between it and anything else that would allow us to infer its existence. Ratnākaraśānti might reach for the theory of non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*), but this is no help: if manifestation that is separate from content is in principle imperceptible, it is just like a ghost, something that is outside the scope of non-apprehension's situationally specific nature.¹²

Indeed, were manifestation and content different, what would that mean? First and foremost, that the two things should have different loci. In that case, difference may be established on the basis of a difference in time or a difference in space. The seed and the sprout are not the same, for they exist at different times. Likewise, two things sitting next to each other are different insofar as they occupy different spaces; we can even establish a difference between two things even if they appear to be identical (two perfectly identical orbs conjured by a magician, say) if they occupy different spaces. But with blue that is presently manifesting, there is no difference in time or in space between blue and manifestation. The two are apprehended together in the same locus at the moment blue manifests. Perhaps difference could be established via a difference in the sense-faculty used to apprehend two different aspects of one and the same thing. We can, for instance, apprehend the difference between the taste and color of coffee

¹² On Jñānaśrīmitra's theory of non-apprehension, see Birgit Kellner, *Jñānaśrīmitra's Anupalabdhirahasya and Sarvaśabdābhāvavacarcā: A Critical Edition with a Survey of his Anupalabdhi-Theory* (Vienna: ATBS, 2007).

because different senses are used in apprehending these different aspects of a single thing. But this is not the case for manifestation and content: any content that manifests, regardless of the sense-faculty through which it manifests, manifests together with manifestation. So if there is no apparent difference between manifestation and content, and there are no two loci separated in time or in space or even on the basis of the apprehending sense-faculty, how can Ratnākaraśānti establish difference?¹³

Jñānaśrīmitra comes close here to advancing what philosophers of mind sometimes refer to as a *representationalist* view of phenomenal character.¹⁴ When asked the question, “What is the manifestation of blue like?,” Jñānaśrīmitra contends that one need look no further than the blue itself—indeed, one *can* look no further, for the manifest blue is all there is. There is no separate manifestation over and above blue, no separate locus of phenomenal character beyond the appearance. In his discussion of this view, Michael Tye gives clear expression to the intuition here:

You are standing before a tapestry in an art gallery. As you take in the rich and varied colors of the cloth, you are told to pay close attention to your visual experience and its phenomenology. What do you do? The representationalist says that you attend closely to the *tapestry* and details in it. You are aware of something outside you—the tapestry—and of various qualities that you experience as being qualities of parts of the tapestry, and by being aware of these things, you are aware of what it is like for you subjectively or phenomenally.¹⁵

For Jñānaśrīmitra, of course, the representation, Tye’s tapestry, is but an appearance of consciousness, a form consciousness takes. It is not *outside*. But the basic intuition is shared: it is solely with reference to the appearance that we should seek an account of its phenomenology.

¹³ For this paragraph, see both JNĀ 369–370 and 376.

¹⁴ See Tye, *Consciousness and Persons: Unity and Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 165–176.

¹⁵ Tye, *Consciousness and Persons*, 165.

What is the experience of the blue of the sky like? It is a soft color, it is bright, ... Try as we may, we will never come to anything beyond qualities *of blue*—and we certainly never come to manifestation that is different from blue, some hypostatized phenomenal character beyond the appearance.

ii. Refuting Ratnākaraśānti's Notion of Difference: On SSŚ 1
b) The Supposed Indefeasibility of Manifestation

We can anticipate Ratnākaraśānti's response to this line of argument. For now we may grant that manifestation is never experienced without content; still, we can infer the difference between them because manifestation is not defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument while content is. It is not due to immediate apprehension, a positive inference, or the non-apprehension of something visible that we understand the two to be different. Rather, we infer the difference between manifestation and content due to the presence of this particular defeating argument.

Jñānaśrīmitra faithfully paraphrases Ratnākaraśānti's argument with this:

Even though there is the appearance of the non-difference between two moments, there is the proof of their difference due to a defeater (*bādhaka*)—so too in this case. Just as the existence or non-existence of a unique effect which cannot be explained in any other way is the way to prove the difference between two moments, so here there is the occurrence of a defeater due to a difference between manifestation and blue. Therefore, manifestation, which cannot be defeated, is in fact different from blue, which can be defeated.¹⁶

Even though there is no appearance of manifestation alone, and so no immediate appearance of the difference between manifestation and content, difference can be inferred on the basis of

¹⁶ JNĀ 370.10–12: *atha kṣaṇayor abhedabhāsane 'pi yathā bhedasiddhir bādhakāt, evam ihāpi. yathā hi kāryaviśeṣasya bhāvābhāvāv anyathānupapadyamānau tayor bhedasādhanau yathā bādhakasya bhedena vṛttiḥ prakāśanīlayor api. tato bādhyān nīlād abādhyāḥ prakāśo bhinna eveti cet.*

manifestation's being indefeasible and the presence of a defeating argument for content. It is as in the case of momentariness, Ratnākaraśānti is here made to say: for the proponent of momentariness, the difference between two moments is as imperceptible as a ghost; still, we can infer a difference between two moments and hence establish momentariness.¹⁷ So too, even though manifestation and content do not appear to be different, the fact that one is defeated while the other is not allows us to infer a difference between them.

Here, "not defeasible" (*abādhyatā*) is doing a great deal of work. It serves as the evidential property: it is because manifestation has this property, while blue does not, that we can establish a difference between them. Jñānaśrīmitra's initial response considers just what this property is supposed to be. The word *a-bādhyatā* (or just *a-bādhā*) is a negation, and there are two basic ways a negation may be understood: either as an *implicative* or *predicate* negation (*paryudāsa*), e.g. "The cup is not blue," which implies that the cup has some other color; or as an *existential* negation (*prasajyapratishedha*), e.g. "There is no cup," the simple negation of the cup's existence.¹⁸ The implicative negation, further, may also be understood in two ways. "Not defeasible" might mean not defeasible *by one particular defeating argument*, hence implying that there is in fact another defeating argument out there. This would make it an implicative negation of a particular within a class, implying another particular in the same class (i.e. another defeater). This Jñānaśrīmitra anticipates Ratnākaraśānti would not be willing to accept: the fact that manifestation is not defeasible means that there is no argument *at all* that defeats it, not that the neither-one-nor-many argument fails but another argument succeeds. In that case, the negation

¹⁷ See Ratnākaraśānti's *Antarvyāptisamarthana*, edited in Yūichi Kajiyama, *The Antarvyāptisamarthana of Ratnākaraśānti* (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 1999), for his proof of momentariness, the details of which are beyond our concern here.

¹⁸ My thanks to Matthew Kapstein for suggesting the clear translations, "predicate" versus "existential."

might imply not something of the same class, but instead something of a different class: a positive proof rather than a defeater. But Jñānaśrīmitra has already shown that there *is* no positive proof for manifestation that is distinct from content: “This so-called non-defeat implies a proof through the force of a valid cognition—but not even one of the two *pramāṇas* has any power to prove self-awareness that is divided [from *ākāras*].”¹⁹ The negation, then, cannot be an implicative one.

Nor can it be an existential negation. In this case, “not defeasible” would mean simply the absence of a defeater. This, however, also applies in the case of totally non-existent things: after all, there is no defeating cognition for a hare’s horn, but that certainly doesn’t imply that a hare’s horn *exists*. That is, if Ratnākaraśānti wants to say that the absence of a defeater reveals that some *x* is an existent entity, then non-existent things too could be proven to exist in the same way: ghosts or hares’ horns or whatever else would exist because no defeating cognition occurs for them. The reason, in technical parlance, is inconclusive (*anekānta*), for it applies in dissimilar cases. So however Ratnākaraśānti wants to understand the negation, he cannot say that “not defeasible” serves as a reason to establish the existence of manifestation.²⁰

¹⁹ JNĀ 370.15–16: *abādhā nāmeyam pramitibalasiddhir yadi matā pramityornaikāpi svavidī bhidurāyām prabhavati* / For this paragraph’s discussion of *paryudāsa*, see JNĀ 370.13–14: *abādhyatā nāma parudāsaprasajyabhedena dvidhā. paryudāso ’pi prakṛtavyaktiviśayo ’sprsyādīvad bādhāntaram evopanayed iti. abrāhmaṇakṣatriyavaj jātiparyudāsāt.*

²⁰ See JNĀ 370.17–23: *abhāvo bādhāyāḥ punar asati sādharanatayā pade samdehasya prathayatu katham bhedam amutaḥ // prasajyapratishedhapakṣe hi bādhāsphuraṇamātram abādhārthaḥ. tac ca sandigdhasattāke ’saty api samānam katham tato nīlāder bhinnavasturūpatam prakāśasya sādhatet. nanuⁱ nīlādi bādhyam abādhyas tu prakāśa iti bhinnarūpasiddhau kaḥ sandeha iti cet? naivam, abādhāyā bādhakāsphuraṇamātratvāt, sattāsandehe bādhitād api nīlād bhinnarūpasiddher ayogāt. ata eva pade sandehasyety uktam. ⁱ nanu] MS; om. JNĀ. “But how could the absence of a defeater reveal the difference [between manifestation and content], when the absence of a defeater is shared in the case of an object of doubt? For if you think ‘not defeasible’ is an existential negation, the meaning of the absence of a defeater is simply the non-occurrence of a defeater, and that is the same even regarding something non-existent whose existence is an object of doubt. How could one prove that manifestation is a real thing distinct from those things like blue? Should you object, “Blue and so on can be defeated, while manifestation cannot be defeated—what doubt could there be that there is a proof that they’re different?” Not so! Because, since ‘not defeasible’ is nothing but the non-occurrence of a defeater, a proof that manifestation is different from blue, which is defeated, is unreasonable when there’s doubt about the existence of manifestation. For just this reason, I added ‘...in the case of an object of doubt.’”*

What if, however, “not defeasible” is best construed not as one or another sort of negation of defeasibility, but as something else entirely, like “devoid of superimposition”? By saying that manifestation is not defeated while mental content is, Ratnākaraśānti might just mean to point out something about the nature of manifestation: it is something whose nature just shines forth, without being obscured by any superimposition. In the passage of the PPU we considered in the last chapter, cited by Jñānaśrīmitra as well, Ratnākaraśānti does indeed tell us that “manifestation alone (*prakāśa eva*) is the innate nature (*nijaṃ rūpam*) of manifestation; hence, it is not the case that the innate nature of manifestation results from some malfunctioning (*viplava*) due to which awareness of it might be mistaken (*bhrānti*).”²¹ Ratnākaraśānti may respond, then, that “not defeasible” means only this: that there is no superimposition resulting from malfunction that would make manifestation mistaken.

Unsurprisingly, Jñānaśrīmitra is unimpressed by this attempt at saving “not defeasible” as valid evidence through this redefinition. He writes,

If the mind [viz. manifestation] is different from blue on the basis of the former’s indefeasibility, how does it shake off defeasibility? If you say, “Because [mind itself] is free of superimposition (*anāropāt*),” your argument is circular since a lack of superimposition is itself the result of indefeasibility!²²

They say that only when blue is defeated is it superimposed; then there can only be the indefeasibility of a result that is not superimposed—how can that [*anāropitatva*] establish indefeasibility?²³

²¹ JNĀ 368.7–8: *prakāśasya prakāśa eva nijaṃ rūpam iti na tat tasya viplavopanītam, yena tadvedanaṃ bhrāntiḥ syāt.*

²² Cf. SSSū 1.49–50.

²³ JNĀ 375.1–4: *nīlād bhinnam abādhyā yadi manoⁱ bādhāvidhūtiḥ kuto ’nāropād iti yady abādhanaphalād anyo ’nyabhāvāśrayaḥ / bādhyamānam eva hiⁱⁱ nīlam āropitam āhuḥ. tad abādhyatāyāⁱⁱⁱ eva phalam anāropitatvaṃ katham abādhasiddhaye prabhavet. ⁱ mano] MS; ⁱⁱ hi] MS; om. JNĀ; ⁱⁱⁱ tad abādhyatāyā] MS; *tadā bādhyatāyā* JNĀ. Cf. Tomlinson, “The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti’s Philosophy of Mind.”*

How do we know something is superimposed? Because a defeating argument shows that it is. It is the absence of a defeating argument, then, that establishes something as lacking superimposition. How then can a lack of superimposition be used to say that something cannot be defeated? Ratnākaraśānti’s argument is circular. Jñānaśrīmitra continues,

If you say, “That is just the nature of consciousness,” then why not say that the content of consciousness has that same nature?

For just as you say [in the PPU, cited at JNĀ 368], “Just manifestation is the nature of manifestation, and that nature is not brought forth by malfunction,” so too blue-ness alone is the nature of blue, and that nature is not brought forth by a malfunction—saying this too does not get you tongue-tied.²⁴

That is, if Ratnākaraśānti wants to say that manifestation being by nature manifestation is what tells us it is free of superimposition, indefeasible, and real, then why not say that blue, which is by nature blue, is also free of superimposition, indefeasible, and real? Just as manifestation shines forth because it is its nature to do so, so too blue is blue because that is its nature—what room is there in either case for error to creep in? You cannot apply this rule—“because *x* is by nature *x*, it is free of superimposition”—to some things but not others. This dictum, “That is just the nature of that” (*tasya tad eva tattvaṃ*), is not enough to establish that manifestation exists as separate from content.²⁵

To fully appreciate the depth of Jñānaśrīmitra’s critique, we might follow him a little further into the weeds. Very insightfully, he sees that Ratnākaraśānti—regardless of what

²⁴ JNĀ 375.5–7: *vijñānasya tad eva rūpam iti cen nīlātmanas tan na kim / yathā hi prakāśasya prakāśa eva rūpam, na tat tasyaⁱ viplavopanītam ity ucyate, tathā nīlasyāpi nīlataiva rūpaṃ na tat tasya viplavopanītam ity ucyamānam api na vaktraṃ vakrīkaroti. ⁱ tat tasya] MS; tu tasya JNĀ.*

²⁵ See in this regard the verse that concludes this line of argument, JNĀ 375.21–22: *yad yena rūpeṇa vikalpitaṃ vā vibhāti vā tasya tad eva tattvaṃ / pramāṇatas tat tu sad anyathā vā bādhāvakaśo dvitaye 'pi tasmāt //* “With whatever form something is constructed or appears, that form is that thing’s reality. But as for whether that thing is existent or not, that has to be determined by a valid means of knowledge. Thus, with respect to both [mental content and manifestation], there is room for defeat [where ‘this is the reality of that’ is used as a reason].” See too the commentary on this verse Jñānaśrīmitra gives: JNĀ 375.23–376.5.

indefeasible (*abādhyatā, abādhā*) is supposed to mean—is in a tricky situation given the demands of Indian logic. Ratnākaraśānti argues that the neither-one-nor-many argument defeats mental content, but not manifestation. Manifestation, then, has the property “not defeasible” while content does not have this property. On the basis of this evidence, Ratnākaraśānti claims we can infer a difference between the two despite this difference never appearing.

Properties used as evidence in inferences, however, have to be *located*: the locus or site (*pakṣa, dharmin*) is an essential part of any inference, as is the presence of the evidential property in the site (*pakṣadharmatā*). When one infers that there is fire on the mountain due to the presence of smoke, one has to perceive the mountain (*viz.* the *pakṣa*) as well as smoke-on-the-mountain (*viz.* *pakṣadharmatā*): if one does not experience the mountain one cannot infer anything about it, and if one experiences smoke somewhere else it does nothing to establish the presence of fire on the particular mountain in question. The inference Ratnākaraśānti is trying to formulate works a little differently, but reference to this stock example helps make sense of it. Through one means or another, Ratnākaraśānti is trying to establish the presence of the evidential property, “not defeasible,” in manifestation so that he might infer a difference between manifestation and content. But this is a problem. Ratnākaraśānti is setting out to prove that manifestation and content are different, whereas his opponent thinks the two are really one and the same—which is to say *they constitute one and the same locus*. If Ratnākaraśānti starts from the assumption that both manifestation and manifest content are *separate* loci such that one may have a particular property while the other does not, he is trying to establish a difference which he has in fact already assumed. But the whole point is that this difference is in doubt. Manifestation is only ever the manifestation *of content*, Jñānaśrīmitra thinks; whether you are talking about

manifestation or about content, the locus is always one and the same. Manifestation alone is never experienced such that it might be a separate locus of the property, “not defeasible.”

Ratnākaraśānti might object that he can point to manifestation alone as a locus. *It's this very manifestation here, one I can point to ostensively.* Not so, Jñānaśrīmitra will respond. What you point to is just *blue*, or whatever content is presently manifesting. Phenomenal character is nothing beyond a given appearance; we've seen again and again that manifestation is only ever perceived together with content. It is not a separate locus. Seemingly more and more frustrated at this point in their discussion (or at least as Jñānaśrīmitra represents Ratnākaraśānti's tone: he has stopped citing the PPU verbatim at this point, instead exploring the many implications of Ratnākaraśānti's view), Ratnākaraśānti might resort to claiming that manifestation's existence was assumed from the start. Both he and Jñānaśrīmitra, after all, think manifestation exists. Why say that it doesn't exist as a locus? But indeed the existence of manifestation is not now and was never in doubt, Jñānaśrīmitra responds; its existence as a *separate* locus, however, is. And this is what Ratnākaraśānti would seem to be both assuming and trying to prove: he assumes it as the distinct locus of the evidential property, “not defeasible,” in order to prove that it is distinct from content.²⁶

Ratnākaraśānti, now driven to his wits' end, might exclaim that, “All this effort is precisely to prove that manifestation is distinct from blue. How could you demand that right at the beginning?”²⁷ That is, Jñānaśrīmitra is now seemingly demanding that Ratnākaraśānti establish manifestation and content as separate loci from the very start in order for his inference to get off the ground, whereas the whole point of Ratnākaraśānti's proof is to establish this

²⁶ These two paragraphs summarize arguments on JNĀ 378–379.

²⁷ JNĀ 379.26: *nanu tadvyatiriktasādhanāyaiva yatna eṣaḥ, kathaṃ prathamatas tatprārthanam iti cet.*

difference. Surely that doesn't seem fair. But it is not Jñānaśrīmitra demanding this: it is a demand of logic itself. "Let there be something to be proven," Jñānaśrīmitra responds (not without a tone of condescension), "still, you must show some support for your reason, the nature of which must be established (*niṣṭhita*)."²⁸ That is, it is logic itself that requires Ratnākaraśānti to establish his evidence in a particular locus. If he tries to say that manifestation, an entity both parties agree is real, serves as the locus, Jñānaśrīmitra will respond again that no, the evidence is situated only in whatever *appearance* presently manifests (and if Ratnākaraśānti wants to accept the conclusion that manifest *appearances* are not defeasible, Jñānaśrīmitra is happy to accept!). On the other hand, if Ratnākaraśānti accepts the fact that in logic, loci, reasons, and targets are all just conceptual constructions that serve a conventional purpose but have no higher purport beyond accomplishing aims in the world, this will do nothing to further Ratnākaraśānti's cause: the locus he's after, manifestation, is an ultimately real thing, not a mere conceptual construction. That is, establishing the presence of the evidential property, "not defeasible," in a *conceptually constructed* locus, "manifestation," does nothing to prove the *ultimate existence* of the real entity, manifestation. It will only establish something about this particular conceptual construction. Jñānaśrīmitra seems to relish breaking the news to Ratnākaraśānti, telling him that the proof of his desired ultimately real manifestation is still quite a ways off.²⁹

²⁸ JNĀ 379.27: *kim api sādhyam astu bhavataḥ, sādhanādhāras tu niṣṭhitasvarūpo darśanīyo* [...].

²⁹ See JNĀ 379.27–380.2: *kim api sādhyam astu bhavataḥ, sādhanādhāras tu niṣṭhitasvarūpo darśanīyo yadi prakāśo nāma* [380] *vasturūpo dharmī saṃmataḥ. yadi tu sādhyasādhanayor vyavacchedamātratānurodhāt avastu saṃdigdhavastubhāvo vā dharmī, tadā nāyaṃ niyamaḥ. prakṛtasiddhis tu dūre*. "Let there be something you have to prove [that isn't already established at the start]. Still, you must show some support for your reason, the nature of which must be established if you hold there is a locus that is real called 'manifestation.' However, because in accordance with the fact that the target of an inference and the reason are just exclusions, the locus is unreal or is an entity whose reality is in doubt; for this reason, there is no such limitation. But the proof of the topic at hand [viz. the ultimate existence of manifestation alone] is quite a ways off."

iii. Responding to Ratnākaraśānti's attack on the Sākāravāda: On SŚŚ 2
a) Towards a Proper Account of Error

Ratnākaraśānti, however, had argued for difference in another way as well. In the last chapter, we saw that he had also resorted to buddhological argument, suggesting that without a difference between manifestation and content, the Sākāravādin would be unable to explain our existence in saṃsāra and the possibility of our liberation from that existence. If presently manifesting content is real, he had argued, then we experience reality, not ignorance, every time content manifests. Content manifests to us all the time, and so we should already be enlightened on the Sākāravādin's account—clearly an absurd conclusion. Further, the Sākāravādin's attempt to make sense of error as conceptual determination that overlays manifest appearances fails because that conceptual determination, Ratnākaraśānti suggested, must in fact manifest to cognition as well. There is no way to separate out manifest content from conceptually constructed content; rather, when we consider things Yogācāras will all agree are patently absurd—external objects or the Naiyāyika notion of Īśvara, for instance—the Sākāravādin must admit that these manifest to cognition. This is enough to prove that not all content that manifests to cognition must be real, and hence the identity between the two cannot be as total as the Sākāravādin argues it is.

Jñānaśrīmitra's response to this attack unfolds in chapter two of the SŚŚ. As we had opportunity to mention above in chapter 3, section iv, b, Jñānaśrīmitra begins SŚŚ 2 by citing almost the whole of Ratnākaraśānti's position. He is nothing if not fair, being sure to properly represent his opponent's argument in this crucial passage. But again, his initial response cuts to the heart of the matter immediately:

If everyone agrees that error
is grasping x where x does not exist,
then it is not fitting that the appearance of x should be veridical (*satyavat*)
even though it is unreal (*alīke 'pi*).³⁰

At issue is the proper understanding of error. Ratnākaraśānti had already made this clear: he claimed that error (and hence saṃsāra itself, which has error at its root) makes sense only on his Nirākāravādin-account, whereas the Sākāravādin, committed as he is to the reality of appearances that immediately manifest to awareness, cannot properly account for the way error suffuses unenlightened experience. Jñānaśrīmitra responds that this gets it backwards. If we agree on the proper definition of error—the definition “oft-stated in the world, where people say ‘Grasping water in a mirage where there is no water is an error,’ and in Śāstra [like Dharmakīrti’s PVin ad 2.1], where it is said ‘Inference is erroneous because it functions with respect to the determination of an object where there is only its own appearance, not an object’”³¹—then error makes sense only on the Sākāravādin’s account, wherein the appearance that manifests to cognition is in fact real.

In establishing this point, Jñānaśrīmitra’s first tack centers on dismantling the notion of a superimposition. “Cognition arises with some appearance,” he says, “a real one or an unreal one. But the imposition of externality (*bāhyāropa*) onto that appearance is caused either by the

³⁰ JNĀ 387.23–24: *atasmimś tadgraho nāma bhramaś cet sarvasaṃmataḥ / alīke 'pi tadākāre satyavan na samañjasaḥ* // Cf. RNĀ 134 for the following, where much of this section is silently cited in Ratnakīrti’s CAPV; note again, as we noted above in Chapter III, that much of the PPU passage is cited at RNĀ 136 and again, broken up by responses, at 140. The changes Ratnakīrti makes to the organization of this material in the CAPV are very interesting and deserve closer study than I will provide here; indeed, comparing CAPV and SSŚ 2 would provide an excellent case study in Ratnakīrti’s method for reorganizing and honing his teacher’s arguments, but this would take us too far afield here. Still, I will try to note all the parallels we come across.

³¹ JNĀ 388.1–2: *marīcāv ajale jalagraho bhrama iti loke, śāstre ca svapratibhāse 'narthe 'rthādhyavasāyena pravṛtter bhrāntam anumānam ityādibahudhābhīdhānāt' [...]. 'ityādibahudhābhīdhānāt] MS; ityādi bahudhābhīdhānāt JNĀ.*

cognition itself or by something else.”³² Were the cognition itself the cause of superimposition, any Buddhist epistemologist committed to momentariness would be in a bind: the activity of any cognition at moment t_1 is simply to arise with its appearance. No other function of cognition is experienced. So cognition at t_1 does not both arise with its appearance *and* superimpose some other appearance onto that appearance. The next moment of cognition at t_2 , however, also cannot perform the act of superimposition, for the appearance manifest at t_1 no longer exists—what is left for cognition to superimpose something onto? Every moment of cognition “does not do anything at all to anything through any other activity apart from its arising connected with a coloring by some appearance”³³—or as he goes on to say, “cognition has no other activity apart from the appearance.”³⁴ Cognitions arise in a continuum, each colored by some appearance and each using itself up in so arising. What room is there for a separate activity of superimposition in this picture?

Jñānaśrīmitra then presses the point further. The opponent might suggest that the superimposed external object itself manifests to cognition, and its manifestation just is cognition arising with the appearance of the external object. But Jñānaśrīmitra demurs: on the opponent’s picture, the *ākāra* of cognition is the scope of superimposition (*āropaviṣaya*), or that onto which something is superimposed; it cannot also be the object that is superimposed (*āropyaviṣaya*). Jñānaśrīmitra illustrates the point with reference to an everyday example of error: the manifestation of a mirage, or of shimmering light rays in the distance (i.e. the *āropaviṣaya*) onto which water is superimposed, is not itself the manifestation of water (i.e. the *āropyaviṣaya*). The

³² JNĀ 388.4–5: *jñānaṃ hi kenacid ākāreṇa satyenālīkenaⁱ vopajātaṃ nāma. bāhyāropas tu tadākāre tatkrto ’nyakṛto vā syāt. ⁱ satyenālīkena] MS, RNĀ; satyena vālīkena JNĀ. Cf. RNĀ 134.4–5.*

³³ JNĀ 388.7–8: *dvitīyapakṣe jñānāntaram api nākāroparāgasanḡinīm utpattim antareṇa vyāpārāntareṇa kvacit kiṃcitkaraṃ nāma. Cf. RNĀ 134.8–9.*

³⁴ JNĀ 388.16: *tasmān nākārād anyo jñānasya vyāpārah.*

proper way to understand this, Jñānaśrīmitra will tell us, is that we are spurred to act as if there were water by the appearance of shimmering light rays. This *acting-as-if-there-were-water* is all superimposition really is when we speak of the superimposition of water in a mirage. The superimposed external object (the water) does not manifest to cognition, properly speaking; what manifests is that onto which the supposed object is superimposed (the light rays).³⁵

The opponent proposes instead that superimposition consists of uniting (*ekīkaraṇa*) the appearance and the external object. Both the light-rays and the water manifest to cognition, in other words, and superimposition means bringing the two together and mistaking them as one and the same. But this won't do either, Jñānaśrīmitra reasons. First of all, if this uniting is supposed to occur between two different cognitions, the proponent of momentariness is again in the same bind as before: the appearance of cognition at t_1 no longer exists at t_2 to be united with the supposed external object that manifests there. On the other hand, this uniting cannot occur between the appearance and the external object in a single cognition, for we don't have an independent cognition of the external object that then can be united with the cognition of the appearance. Rather, all we experience is the manifest appearance. The external object does not manifest, and so it cannot be united with the manifest appearance.³⁶

iii. Responding to Ratnākaraśānti's attack on the Sākāravāda: On SSŚ 2 b) Versus The Manifestation of Unreal Content

³⁵ JNĀ 388.18–19: *tadākārasphuraṇam eva tasya sphuraṇam iti cet. na, tasyāropaviṣayatvāt. na hi marīcisphuraṇamⁱ eva jalasphuraṇam. ⁱ marīcisphuraṇam] MS, RNĀ; marīcivisphuraṇam JNĀ. Cf. RNĀ 134.16–17.*

³⁶ JNĀ 388.19–23: *tenasahaikīkaraṇād iti cet. ko 'yam ekīkaraṇārthaḥ. yady ekatāpattau prayojakatvam, tadāropyāviṣayayoḥ kadācid ekībhāvābhāvād asaṃbhavam eva. na hi śaśaviṣāṇe kāraṇam kiṃcit. na ca pūrvam anekam ekatām etīti kṣaṇikavādināḥ sāmpratam. arthāntarotpattimātram tu syāt. na ca tad apy upalabdhiḥ gocarō 'nyatrāropaviṣayāt. na ca tāvatāpy arthasya kiṃcid iti kutas tasyāropaḥ. Cf. RNĀ 134.20–24.*

In Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, all the opponent’s explanations of superimposition share a basic flaw: they are predicated on the possibility of the appearance of something unreal or non-existent (*asatkhyāti*, *asatpratibhāsa*, *asatprakāśa*, etc.). Whether the opponent explains superimposition as cognition bringing one appearance to bear on another, concealing the real one with an unreal one, or whether it is explained as somehow unifying in a single moment of cognition a real and an unreal appearance, in any case Jñānaśrīmitra refuses the premise that something unreal can possibly manifest to cognition.

Making sense of just what this denial means is essential to understanding the radical nature of Jñānaśrīmitra’s position. In his criticism of the Sākāravādin cited at the beginning of SSŚ 2, Ratnākaraśānti had asked, “How could the object that is being determined by conceptual cognition not be made manifest (*prakāśyate*)? Or how could the object that is being made manifest (*prakāśyamāno*) [by conceptual cognition] not manifest in that conceptual cognition?”³⁷ By this he had implied that, for us to be aware of a determined object, that object must show up in cognition—and what could this *showing-up* mean aside from *manifesting* to cognition? If the determined object were not manifest, how could we even be aware of it?

Jñānaśrīmitra seeks to undermine this objection by showing that the manifestation of something unreal is absurd. Thus, because the manifestation of the unreal is absurd, determined objects must be related to cognition in some other way. While Jñānaśrīmitra might sometimes

³⁷ See Katsura’s “Mahidol Handout” (cf. SSŚ, 387.9–12; CAPV, 136.9–13; PPU 78—394.12–18): *katham avasīyamānas tayā so ’rtho na prakāśyate. prakāśyamāno vā katham asau tasyām na prakāśate*. See chapter 3, section iv, b.

use appear-words loosely, when he is speaking precisely, something that *appears* or *manifests* is simply real. Determined objects do not appear or manifest, properly speaking.

Jñānaśrīmitra entertains three possibilities for what the manifestation of something unreal might mean. The compound *asatpratibhāsa* can be understood, first, as a genitive *tatpuruṣa*, as in “the appearance of unreal things like Īśvara and so on” (*asadīśvarādeḥ khyātiḥ*); second, as a *paryudāsa* or implicative negation, as in “a presently-manifesting *ākāra* is unreal” (*bhāsamāno vā ākāro 'san*); or third, as a *prasajyapratishedha*, an existential negation, as in “something real does not appear” (*san vā kaścit na khyāti*).³⁸ Each of these is incoherent.

The first position, he argues, is self-defeating. Falling into verse, he writes,

How could something whose nature *appears* be non-existent?

“Because it is defeated.”

That defeat, too, must surely be
either perception or inference.

If you cannot trust perception in one case,

how can you trust it in the other case?

And how then could inference, which relies upon perception,
be a fit object of your trust?³⁹

That is, if the opponent thinks that what manifests to consciousness is unreal because it can be defeated, that defeat must be another cognition with its own manifest content. If the defeating cognition is a perceptual one, however, then what reason is there to trust it? The opponent, after all, is telling us that the initial manifestation, one that was also experienced through perception,

³⁸ JNĀ 390.22–24: *tathā hy asatpratibhāsa ity asadīśvarādeḥ khyātiḥ, bhāsamāno vākāro 'san, san vā kaścit na khyātiḥ vivakṣitam*. Cf. RNĀ 131.32–33. We will not return to this third option explicitly. Jñānaśrīmitra returns to it on JNĀ 398.20–23. He brushes it aside given his definition of existence as appearance, which we will come to below in more detail: something that appears exists, and something exists appears. On this account, it is absurd for something to be real and yet not to appear.

³⁹ JNĀ 391.1–4: *yasya svarūpanirbhāsas tad evāsat katham bhavet / bādhāto yadi sāpy ekā pratyakṣānumayor nanu // pratyakṣe yady aviśvāsa ekatrānyatra kā gatiḥ / tatpūrvam anumānaṃ vā katham āśvāsaḥ gocarāḥ //* Cf. RNĀ 132.7–10. Ratnakīrti here attributes these verses to his teacher, introducing them with *yadāhur guravaḥ*, as with the verses in the following note.

was wrong—why should we have any confidence in the manifest content of a subsequent defeating perceptual cognition? And an inferential cognition fares no better, for an inference’s input is perceptual. So if what manifests in perception cannot be trusted, all knowledge falls apart—including the opponent’s attempt to refute manifest appearances. Jñānaśrīmitra continues,

Furthermore, there is nothing to being a perceptual cognition aside from making the nature of something directly manifest (*svarūpasākṣātkaraṇa*). It is precisely for this reason that [the opponent’s view that perception] is the basis for the error of conceptual construction is defeated.

If [what the opponent claims to be unreal] is not perceived, its nature could not appear at all. Therefore, it is incoherent to say, “An unreal thing like Īśvara appears.”

If, on the other hand, its nature does indeed appear, then it must be *real* (*sad eva*). Therefore, it appears untrue on *your* part to say that an unreal thing appears!⁴⁰

Perceptual cognition just is the manifestation of mental content. Hence, something that is not perceived does not manifest and so is unreal, while something that manifests is perceived and real. The opponent’s example of an unreal thing that manifests, then, either does not really manifest and so maintains its unreal status, or else it does manifest, in which case it must be real. Of course, Jñānaśrīmitra’s Buddhist interlocutor will not accept that Īśvara is real, and so he falls into absurdity in insisting that an unreal thing like Īśvara manifests to cognition. Jñānaśrīmitra’s wordplay adds insult to injury: the only appearance of something untrue is the opponent’s position that the unreal appears (*asat pratibhātīti pratibhāty asad eva vaḥ*)!

⁴⁰ JNĀ 391.5–10: *svarūpasākṣātkaraṇād adhyakṣatvaṃ na cāparam / vikalpabhramabhūmitvam ata eva hi bādhitam // yadi nādhyakṣatā tasya rūpanirbhāsa eva na / tatas tad asad īśādi pratibhātīty asaṃgatam // yadi tu pratibhāseta rūpam asya sad eva tat / tad asat pratibhātīti pratibhāty asad eva vaḥ // Cf. RNĀ 133.17–22.*

This argument, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us, should do to refute the second position too, viz. that *asatpratibhāsa* means a presently-manifesting unreal *ākāra* (*bhāsamāno vā ākāro 'san*). “By this argument,” he writes, “the second position too should be understood to be rejected because, since existence is established only due to appearance, there is no room for a defeater.”⁴¹ The opponent is unconvinced, and raises what he takes to be a clear counterexample: “But the double-moon, for instance, that really is experienced, is refuted even though it appears!”⁴² It seems obvious, in cases of perceptual illusion, that we perceive something—something manifests to perceptual cognition—and then that manifestation is refuted. How can Jñānaśrīmitra account for this?

Easily. What is refuted is *not* the appearance: the appearance—even of an illusion like the double-moon—cannot be denied. As he says, putting his point in the form of a dictum we are surely meant to remember, “the thing that is defeated does not appear, and what does appear cannot be defeated.”⁴³ That is, as he goes on to clarify, the manifest image of a double-moon is not refuted by some following cognition: if a double-moon appears, that’s the way cognition appears—full stop. Jñānaśrīmitra here embraces what Ratnākaraśānti thought was an absurd conclusion, affirming that, if there is the manifestation of a double-moon, it makes no sense to say that there isn’t one. What *is* denied is the external entity (*bādhā bāhyasya vastunaḥ*). A manifest form undoubtedly appears, but the idea that that form is somehow connected to an external entity of the sort that might be touched—that is, the determined external object—*that is*

⁴¹ JNĀ 391.11–12: *etena dvitīyo 'pi pakṣaḥ pratikṣipto veditavyaḥ, pratibhāsād eva sattāsiddher bādhakāvakāśābhāvāt*. Cf. RNĀ 132.17–18. We will discuss below the implications of this important point, viz. that existence is established *only due to appearance* (*pratibhāsād eva*).

⁴² JNĀ 391.13: *dr̥ṣṭam eva dvicandrādi pratibhāse 'pi bādhitam* / Cf. RNĀ 132.12.

⁴³ JNĀ 391.15: *bādhyasyāpratibhāsanāt, pratibhāsinaś cābādhyatvāt*. Cf. RNĀ 132.14.

denied. In itself, the manifestation of floating hairs (another stock-example of illusion) is not erroneous; the mistake is thinking they are real and reaching out to brush them away.⁴⁴

**iii. Responding to Ratnākaraśānti’s attack on the Sākāravāda: On SSS 2
c) Determination and Externally Directed Activity**

All of this will elicit a frustrated objection: “But *obviously* external objects manifest to us! We see them everyday! And our experience of them, combined with our belief that they persist and our attachment to them, is an essential part of our suffering in the world. How can you, Jñānaśrīmitra, say external objects never manifest?” That is, as Ratnākaraśānti argues in his PPU, external objects are *present to our conscious experience*, and what could this mean aside from *manifest*? If the external does not manifest to us, how do we experience it? If it does manifest, isn’t that precisely the manifestation of something unreal (or an unreal manifesting thing) that Jñānaśrīmitra has tried to refute?

To satisfactorily respond to these worries, Jñānaśrīmitra needs to account for the presence of external, determined content in our cognition without admitting that that content must be manifest. He does this in the first place by reconceptualizing the external (*bāhya*).⁴⁵ An object is

⁴⁴ As Jñānaśrīmitra puts the point, “There is the appearance of an *ākāra* in cognition; it is the external object that is defeated. For there is the appearance of only *rūpa* [viz. the nature of cognition, the *buddhyākāra*], while touch and so on are defeated. [To explain this verse:] For that appearance of *rūpa* alone [viz. the *buddhyākāra*] is determined (*adhyavasīyate*) as being a particular collected-object of the four senses, viz. form, taste, scent, and touch. It is for just this reason that there is the possibility of trying to touch [floating-]hairs, for instance, with the hand. Therefore, the defeat, too, is of *rūpa* only that is connected with all that; it is not of just the *rūpa*.” JNĀ 391.16–20: *buddhyākārasya nirbhāso bādḥā bāhyasya vastunaḥ / rūpasyaiva hi nirbhāsaḥ sparśāder api bādhanam // sa hi rūpamātrapratibhāso rūparasagandhasparśasamudāyaviśeṣatayādhyavasīyate. ata eva keśādu karaparāmarśodyamādi-sambhavaḥ. tato bādḥāpi tatsahacaritasyaiva rūpasya, na rūpamātrasya.* For the verse, compare RNĀ 132.15–16, where the reading of *padās* cd is *sphūrtāv apy aviśvāse kva viśvāsa iti kīrtitam*.

⁴⁵ See the important discussion of this in Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 24–26.

external *not* because it lies outside the head, as part of the external world defined over and against the internal life of the mind. Rather, an object is external if it is the object of the mental process of determination (*adhyavasāya*). This means that, as McCrea and Patil point out, “Even though mental images cannot be acted on physically, they can be the objects of verbal and mental activity, since we do talk and think about them. And in Jñānaśrīmitra’s account, insofar as such mental objects become the objects of activity, they are ‘external.’”⁴⁶ The link here to *activity* (*pravṛtti*) is essential: on Jñānaśrīmitra’s account, it is only in impelling activity that is directed toward an object taken to be distinct from a given instance of cognition that we can speak of the determination of the external. Or to put it another way, we can only ever act toward determined objects; undetermined manifest mental content is never the object of action.⁴⁷

Jñānaśrīmitra lays out this vision of determination and externality in SŚ 2 after having shown that *asatpratibhāsa* is conceptually incoherent.⁴⁸ “This,” he says, “is how it really works”:

Right as it is arising with some *ākāra*, conceptual construction—impelled by diverse, beginningless habituations and relying upon a particular causal condition that awakens it—lays down a continuity of a remembrance of the accomplishment of an aim (*arthakriyā*) (a desire and so on), which is conducive to externally directed activity (*bahirmukhapravṛtṭyanukūla*). Then, on the part of a person who has some desire for the accomplishment of an aim, there is activity, avoidance, or doing nothing in conformity with the external object.⁴⁹

Every cognition arises with an *ākāra*, as we’ve seen Jñānaśrīmitra say before. What is distinct about conceptual construction is that it arises with an *ākāra* that incites the remembrance of the

⁴⁶ McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language*, 24.

⁴⁷ We might note that Ratnakīrti follows his teacher in this regard: see Parimal Patil, *Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 224–227.

⁴⁸ Note that much of this discussion parallels passages in the AP, discussed and translated in McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language*, in addition to Ratnakīrti’s CAPV.

⁴⁹ JNĀ 393.10–13: *tad ayam atra paramārthaḥ, vividhānādivāsanāvaśāt, prabodhakapratyayaviśeṣāpekṣayā vikalpaḥ kenacid ākāreṇopajāyamāna eva bahirmukhapravṛtṭyanukūlam arthakriyāsmaraṇābhilāṣādiprabandhami ādhatte. tataḥ puruṣasyārthakriyārthino bahirarthānurūpāṇi pravṛttinivṛtṭyavadhīraṇāni bhavanti.* [-ābhilāṣādi-] MS_{pc}, RNĀ; -ābhilāpādi- JNĀ, -ābhiṣalāṣādi- MS_{ac} Cf. RNĀ 137.13–16, and compare too AP, JNĀ 226ff., viz. McCrea and Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language*, 88ff.

accomplishment of a desired effect which conforms to an activity directed away from cognition itself. A person with some aim in the present then acts in accordance with that remembrance. Take, for instance, the appearance of a piece of chocolate cake. Insofar as this appearance is simply manifest to cognition and experienced through self-awareness—*it seems to me like chocolate cake*—there is nothing wrong: cognition has arisen colored by a chocolate-cake *ākāra*. But this appearance becomes a conceptual construction, bound up with the errors associated with determination, when it triggers the memory of past chocolate cakes, the satisfaction gained by eating them, etc., and then initiates desirous activity directed away from cognition toward this construction, “chocolate cake.” When the image functions as part of this causal story, related to cognition by inciting effects of outwardly directed activity, it is erroneous. When the image is simply manifest, it is real.

Jñānaśrīmitra goes on to cite Dharmakīrti as evidence for this picture. He writes,

Due to the principle [Dharmakīrti gives in the PVin ad 1.41ab], “This cognition, though it cognizes itself (*svavit*), should be understood as cognizing an object (*arthavit*) because of its effect,” so too a conceptual construction, arising with an *ākāra* such as, “There is fire here,” is nothing but an incitation toward activity, which is to say the determining of the external.⁵⁰

The manifestation of the chocolate-cake-colored cognition is indubitable when considered as a mere first-person seeming—*it seems to me like chocolate cake*. This is immediately evident self-awareness (*svavit*): no other cognition can come along and deny this first-person seeming. What makes that cognition a conceptual construction of an object (*arthavit* rather than *svavit*, as Dharmakīrti puts it) is the *effect* it has: it incites activity (*vikalpasya ... pravṛttyākṣepakatvam*).

⁵⁰ JNĀ 393.18–20: *svavidⁱ apīyam arthavid eva kāryato draṣṭavyeti nyāyāt, tathā vikalpasyāpy agnir atretyādīnākāreṇotpadyamānasya pravṛttyākṣepakatvam eva bāhyādhyavasānam. ⁱsvavid] MS, RNĀ, PVin; svacit JNĀ. Cf. RNĀ 137.21–23, PVin 37.5–6.*

Every cognition is immediately evident and without an object insofar as it is merely a first-person seeming; when that cognition is tied up with externally directed activity, however, it is an erroneous conceptual construction. And as it happens, this occurs constantly: we are all mired in the errors of saṃsāra precisely because *ākāras* impel us toward externally directed activity. The chocolate cake is never simply manifest. It is always bound up with the remembrance of cakes past.

Insofar as they are unreal, these determined external objects cannot manifest to cognition. Were they manifest to cognition, that would be an instance of *asatpratibhāsa*, the manifestation of the unreal or an unreal manifesting thing, which Jñānaśrīmitra has thoroughly refuted. Whereas Ratnākaraśānti understands error to be the superimposition of one (false) manifest appearance onto another (true) manifestation, Jñānaśrīmitra has shown that the process must work rather differently. Error instead occurs due to apprehending x where x is not, which is to say it occurs due to the engagement with a determined object where there is no object but instead just cognition's own appearance (that is, as Dharmakīrti defines it in the PVin, error occurs *atasmīns tadgrahāt*, or *svapratibhāse 'narthe 'rthādhyavasāyena pravartanāt*). Error, then, is fundamentally an *engagement*, an active comportment toward a manifest appearance *as if* it were a distinct object. The appearance, were it recognized as it really is and not engaged with in such a false manner, would be fine.

We might return to one last example to make this clear. Strictly speaking, the water in a mirage does not manifest to the thirsty traveller in the desert. All that manifests are the shimmering light rays. That appearance, however, has the power to impel the traveller away from the manifest content of the cognition itself, seeking satisfaction in the conceptual construction,

“water.” This is what it means to apprehend x where x is not: it is not the apprehension of an appearance where that appearance does not exist, but rather the engagement with a conceptual construction where all that exists is a manifest appearance.⁵¹

Jñānaśrīmitra sometimes even goes so far as to say that the determined external entity is not even properly *cognized*. “For it has been said,” he says in restating his own view, “that the superimposition of the external object is in fact nothing but the instigation of an activity that is conducive to the external object; it is not at all the *cognition (pratīti)* of something distinct.”⁵² The idea is that superimposition is simply acting toward something distinct from cognition itself, *as if* perceiving an external object where really there is just a manifest mental image. The image spurs the activity: as Jñānaśrīmitra puts it at one point, “the non-conceptual cognition contains an error, which is the fact that it is connected to an *ākāra* that has within it (*garbha*) the capacity to produce conceptual cognition of such a sort [that instigates externally directed activity].”⁵³ The *ākāra* contains within itself the capacity to spur erroneous activity directed toward external objects, but in itself, it is real.

The full picture, then, is this: at every moment, *ākāras* manifest to cognition. Due to past habituations and dependent upon the causal conditions that awaken them, these *ākāras* contain within themselves the capacity to incite activity directed away from the manifest cognition itself.

⁵¹ Jñānaśrīmitra restates his point elegantly in a summary verse, availing himself of this example of the mirage once again. He writes, at JNĀ 395.6–9: *sarvā nirviṣayaiva kalpanamatir vyāvṛttibhedānugasvākārotkalitā tu vīkṣitaphalasmṛtyādīm ātanvatī / lokasyākṣipati pravṛttim anapekṣyaivānyad adhyakṣavad vastvāropa itīrito 'rciṣi jalārope janānāmⁱ iva // ⁱjanānām] MS; jalānām, JNĀ. “All conceptual cognition really has no object. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it bears an imprint of some *ākāra* that conforms to a particular exclusion and causes the memory of a result of something directly perceived, it instigates activity on the part of people without requiring anything else, in this respect being like perception. It is called the superimposition of an entity; it is just like the superimposition of water onto rays of light for ordinary people.”*

⁵² JNĀ 393.24–25: *uktaṃ hi tadanurūpapravṛttyākṣepa eva tadārope na parapratītirⁱ nāmeti. ⁱ parapratītir] MS; paramapratītir JNĀ.*

⁵³ JNĀ 395.3–5: *sarvaiva caⁱ vikalpo bahir asprśann eva saty asati bāhye pravṛttiprayojakatayā bhrānta ucyate. asati tu tādr̥gvikalpotpādanaśaktigarbhākārayogo nirvikalpakasya bhrama iti sthītam. ⁱ sarvaiva ca] MS; sarva eva JNĀ.*

Thus spurred, we act as if external objects were there—this activity being all “the superimposition of the external” means—despite the fact that only cognition manifests. The *ākāras* that are manifest to us, then, can be *either* manifest *or* bound up with this process of determination: it is just that, when the *ākāra* incites externally directed activity, we call it the cognition of an object (Dharmakīrti’s *arthavit*) rather than immediately evident self-awareness (his *svavit*).⁵⁴

With all this, Jñānaśrīmitra can easily counter Ratnākaraśānti’s buddhological argument. In response to the objection that the Sākāravādin denies the possibility of error in accepting that manifest appearances are real, Jñānaśrīmitra says:

Moreover, with regard to this [investigation regarding defilement and purification], even given that all cognitions have the awareness of their own real form, there is no elimination of defilement on my view, for we rely on an account of error that is well established in convention, the positing of which arises in the manner just explained.⁵⁵ For just as, for one who accepts the existence of external objects, certain cognitions are posited as erroneous, so too for idealism (*antarnaye*) all cognitions are erroneous. It is just that, if error is made on the basis of externally directed activity, there is no error at all on the part of any cognition with regard to itself.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ One might fruitfully compare this position to John McDowell’s disjunctivist move in “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge” (*Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 [1982]: 455–479). As McDowell argues there is really no common factor between cases of veridical and illusory perception—and so he can say, “an appearance that such-and-such is the case can be *either* a mere appearance *or* the fact that such-and-such is the case making itself perceptually manifest to someone” (472)—so too Jñānaśrīmitra means to diffuse Ratnākaraśānti’s criticisms by showing that there is *either* the manifestation of an *ākāra* in veridical experience *or* the *ākāra* is related to cognition causally in such a way as to determine erroneous externally directed activity. Of course, McDowell’s and Jñānaśrīmitra’s projects are at odds in countless ways; still, if seeing the parallel between their moves in this regard can be instructive, I point to it here.

⁵⁵ Or literally, “the positing of which arises from the seed just explained,” which is to say in dependence upon the *ākāra* that has within it the capacity to produce conceptual cognition thanks to beginningless habituations.

⁵⁶ JNĀ 395.19–23: *tatra caⁱ satyasvākārasaṃvedane ’pi sarvajñānānām, vyavahāraprasiddham anantaroktabījanirjātavyavasthānaṃⁱⁱ bhramatvam āśrītya na saṃkleśakṣatiḥ. yathā ca bāhye sati kvacid bhramavyavasthā, tathāntaranayeⁱⁱⁱ sarvatra. kevalaṃ bahirmukhapravṛttyapekṣayā kriyamāṇo nātmani kaścid bhrama ity uktam bhavati.* ⁱ ca] MS; om. JNĀ. ⁱⁱ anantarokta-] MS; *anantakāla-* JNĀ. ⁱⁱⁱ tathāntaranaye] MS, RNĀ; *tathā nirṇaye* JNĀ. For the referent of *tatra*, see *pada* d of the preceding verse: *saṃkleśādīparīkṣaṇam*. Cf. RNĀ 140.19–20.

We are all mired in *samsāra* all the time insofar as we cannot help but be spurred by *ākāras* that incite externally directed activity. Liberation would indeed be engaging just with the *ākāra* manifest in self-awareness.

Before moving on to a related set of issues, we might pause to consider how Jñānaśrīmitra's position thus far compares to Ratnākaraśānti's. Ratnākaraśānti thinks that manifestation is real, that it is given indubitably in self-awareness, and that the everyday objects we encounter, insofar as they are suffused with duality, are unreal. He holds that those unreal everyday objects manifest to cognition, and so they must be different from manifestation itself; the fact that they are targetable by the neither-one-nor-many argument while manifestation itself is not proves this fact. Jñānaśrīmitra, on the other hand, thinks contentless manifestation is impossible. There is only ever a manifest *ākāra*—that is what is real and given indubitably in self-awareness, not a hypostatized bare manifestation—and so, insofar as that is real, unreal everyday objects cannot be manifest. When we are dealing with the cognition of actionable objects (*arthavit* rather than *svavit*), we are dealing not with manifest appearances, but rather with an incitation toward something distinct from a given moment of consciousness and the anticipation of a satisfied desire.

By telling us that the actionable objects we engage with in a fundamentally interested way are not manifest, Jñānaśrīmitra is delimiting the notion of “manifestation” in a way Ratnākaraśānti did not. For Ratnākaraśānti, any mental content whatsoever that is present to consciousness is manifest to consciousness. For Jñānaśrīmitra, this is not so: the object that incites externally directed activity is not manifest; properly speaking, only mental content that is present first-personally in self-awareness is manifest. This is part of what it means to say, with a

verse of Dharmakīrti's whose full significance we will appreciate below, *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate* (PV 3.221ab)—or, as Jñānaśrīmitra modifies the half-verse (JNĀ 395), *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ rūpaṃ tasya tad eva hi*: “However cognition appears, that is precisely how it is experienced,” or “[...] that is precisely its nature.” Our goal in what follows will be to get clear on just what this tells us about manifest mental content and the non-dual, contentful nature of consciousness.

iv. Variegated Mental Content and the Unity of Cognition: the *Citrādvaita* a) The Problem

To paraphrase Dharmakīrti: Cognition appears as unified, and that is precisely how it is experienced. When I experience the world, though there are manifold objects I experience at any given moment—the standard-issue medium-sized dry goods, but also smells and sounds and moods, etc.—that experience is given as *mine*, as a unified experience *for me*. Consciousness is experienced with what some philosophers refer to as *phenomenal unity*.⁵⁷ This thesis that consciousness is unified, however, has given philosophers pause. Since we experience manifold objects (assuming for the moment an external realism), the unity cannot come from the side of the object. But then, is it to be found in a *representation* of the manifold that is in fact the immediate object of experience? After all, a representation of a manifold need not itself be manifold: a picture of a crowd of people is itself a single picture. Or else does the unity of

⁵⁷ See for instance Michael Tye's *Consciousness and Persons*, passim but especially for our purposes his Chapter 1. The core intuition regarding phenomenal unity, Tye writes, is that “in normal cases, simultaneously experienced perceptual qualities—the loudness of a sound, the smoothness of a surface, the sweetness of a taste, the pungency of a smell—are experienced together and thus are phenomenologically unified” (36). See Kapstein, *Reason's Traces*, 147–151, for a discussion of phenomenal unity as a topic of dispute among Buddhist and non-Buddhist logicians.

experience come from consciousness itself? Perhaps it is the fact that consciousness is in every moment conscious not only of its object but also of itself that gives it its phenomenal unity. Or perhaps it is the transcendental unity of apperception that accounts for experience being unified—though the origins of *this* took Kant three *Critiques* to explore.

Jñānaśrīmitra is concerned to make sense of the unitary nature of consciousness as well. A central part of the SSS concerns a defense of the view that the manifestation of an appearance given in self-awareness, however manifold this may seem, is really unitary. Above we alluded to what we might call Jñānaśrīmitra's representationalism: the phenomenal character of consciousness is not to be found anywhere but the content of consciousness; manifestation is not a hypostatized entity over and above a given appearance. So too with phenomenal unity: it is not something over and above the manifestation of a given appearance. But how it is that what seems intuitively to be manifold—the appearance of different colors in Michael Tye's tapestry or Dharmakīrti's butterfly-wing—can yet be unitary presents Jñānaśrīmitra with a difficult set of issues.

**iv. Variegated Mental Content and the Unity of Cognition: the *Citrādvaita*
b) Ratnākaraśānti's Last Stand: One More Argument for Difference**

The problem of the unity of consciousness and its manifold content is raised by Ratnākaraśānti, who has this last trick up his sleeve in his effort to establish the difference between content and manifestation. Citing by name and critiquing Jñānaśrīmitra's hero, Prajñākaragupta, Ratnākaraśānti argues in his VMS that an appearance to consciousness is manifold whereas

manifestation itself is unitary, and so there must be at least this difference between them. He raises here the topic of our cognition of a variegated mental image (*citrākāra*)—a topic Dharmakīrti addressed and which takes on special significance in Prajñākaragupta.⁵⁸ Opposed to Prajñākaragupta (and implicitly, it would seem, Dharmakīrti as well), Ratnākaraśānti here sides with his erstwhile Mādhyamika opponent Śāntarakṣita, who also argues that the problem of the numerical correspondence between manifestation and appearances is insurmountable, and so the two must be distinct.⁵⁹

Dharmakīrti had suggested in a pair of obscure verses (PV 3.220–221), however, that there is a fundamental difference between cognition and *external objects*: external objects can be analyzed into their component parts, but *each cognition presents itself as a unity*.⁶⁰ The experience of even a variegated image like a butterfly wing, then, *insofar as that appearance is a quality contingent on cognition (jñānopādhi)*—and not external, analyzable matter—is really unitary (*ekabhāva*). Early commentators explain that the cognition of a variegated image is

⁵⁸ While very important, a detailed discussion of the issues surrounding our cognition of the *citrākāra* in Dharmakīrti and his commentators is outside the scope of our current discussion. See John Dunne’s lucid discussion of this topic in his *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy*, 98–113, as well as his translation of the relevant passage from Dharmakīrti (with copious reference to Devendrabuddhi and Śākyabuddhi), 396–411. For Prajñākaragupta’s novel interpretation of this issue, see Masahiro Inami, “Nondual cognition,” in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference. Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, and Birgit Kellner (Vienna: VÖAW, 2011), 177–196. Inami’s work is especially helpful in getting a handle on Jñānaśrīmitra’s position on the *citrādvaita*.

⁵⁹ See Śāntarakṣita’s MA(Ś), v.46 (following Dan Arnold’s forthcoming translation): “If appearances were real, then either cognition would have to be manifold, or else they would have to be unitary. Insofar as the two thus have contradictory properties, cognition and appearances are certainly distinct.” Ichigō, *Madhyamakālamkāra*, 128: *gal te yang dag rnam par shes / du mar ’gyur ro yang na ni / de dag gcig ’gyur ’gal ldan pas / gdon mi za bar so sor ’gyur / Arnold’s forthcoming translation also incorporates part of Śāntarakṣita’s commentary: “It is hard to deny either that cognition, insofar as it is not distinct from real appearances, must (like the essence of the appearances themselves) be manifold; or, on the other hand, that the appearances, since they are not distinct from unitary cognition, must (like the essence of cognition) be unitary. If they are ultimately real, then appearances and cognition must be distinct, since they have contradictory properties.” (See Ichigō, *Madhyamakālamkāra*, 128, for the Tibetan of this passage, as well as the Sanskrit as cited by Haribhadra.) Reasoning like this is what Ratnākaraśānti is thinking here too: despite their disagreeing about the ultimate nature of manifestation, Ratnākaraśānti can join forces with Śāntarakṣita to refute the Sākāravādin with this line of argument.*

⁶⁰ We will come to Jñānaśrīmitra’s discussion of these verses below. See the full discussion, translated in the appendix.

unitary because it cannot bear analysis (*aśakyavivecana*). When we analyze the cognition of variegated mental content into the cognition of blue plus the cognition of yellow, for instance, we in fact engender new cognitions, each of which is unitary in itself: the cognition of the variegated image is one cognition, the analytical cognition of just blue is another, and so on. To think that the cognition of a variegated image is analyzable is to mistake the image for the external object that caused it in the first place. One who analyzes the cognition, Dharmakīrti says in John Dunne’s translation, is “focusing on the object [that produced the awareness, not the awareness itself]” (*pataty arthe*).⁶¹ We cognize mental images of external objects, and when we seek to analyze these images as if they had parts we treat them as if they were not cognitive phenomena but instead the external objects that produced them.

In Ratnākaraśānti’s VMS, Prajñākaragupta is made to conclude from this that the cognitions of blue and yellow in the cognition of variegation must not be different from each other: the cognition of variegation is just one cognition. “According to Prajñākaragupta,” Ratnākaraśānti says, “[the cognitions of blue and yellow] are really *one* because they appear together, for if they were different, they would not be cognized together through the inner-experience of self-awareness.”⁶² Prajñākaragupta reasons that, if the cognition of blue and the cognition of yellow arise together in a single moment of experience and are experienced together through self-awareness, they must not be different from one another. If they were different, that would mean they would each be cognized by their own instance of self-awareness: each would be its own separate cognition. As such, the two cognitions would be as distinct from each other

⁶¹ Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy*, 411.

⁶² VMS 106—848: *btsun pa shes rab ’byung gnas sbas pa ni ’di dag gcig nyid de, lhan cig par snang ba’i phyir te, ’di ltar tha dad pa na rang rig pa nang du bltas pas phan tshun rtogs pa med de.*

as one's own cognition is from another person's. But the experience of variegation is not like that: what is given in self-awareness is a unitary cognition, and so one is able to experience blue and yellow together in that single cognition. Hence, the cognition of blue and the cognition of yellow in the experience of variegation are really one and the same.

Ratnākaraśānti objects that this is incoherent, for blue and yellow are in fact mutually exclusive properties, and so they cannot occur in a single cognition (or, in the technical parlance Ratnākaraśānti alludes to here, they cannot occupy the same locus). “Blue and yellow each have a single nature that does not exist in the other: they are really different. This is because it is contradictory for existence and non-existence to exist at the same time in one and the same place.”⁶³ Blue is (among other things) the non-existence of yellow, and likewise yellow is (among other things) the non-existence of blue. Hence, the two cannot occur in one cognition, for it is contradictory for the *existence* of blue on the one hand and yellow qua the *non-existence* of blue on the other to occupy the same locus. The fact that the two different colors appear to a single continuum is explained not due to their appearing together; rather, Ratnākaraśānti

⁶³ VMS 106—848: 'di ltar sngon po dang ser po la sogs pa gcig gi ngo bo gang yin pa de gzhan la de med pa de kho na nyid bye brag yin no. gcig la gcig yin par cig car dngos po dang dngos po med pa 'gal ba'i phyir ro.

stipulates that the cognition of blue and the separate cognition of yellow have one and the same material cause (*upādāna*), and that is enough to explain their occurrence in a single continuum.⁶⁴

This obscure line of argument allows Ratnākaraśānti one last means to establish a difference between content and manifestation. If he can maintain that the content of our cognition is manifold when we experience variegated appearances but manifestation itself is unitary—and if he can maintain this while still accounting for how there is a distinction between mental continua—then he can argue that the identity between content and manifestation will only ever be a superimposed one. Something manifold can never be identical to something unitary.

iv. Variegated Mental Content and the Unity of Cognition: the *Citrādvaita*
c) Jñānaśrīmitra's Response: Background Assumptions

Jñānaśrīmitra's clearest statements regarding his non-dualism come in responding to this line of objection and explicating the relationship between cognition and variegated appearances.

Jñānaśrīmitra's arguments in this regard are founded on two assumptions we have already seen at

⁶⁴ VMS 106—849: *de bas na tha dad pa gcig yin pa spangs nas lhan cig snang ba'i rgyu mtshan dpyad de, de dag kyang nye bar len pa tha mi dad pa nyid can yin pa'i phyir rtogs par bya ba de rnams kyi nye bar len pa tha mi dad pa yin nyid yin la rtogs par byed pa de rnams kyi yang de nyid de, rang dang gzhan gyi sems ni nye bar len pa gcig pa can nyid ma yin pas de rnams kyi lhan cig snang ba med do.* Ratnākaraśānti's whole response to Prajñākaragupta, and this last argument regarding having the same *upādāna* in particular, is very closely paraphrased in the third chapter of the SSŚ in the voice of a *pūrvapakṣa*, raising the intriguing possibility that Jñānaśrīmitra knew the VMS. See JNĀ 420.7–11: *nānākāraṃ hi citram abhidhīyate, tataḥ parasparaviruddhadharmādhyāsinām ākāraṇām katham abhedat? bhedo 'pi tarhi katham ekavedanāntarगतānām bhinnasantānavat parasparam asaṃvedanāt ekasyaiva kasyacit pratibhāsaprasakteḥ. tad ayuktam, viruddhadharmādhyāsasya tad avasthatvāt. tasmād anekam evedam, abhinnopādānanyatvāt parasparam adhyakṣabhāvaḥ sāhityapratihāsasvabhāvaḥ. santānāntarabhuvām tu buddhīm abhinnopādānatāviraḥān nātivyāptiḥ.* “For something that has various forms (*nānākāraṃ*) is called variegated (*citram*). Then how can there be non-difference of multiple *ākāras* that consist of the imposition of mutually opposed properties? ‘Then, how can there be difference either, because it would undesirably follow that only one *ākāra* would appear since the mutually opposed *ākāras* within a single awareness cannot be aware of each other, just liked different continua [are not aware of each other].’ That is not right, for there is still the superimposition of opposed properties. Therefore, this must be only multiple. However, because of the property of being produced from the same material cause (*abhinnopādānanyatvāt*), there can be mutual awareness [viz. the awareness of blue and of yellow], which has as its nature appearance with accompaniment (*sāhityapratibhāsa-svabhāvaḥ*). However, for cognitions that arise in other continuities, there is no state of having the same material cause; hence, there is no over-extension.”

work: first, to exist is to manifest; second, to manifest is to be included within a single, unitary cognition.⁶⁵ Having restricted the definition of manifestation such that it no longer refers to anything unreal, Jñānaśrīmitra has already stipulated this first assumption: because *asat-pratibhāsa/khyāti*, the manifestation of the non-existent or non-existent manifestation, is incoherent no matter how it is understood, it is only ever existence that manifests. This definition, that existence is what is manifest, is in fact Prajñākaragupta's: as he puts the point, "If something does not exist, how can it manifest? If it manifests, how can it not exist?"⁶⁶ Ultimately, then, what manifests exists and what exists manifests.

The second assumption, that to manifest is to be included within a single, unitary cognition, may appear less obvious, but it is nevertheless closely tied to the first. For a cognition to be manifest is for it to make its nature immediately present to self-awareness. Self-awareness, insofar as it is aware only of itself, is not aware of anything distinct—for instance, another cognition. "Awareness," Jñānaśrīmitra writes, "does not enter into another awareness, and it is precisely because it passes away locked in a single awareness that we deny that one's own and another's cognition are aware of each other."⁶⁷ Each cognition is aware of only itself, locked

⁶⁵ Jñānaśrīmitra establishes this first point in different places throughout his SSS, some of which we discussed above, chapter 4, section iii, b. For the conclusion, see, for instance, JNĀ 420.1–2: *tattvatas tu prakāśa eva vāstavi satteti vyavasthāpitam*; JNĀ 444.10–11: *sattvaṃ ca pratibhāsāt siddham*. See, too, Taiken Kyuma, "Jñānaśrīmitra on the Definition of Existence," in *From Vasubandhu to Caitanya: studies in Indian philosophy and its textual history*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst and Karin Preisendanz (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010), 121–136.

⁶⁶ Jñānaśrīmitra cites this line of Prajñākaragupta's at JNĀ 462.14: *abhāve katham pratibhāsaḥ? pratibhāsaś cet, katham abhāvaḥ?* Cf. PVA 286.28–29: *teṣāṃ apy avidyamānatve katham pratibhāsaḥ? pratibhāsaś cet katham avidyamānatā?* Jñānaśrīmitra shows that the *Ṭīkā* on the PVA by Jayanta also confirms this definition: JNĀ.462.15–16: *tīkā cātra ekānekarūpaparihṛtasyāpy upalambhātmatayopalambhaḥ satteti nyāyāt sad eveti*. "Even if it has neither a unitary nor a manifold nature, [appearance] exists insofar as it consists of apprehension, due to the dictum that existence is apprehension." See Inami, "Nondual cognition," 191, for the Tibetan parallel in Jayanta's *Ṭīkā*. Inami notes there too, in fn.49, passages where Prajñākaragupta offers the definition of existence Jayanta cites here: "PVA 213,25: ... *upalambhaḥ satteti vyavasthā /*; 214,21: *tata upalambhaḥ sattocyate /*; 412,26: *upalambhaḥ sattocyate /*."

⁶⁷ JNĀ 420.15–16: *na hi saṃvit paraśaṃvidam āviśati. ekasaṃvidargalavigamād eva ca svaparavidām anyonyavedanāpavādaḥ*.

away in itself, in total darkness with respect to everything else. If as Ratnākaraśānti argues the cognition of blue and the cognition of yellow were really separate, they would be like two different mental continua which, no matter how close they are to one another, nevertheless do not experience each other.⁶⁸ Again, Jñānaśrīmitra takes this assumption from Prajñākaragupta, who writes, “If awareness is self-awareness, the manifestation of difference is not reasonable because [self-awareness] culminates in its own nature. For there is no awareness of something distinct in self-awareness. Hence there is no manifestation of difference.”⁶⁹

These two assumptions have an important implication, first drawn out by Prajñākaragupta and made abundantly clear by Jñānaśrīmitra. Contra much of Dharmakīrti’s text-tradition, existence is not ultimately defined as causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*).⁷⁰ Indeed, all forms of causation are predicated on the possibility of two distinct moments of cognition manifesting

⁶⁸ JNĀ 420.18–20: *pratibhāsaś ca teṣāṃ svasvarūpasākṣātkaraṇam iti nānyonyavedanam upapādītam, santamasamagrasaṃnihitānekapuruṣavat*. “Moreover, manifestation is a cognition making its nature directly present. Hence, [the opponent who argues that the cognition of blue and cognition of yellow might be aware of each other] has not shown mutual awareness, [and the cognition of blue and the cognition of yellow] are like people who are close to one another but plunged into total darkness.”

⁶⁹ PVA 288.3–4: *jñānam api yadīdam svasaṃvedanaṃ svasvarūpaparyavasānād bhedāvabhāsītā na yuktā. na hi svasaṃvedane parasaṃvedanam. tato na bhedapratibhāsa*. Indeed, as Inami points out, even to say there is *self*-awareness might be too much: strictly speaking, if *self*-awareness is thought to be opposed to *other*-awareness, we should say only that manifestation in which there is no distinction merely occurs. See Inami, “Nondual cognition,” 180–181.

⁷⁰ Causal efficacy is only the highest *conventional* definition of existence; it is not ultimately the case. Jñānaśrīmitra makes this point in his *Kṣaṇabhaṅgādhyāyaḥ Pakṣadharmādhikāraḥ* (see JNĀ 4–7), as Taiken Kyuma has shown in “Jñānaśrīmitra on the Definition of Existence,” and as Eli Franco and Miyako Notake note as well (*Dharmakīrti on the Duality of the Object*, 38–42). In his *Kṣaṇabhaṅgādhyāyaḥ Pakṣadharmādhikāraḥ*, Jñānaśrīmitra puts the point in the context of Dharmakīrti’s enigmatic verses on causal efficacy as the criterion of ultimate existence, viz. PV 3.3–4; he interprets verse 4’s enigmatic *astu yathā tathā* with “No matter whether it is real conventionally or ultimately, what is the use of clinging to this point?” (*astu yathā tathā samvṛtyā paramārthena vā, kim atra nirbandhena*). Relying on Masahiro Inami’s work (available only in Japanese), Franco and Notake say the following, which is indeed Jñānaśrīmitra’s view: “Inami claims that this interpretation of the phrase is unique to Jñānaśrīmitra, and adds that in order to understand it we need to know his singular view of the two truths, namely, that the distinction between the conventionally real and the ultimately real is relative rather than absolute. Jñānaśrīmitra thought that there is a hierarchy among conventionally real things: from the view point of lower conventionally real things, higher conventionally real things are ultimately real, but that these ultimately real things are, in turn, merely conventionally real in relation to yet higher conventionally real things. Thus *arthakriyā*, which is the highest of the conventionally real, is ultimately real” (41). Jñānaśrīmitra reiterates this point, and explores its logical ramifications, in SSS 3, again with reference to PV 3.4 (as well as PVin 1.59); cf. JNĀ 419.1–15.

together in a single experience. But this is not possible. As Jñānaśrīmitra writes at the beginning of SSS 3, tellingly entitled “The Entrance into the Middle Way” (*madhyamāvatārapariccheda*),

When one falsely conceives that there is cognition of other things (*anātmasaṃvitti*),
all this [viz. causal relationships (*hetupalabhāva*) and temporal sequence
(*pūrvāparabhāva*)] is suitable in convention (*vyavahāra*).
But when one is solely intent upon cognition
that is aware of its own nature (*svarūpasamvitti*),
where is there the possibility of the difference of temporal sequence?⁷¹

When we accept that the present moment of self-aware manifestation is all that is ultimately real, there is no scope for the experience of difference. The cognition of temporal sequence, which grounds the cognition of cause and effect, can only be conventionally true, dependent as it is upon the false conceit (*abhimāna*) that there is the awareness of other things.

Throughout the early sections of SSS 3, Jñānaśrīmitra defends this position—taking Ratnākaraśānti’s defense of the reality of causal relations as his target.⁷² A detailed look at these arguments is beyond the scope of our present discussion, though we will return to the important issue of the mere conventional nature of difference below. Suffice it to say here that Jñānaśrīmitra grounds his arguments on the fact that difference is only ever a conventional determination, and so, because every attempt the opponent makes to establish causal efficacy is grounded on difference, causal efficacy can only be conventional.

Indeed, not only is the notion of a cause (*hetu*) grounded on difference, but so is the notion of a reason (*hetu*) in an inferential cognition. When the opponent worries that Jñānaśrīmitra contradicts himself insofar as he uses reasons to show that there are no reasons

⁷¹ JNĀ 412.18–21: *anātmasaṃvittiyabhimānakāle samastam etad vyavahārayogyam / svarūpasamvittiparāyaṇatve kva bheda-pūrvāparabhāvayogaḥ //*

⁷² Bhikṣu Hejung first identified that the *pūrvapakṣa* at JNĀ 413.21–24 is a citation from the PPU.

(“How then does a reason prove that there are no reasons?”⁷³), Jñānaśrīmitra responds that there is no contradiction in his use of reasons *conventionally* to show that reasons have no scope *ultimately*. He writes,

On the basis of being cognized with a function despite really being without a function, what is really cognition’s own appearance is observed as if it had a function with regard to [the absence of a cause/reason (*hetu*)]. [...] And apart from a particular kind of transformation of forms of conceptualization (*kalpanākāra-*), there is no other means of realizing reality. But no one anywhere disagrees about the culminating state, the ultimate truth, which is solely characterized by self-awareness, nor can there be any proof or refutation regarding that. [...] Inference too, just like sense-perception, is a means of knowledge only *conventionally* (*saṃvyavahārataḥ*), not in reality (*tattvataḥ*), for it is reliant upon the apprehension of relations. And that [apprehension of relations] is not possible for one who is immersed in self-awareness alone (*svavinmātramagna*), because even in the case of a *svabhāva* *hetu*, positive and negative concomitance must be established by different cognitions.⁷⁴

We start out stuck in convention and must make do with the tools we have. Despite being abandoned by one who abides in the ultimate truth, immersed in self-awareness alone, these tools can be used to approach that truth, and it is essential to use valid arguments in our effort to realize it. Indeed, as Jñānaśrīmitra tells us later, Dharmakīrti says the same in PVin ad 1.58: “That is precisely why Dharmakīrti says, ‘What I’ve taught is the nature of valid knowledge conventionally.’ Therefore, it is not a fault that one who is at the level of convention should follow fixed reasons.”⁷⁵ Dharmakīrti himself recognized that logic is of conventional use on the path to ultimate truth—surely the opponent cannot fault Jñānaśrīmitra for doing the same.

⁷³ JNĀ 416.6: *katham tarhi hetunā hetvabhāvasiddhir iti.*

⁷⁴ JNĀ 416.8–11, 16–18: *tataḥ savyāpārapratītatām upādāya nirvyāpāro ’pi svapratībhāsa etasmin savyāpāra iva lakṣyate. [...] na ca kalpanākāravivartaviśeṣād anyas tattvādhigamopāyaḥⁱ. na tu svavidekalakṣaṇaparamārthaniṣṭhāyāṃ kasyacit kvacit vivādaḥ, sādhanadūṣaṇāvātāro vā. [...] anumānam apīndriyapratyakṣavat saṃvyavahārata eva pramāṇam, na tattvataḥ sambandhagrahaṇādyapekṣatvāt. na ca svavinmātramagnena tac chakyamⁱⁱ, svabhāvaḥetāv apy anvayavyatirekayoḥ pratītibhedasādhyatvāt. ⁱ tattvādhigamopāyaḥ] MS_{pc}; tattvābhyadhigamopāyaḥ JNĀ; ⁱⁱ tac chakyam] conj. Isaacson; tac ca śakyam JNĀ.*

⁷⁵ JNĀ 419.13–14: *ata evāha, sāṃvyāvahārikasya cedaṃ pramāṇasya rūpam uktam ityādi tasmān na sāṃvyāvahārikasya pratiniyatasādhanānusāradoṣaḥ. Cf. PVin ad 1.58: sāṃvyāvahārikasya caitat pramāṇasya rūpam uktam. See Parimal Patil’s discussion of this passage in *Against a Hindu God*, 321–323.*

iv. **Variegated Mental Content and the Unity of Cognition: the *Citrādvaita***
d) **Jñānaśrīmitra's Response: The Non-Duality of Wondrously Variegated Cognition**

All this allows us to see more clearly the importance of Ratnākaraśānti's argument that a variegated mental image must be manifold because one cannot impose contradictory properties in a single locus. Having shown that all forms of difference predicated on temporal sequence are not manifest in self-awareness, Jñānaśrīmitra still has to account for variegation. For if Ratnākaraśānti is right and the blue and yellow that manifest in the experience of variegation are really different, Jñānaśrīmitra will be forced to accept that difference *does* manifest in that experience. Not only would this allow Ratnākaraśānti to conclude that there is a difference between (manifold) content and (unitary) manifestation; further, it would contradict Prajñākaragupta's and Jñānaśrīmitra's dictum that difference is never manifest in self-awareness. It would amount to a denial of the phenomenal unity of experience. The stakes are quite high, then, for interpreting the unity of variegated appearances—interpreting, that is, Dharmakīrti's statement in PV 3.221: “Awareness is experienced in precisely the way it appears. For this reason, consciousness with variegated content is indeed unitary.”⁷⁶

But once again, and following Prajñākaragupta's lead, Jñānaśrīmitra presents an innovative solution to this problem: he embraces the non-duality of the experience of variegation while at once abandoning both the manifoldness *and the unity* of that experience. That is,

⁷⁶ See Jñānaśrīmitra's first citation of this verse, at JNĀ 445.16–17: *yad yathā bhāṣate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ* // ⁱ *citrākārasya cetasaḥ*] MS; *citrākāre 'pi cetasi* JNĀ. Note, however, that this translation does not follow Jñānaśrīmitra's initial interpretation of this verse: we will come to that below.

Jñānaśrīmitra will admit that manifest variegated content is neither unitary nor manifold—and yet, insofar as it manifests, it is still ultimately real. The pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold that is central to the neither-one-nor-many argument does not apply to manifest variegated content: this content, despite being neither one nor many, is not shown by this fact not to exist. Indeed, its manifest non-dual reality is beyond both the dualistic bifurcation of being unitary or being manifold, as well as the dualism implied by all forms of argument.

Jñānaśrīmitra finds this view confirmed in PV 3.220–221, Dharmakīrti’s verses on the *citrākāra*—or, as Prajñākaragupta first dubbed it, the *citrādvaita*.⁷⁷ Recall that earlier commentators understood these verses to be making a relatively straightforward point: because cognition cannot be analyzed in the same way external matter can be—because, that is, cognition presents a phenomenal unity—our experience of even variegated content is really unitary. Thinking it can be analyzed into its discrete parts (blue here, yellow there) is to attend not to the cognition itself but to the external object that caused the cognition. Hence, as John Dunne translates the verses following the earliest strata of commentators, we have:

A color such as blue in a variegated or multicolored awareness is a quality contingent on awareness (*jñānopādhi*) and as such it does not participate in any other awareness [such as the awareness of just blue]. Hence, it cannot be seen [as distinct from the variegation] because when analyzing it [as distinct], one is focusing on the object (*artha*) [that produced the awareness, not the awareness itself]. [PV 3.220]

⁷⁷ PVA 290.13. See Inami, “Nondual cognition,” 184: “While Prajñākaragupta may be granted the introduction of the term ‘*citrādvaita*’ in Buddhist philosophy, he uses it only once to refer to the variegated and singular nature of cognition.”

An awareness is experienced in whichever way that awareness appears. Therefore, indeed (*nāma*), the variegated or multicolored image in awareness should be simple. [PV 3.221]⁷⁸

Blue that appears in a variegated awareness is inextricable from that variegation, which is experienced in the first place as simple, an indivisible unitary appearance. The awareness of *just blue* would be a separate awareness with its own phenomenal unity. To analyze the variegated awareness is to focus on the external object that is supposed by some to have caused it.

Though he preserves certain aspects of this interpretation, Jñānaśrīmitra understands this pair of verses rather differently. We might freely render the verses, now following Jñānaśrīmitra’s lead:

Blue that appears in the awareness of variegation [is both manifold and unitary, and so neither unitary nor manifold]. Still, it consists of awareness [and so it ultimately exists]. It is not possible to experience it without the other [colors in the variegation]; one who analyzes it falls on the side of the external realists.

Awareness is experienced in precisely the way it manifests. Hence, the name, “unitary,” ought to apply to awareness with variegated content.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy*, 410–411. See Hiromasa Tosaki’s *Bukkyō-ninshikiron no kenkyū* (“Studies in Buddhist epistemology”) (Tokyo: Daitōshuppansha, 1979–1985), Vol. 1, 317: *nīlādīś citravijñāne jñānopādhir anyabhāk / aśakyadarśanas taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan* // [220] *yad yathā bhāsate jñānan tat tathāivānubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasi* // [221] Note the reading of 221d here, which Jñānaśrīmitra never presents. See the following footnote.

⁷⁹ JNĀ 445.5–6, 16–17: *nīlādīś citravijñāne jñānopādhir anyabhāk / aśakyadarśanas taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan* // [220] *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ* // [221] ⁱ *citrākārasya cetasaḥ*] MS, *citrākāre ’pi cetasi* JNĀ. Note that *citrākārasya cetasaḥ* is also Prajñākaragupta’s reading of *pada* d: PVA 290.11. The reading of this verse is subject to some variation. Jñānaśrīmitra presents these verses a number of times throughout the chapter, and later he considers the reading *citrākāre ’pi cetasi* at a number of places, suggesting that he was fully aware of both readings and was happy to show his position followed either way (though I suspect that his presentation of the genitive reading first, as well as its occurrence in Prajñākaragupta, suggests he prefers it): for the locative reading, see JNĀ 447.12, 454.23, SSSū 4.134; for the genitive reading, see also JNĀ 448.15, 455.2, SSSū 4.104, 4.174. Only Manorathanandin supports the reading of the two words in different cases, viz. *citrākārasya cetasi*, which occurs in Sāṅkṛtyāyana’s 1938 edition of the *kārikās* of the PV and is repeated in Miyasaka’s “Pramāṇavārttika-Kārikā” and Tosaki’s *Bukkyō-ninshikiron no kenkyū*; cf. Manorathanandin’s gloss, PVV 185.10–11: *citrasya nīlapītādyākārasya cetasi buddhāv ekabhāvo nāma bhavet tadā ko doṣaḥ*. Finally, Birgit Kellner has suggested (see Isaacson and Sferra, *Sekanirdeśa*, 269 fn.93) that the reading of *prakāśate* for *anubhūyate* in 3.221b is unattested anywhere; Sāṅkṛtyāyana first conjectured this on the basis of Manorathanandin’s gloss since his principal witness was damaged here, and it has since been suggested by others as a viable reading. Jñānaśrīmitra does, however, have *anugamyate* for *anubhūyate* at two places: see JNĀ 448.14, SSSū 4.174.

Jñānaśrīmitra returns to these verses many times over the course of SSS 4, entertaining many different interpretations—and even different readings—of the verses. On his first pass through them, he emphasizes a fundamental difference between his interpretation and that of his predecessors: while his predecessors had suggested that the blue (*nīlādi*) in the consciousness of variegation (*citravijñāna*) consists of awareness (*jñānopādhi*), and so it is really (*nāma*) unitary (*ekabhāva*), Jñānaśrīmitra takes Dharmakīrti to be saying instead that the blue is neither unitary nor manifold.⁸⁰ That is, Dharmakīrti’s word *citravijñāne*, “in the awareness of variegation,” is in fact a negation of being unitary and being manifold: *citra*, variegation, is the negation of *unitary*, and insofar as it is only ever one single cognizer (*ekapratipattṛ*) who is aware in a given moment of experience, *vijñāna*, awareness, is the negation of *manifold*. Blue that appears in the *single* cognizer’s awareness of *multiplicity*, then, is both manifold and unitary, and so, because to be manifold is to be not-unitary and to be unitary is to be not-manifold, it is neither unitary nor manifold.⁸¹

And yet, in a further innovative move, Jñānaśrīmitra lends new meaning to Dharmakīrti’s *jñānopādhi*, which Dunne translates “it is a quality contingent on awareness,” and which we might understand as “it consists of awareness,” following Jñānaśrīmitra (see his *jñānātmatayā*). External matter is shown to be unreal by the neither-one-nor-many argument, as Vasubandhu famously argued. But contra Mādhyamikas like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, as well as Nirākāravādins like Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra shows that this argument no longer applies

⁸⁰ Indeed, this is how he first introduces the pair of verses: “Therefore, in summary, we can say that blue and so on, which is neither unitary nor manifold, indeed exists insofar as it is manifest.” JNĀ 445.4: *tasmāt prakāṣatayā sann eva nīlādir ekānekavidhuraś ceti saṃgrahaḥ*.

⁸¹ JNĀ 445.8–9: *atra citra ity ekatā niṣedhaḥ. vijñāna ity ekapratipattuh. pratibhāsamānatayā ekasaṃvidantargamād anekatāniṣedhaḥ*. See the full initial discussion of Dharmakīrti’s verses, translated in the appendix, section v.

when we consider awareness. Its scope is only the external; it does not extend to cognition and its appearances. Blue in the consciousness of variegation *exists despite being neither unitary nor manifold*: this is because, given Jñānaśrīmitra’s narrowing of the definition of manifestation, whatever immediately manifests in consciousness indubitably exists. The blue that is manifest in the consciousness of variegation is neither unitary nor manifold, and yet it consists of awareness and so its manifestation is real in the distinctive way only awareness can be. As Dharmakīrti says, “awareness is experienced in precisely the way it manifests” (*yad yathā bhāsate jñānam tad tathaivānubhūyate*). The use of the name (*nāma*), “unitary” (*ekabhāva*), is just an unreal conventional designation we use to speak of this awareness that is really neither unitary nor manifold.⁸²

Predictably, an opponent may object that Jñānaśrīmitra cannot allow something that is neither one nor many to exist. Surely being unitary and being manifold pervade existence—in what other way could something exist?—and so, the non-apprehension of either being unitary or being manifold in *x* is a proper defeater (*bādhaka*) for that *x*; that is, it shows that *x* does not exist. Why should that argument fail when applied to manifest appearances?

Jñānaśrīmitra thinks it fails for two basic reasons. First, when we are considering awareness and not external objects, the definition of existence is no longer having a single or

⁸² See JNĀ 445.9–21: *jñānopādhīr iti jaḍād vyāvṛtyā jñānātmatayā bādhakābhāvāḥ. ākārāntaram pītādim abhajan na śakyate draṣṭum ity anena bhedavyavahāre prayojanābhāvam āha. yadi hi tataḥ pṛthag apy eko labhyaḥ syāt, tasmāc ca tatsādhyasiddhiś caitrāmaitrādivad ucito ’nekavyavahāraḥ. na caivaṃ, tata eka evocitaḥ. taṃ hītyādinā ca yāvad eva bahir ityādikam artham āha. buddhirūpatāparāmarśe hi buddhyādikalāpe vihita-caitrādyekaśabdam tatrāpi tathaiva pravartayet. vivecayan bhindan punar artha eva patet, arthasyaiva janmagrahaṇam vā pṛthak, na jñānasya. yataḥ, [PV 3.221]. *nāma* samjñāvācakaḥ śabda ity arthaḥ. sa ekaikabhāvo na tāttvikaḥ. *bhāsata* iti jāyata ity arthaḥ, prakāśamānasyaiva janmetyabhiprāyāt. tad evam ekānekasvabhāvavidhuram eva jñānam citrādvaitam apetabādhanaṃ. samvṛtau caikavyavahāragocara eva kṣaṇikatvādivad iti darśitam. nanu tathāpi tac ca nāsti tadvyāptam cāstīti katham sampratayaviśayaḥ? na caivaṃ kvacid etāvāśvāsaḥ. Compare too JNĀ 461.2–13; note that JNĀ 461.8, *parasparasvabhāvas tyajann eva* reads *parasparasvabhāvam bhajann eva* in the MS. See section xvi of the appendix.*

multiple nature: it is simply manifesting. To exist is to manifest, not to have a unitary or manifold nature. And so the pervasion on which the neither-one-nor-many argument depends no longer holds. Recall that the argument works as a non-apprehension of the pervader (*vyāpakānupalabdhi*).⁸³ One first ascertains that existence is pervaded by having a unitary or manifold nature (*ekānekasvabhāva*). Then, through various forms of mereological reasoning, having a unitary or manifold nature is not apprehended in some *x*. Because existence is pervaded by having a unitary or a manifold nature, that *x* is thus shown not to exist. This works for external objects, Jñānaśrīmitra is happy to admit, and indeed, this is all Vasubandhu meant when he used the argument.⁸⁴ But when we come to consider awareness and mental images, the argument no longer holds insofar as the pervasion between existence and having a unitary or manifold nature no longer holds: a variegated mental image may be neither unitary nor manifold, but if it *manifests*, it *exists*.

This point has far-reaching consequences. In verses 46–51 of his *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, Śāntarakṣita famously applies the neither-one-nor-many argument to consciousness. “If, however, it is admitted that there are as many cognitions as there are appearances,” Śāntarakṣita writes, “it is in that case difficult to deny that this view will admit of the same analysis that applies to atoms.”⁸⁵ We saw in chapter 3, section ii, that Ratnākaraśānti uses precisely Vasubandhu’s mereological unpacking of the argument when he targets mental content: he

⁸³ Jñānaśrīmitra almost always refers to the argument not as, for instance, the *ekānekasvabhāvarahitahetu*, or something equivalent, but rather as *vyāpakānupalabdhi*. This may be a subtle way to remind his readers that the argument depends on a pervader (*vyāpaka*)—one that Jñānaśrīmitra thinks is warranted only when we are considering the provisional existence of external objects.

⁸⁴ See JNĀ 451.23–452.2, where Jñānaśrīmitra specifies that Vasubandhu himself meant to use the neither-one-nor-many argument *only against external objects*, recognizing that the pervasion does not hold when we are speaking of consciousness: e.g., *ata evācāryavasubandhupādair api bāhyādhikāreṇaiva vyāpakānupalambha udbhāvito, na jñānādhikāreṇa*. See section x of the appendix.

⁸⁵ See Dan Arnold’s forthcoming translation, with Śāntarakṣita’s *Vṛtti*. Compare Kajiyama’s translation of Mokṣākaragupta’s use of this line of argument, *Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, 148–151.

applies the argument Vasubandhu uses against atoms against mental content. But Jñānaśrīmitra cuts this argument off at its root: there is simply no pervasion between existence and having a unitary or manifold nature when we are considering cognition. However the neither-one-nor-many argument is understood, it relies on this pervasion, and so its scope simply does not include consciousness. Consciousness arises as non-dual, a non-duality beyond the bifurcation of one and many, unitary and manifold. To miss this point is to misconstrue not only the nature of consciousness, but also Vasubandhu's and Dharmakīrti's intentions.

The second reason the neither-one-nor-many argument fails when applied to manifest appearances is that the existence of a manifest mental image cannot be defeated by *any* argument. Defeaters (*bādhakas*), just like positive arguments (*sādhakas*), depend upon a dualistic relation between the target of the argument and the defeating or proving cognition itself (*bādhyabādhakabhāva*, *sādhyasādhakabhāva*). A present moment of cognition functions as a defeater only by constructing a target of defeat. Even if that constructed target is another awareness (even if we grant, for instance, that the atoms we refute with the neither-one-nor-many argument are but mental constructions), nevertheless the target of defeat amounts to something external to the defeating cognition itself.⁸⁶

Another way to see this is to note that a defeating cognition is predicated on the mistaken positing of object and subject (*grāhyagrāhakavyavasthā*). Defeat invariably takes the form,

⁸⁶ JNĀ 438.11–13: *vedanaṃ kiñcid uddiśya yad bāhyaṃ bāhyam eva tat / tac ca jñānaṃ jaḍaṃ vā syād iti cintā nirarthikā // sarvathā bāhyaagrāhyavyavasthānāntariyako bādhaⁱ iti siddham. ⁱ bādha] MS, bādhaka JNĀ. “With reference to awareness, whatever is external to it is external to it—it is useless to worry whether that is awareness or an insentient material object. In every case, defeat is invariably related to the conditional positing of an apprehended object that is external. This is established.” For this and the following passages, see sections i and ii of the appendix.*

“This is defeated by that”: it invariably creates an *object*.⁸⁷ But insofar as this sort of duality is overcome when idealism is truly realized, such arguments cannot have ultimate bearing.⁸⁸

“When this conditional positing of the apprehension of the external object is overcome,”

Jñānaśrīmitra writes,

everything sinks down into self-awareness (*svasaṃvedanamagna*). [...] When considering cognition alone, all activities stop. So, this relation between the object of defeat and the defeater is only conventional (*sāṃvṛta eva*); it does not find any room when we are directly facing the nature of reality (*tattvarūpāmukhīkaraṇa*). In that case, fine, a proof does not come about either.⁸⁹

Insofar as both defeat and proof function with respect to something external to the present moment of consciousness manifest in self-awareness, they are conventional. Inference then is a source of knowledge only so long as something external to the present manifest awareness is (falsely) posited, only so long as we fall back into the error of positing object and subject. When

⁸⁷ JNĀ 438.25: *na cāviṣayīkṛtasya bādhaḥ, idam anena bādhyata iti bādhibādhyavasāyāt*. “Further, there is no defeat for something not made into an object, because the determination of defeat takes the form, ‘This is defeated by that.’”

⁸⁸ See JNĀ 438.22–438.24: *punar api brūmaḥ na vijñaptimātrasiddhau bādhakāvakāśa iti prakṛtam. tatra grāhyagrāhakavyavasthā nāntarīyake sidhyati nāniṣṭam āpāditam bhavati, yathā hi tasyā viplavas tathā bādhakasyeti sādhyasiddheḥ*. “We may say again that given the proof that there is only cognition, there is no room for a defeater. This is the main point. Given that proof, when there is the establishment of a defeater, which is invariably related to the conditional positing of object and subject, nothing undesirable falls on us, because our target is proven when we see that insofar as that [conditional positing of object and subject] is mistaken, so too is the defeater.”

⁸⁹ JNĀ 439.16–17, 24–26: *bāhyagrahavyavasthāparibhave hi svasaṃvedanamagnam aśeṣam iti [...] vinmātra-cintāyām punaḥ sarvavyāpāroparamaḥ. tad ayaṃ bādhibādhakabhāvaḥ sāṃvṛta eva, na tattvarūpāmukhīkaraṇa-kāle avakāśam āśādayati. tadā ca kāmam sādhanasyāpi nāvātāraḥ*. Jñānaśrīmitra shows that Vasubandhu himself makes the same point in v.27 of his *Triṃśikā*, cited here (JNĀ 439.19–20): “Even one who judges, ‘This is really just cognition,’ posits something before himself on the basis of apprehension. He does not understand that there is only cognition.”

such externality is abandoned, when there is no making-into-an-object (*viṣayīkaraṇa*), self-awareness is the sole source of knowledge.⁹⁰

Defeating arguments, which are by nature dualistic, do not apply when we consider manifestation—when we are, as Jñānaśrīmitra puts it, immersed in self-awareness alone (*svavinmātramagna*). What is manifest in self-awareness is real and cannot be defeated by argument.⁹¹ Hence, it must be wrong to think that the pervasion between existence and unity and multiplicity applies in the case of manifestation: insofar as there is the awareness of manifest variegation, it is indubitably real.

But Ratnākaraśānti’s particular worry regarding the imputation of contrary qualities has not yet been answered. Why should we think only non-duality or non-difference is manifest in self-awareness? Are not blue and yellow really *different* in our experience of variegation?

“Surely,” an opponent is made to object,

To say “A variegated thing is unitary (*citram ekam*)” is against our experience, for blue and yellow and so on appear only as *different* (*bheda*). Further, variegated (*citra*), multiple (*nānā*), and manifold (*aneka*) don’t have different meanings, and that is established through the implicative negation of being unitary (*ekaparyudāsena*) [which thus implies being manifold]—so how can a variegated thing be unitary (*citram ekam*)?

⁹⁰ In addition to passages cited above regarding this point, see JNĀ 440.9–10, 15–17: *bahir bodhe ’numānādi mānam na svaikasamvidi / svaikasamvitprasiddhau tu tadgrahād eva tadbhavaḥ // [...] sarva hi vivādarūḍhasya vacanam āvirbhāvitāsādhyasādhanadr̥ṣṭāntāditayā nānumānam anākṣipya prakṛtopayogi bhavitum arhati. ata eva samvṛtāvavaśyam pramāṇasvikāra ity advaitabindau darśitam asmābhiḥ*. “When awareness is of something external, inference and so on are sources of knowledge; now, however, when cognition is aware only of itself. But when there is the proof of cognition that is aware of only itself, some *x* exists precisely because it is apprehended. [...] All talk of one who has risen for debate becomes relevant to the topic at hand only if it relies on some sort of inference insofar as there is a target, a proof, example, etc. For just this reason, it is necessary to accept means of knowledge in convention, as I’ve shown in my *Advaitabindu*.” Suffice it to say, a consideration of this point as discussed in the *Advaitabindu* is beyond the scope of our current discussion.

⁹¹ Compare in this regard Dharmakīrti’s comment in PVin ad 1.54 to the effect that the existence of apprehension (*upalambhasattā*) is without need of further epistemic warrant (*aprāmāṇikā*). See Dan Arnold’s discussion of this passage in *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 180–183.

[...] The cognition, ‘This is blue, this is yellow,’ is a cognition of difference precisely insofar as [blue’s and yellow’s respective] natures are mutually related.⁹²

It would seem to be immediately evident to self-awareness that blue and yellow are different. To be blue is to be non-yellow, and vice-versa: these two natures are opposed, and these opposed natures cannot be present in one and the same place. And indeed, the opponent here objects just as Ratnākaraśānti does in his VMS, they are not *experienced* as present in one and the same place. They are experienced as different: that is what variegation means. The manifold nature of variegation is irreducibly multiple. How can Jñānaśrīmitra defend that it is non-dual?

Jñānaśrīmitra argues that the opponent analyzing in this way subtly assumes external realism. The opponent claims that blue and yellow must be different: to say they are non-different amounts to saying blue is simply the same as yellow, and this is manifestly contradicted by experience. Not so fast, Jñānaśrīmitra responds: “As for what you said—‘If they are one, blue would be yellow!’—this is a fault only to external objects, because there would be the unwanted consequence that actions would be undertaken with respect to blue, e.g., on the part of those who want an effect entailed by yellow.”⁹³ Only if we are dealing with the conventional world of externally directed activities do we impute a difference between the variegated contents of our experience. If a painter is handed yellow paint having asked for blue, she will be disappointed: yellow will not accomplish the same goals as blue—filling in the water in an ocean scene, for instance. Jñānaśrīmitra is happy to admit that blue and yellow are multiple different colors (*nānātva*) when it comes to externally directed activity and the satisfaction of particular needs in

⁹² JNĀ 447.20–22, 23–24: *nanu citram ekam ity anubhavaviruddham etat, nīlapītādīnām bhedenaiiva bhāsanāt. kiṃ ca, citram nānā ’nekam’ ity anarthāntaram, tac caikaparyudāseṇa sṭhitam iti tat katham citram ekam? [...] nanv idaṃ nīlam idaṃ pītam iti parasparātmataiva pratītir bhedapratītir iti cet. ’ nānā ’nekam] MS, nānekam JNĀ.*

⁹³ JNĀ 449.1–2: *yad tūcyate, ekatve nīlam pītam eva syād iti, sa bāhya eva doṣaḥ, tadarthakriyārthinām tatrāpi pravṛtteḥ kriyāyāś ca prasāṅgāt.* See the discussion of this point translated in section vii of the appendix.

the world. But this is all abandoned when we consider awareness alone: there, there is no difference. Blue and yellow that manifest in awareness are variegated (*citra*), but this does *not* mean, as the opponent claims it does, that they are multiple (*nānā*): variegation is not the negation of being unitary, and so there is no contradiction in saying what is variegated is unitary.⁹⁴

The very existence of difference, Jñānaśrīmitra continues, is in fact limited to the external. Difference sets limits on the efficacy of our actions, on the objects that will satisfy particular needs, and so on. “However, in the case of cognition,” Jñānaśrīmitra stipulates, “difference is really the abandonment of the nature [of cognition itself], for the existence of cognition, which is independent of causal efficacy, is just due to manifestation.”⁹⁵ Dharmakīrti himself says as much when he writes in PV 3.220cd what we might understand to mean: “One who differentiates falls on the side of the external” (*taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan*). Saying, “This is different from that,” is possible only with respect to externally directed activity: such analysis does not follow from self-awareness, but rather it is due to the play of repeated habitation to the external.⁹⁶

Later, this line of objection is raised once more, and Jñānaśrīmitra finally puts it to rest for good. “But how,” the opponent asks, “is it possible to deny blue and yellow and so on, whose vivid appearance (*spaṣṭākāra*) is right before the eyes, which is appearing (*bhāsamāna*) and is the imposition of opposed properties (*viruddhadharmādhyāsa*)?” Once again, now without reference to causal efficacy as what might distinguish blue from yellow, the opponent objects

⁹⁴ See JNĀ 449.2–11, translated in section vii of the appendix.

⁹⁵ JNĀ 449.14–15: *buddhes tu bhede eva svarūpahāniḥ, arthakriyānapekṣāyās tasyāḥ prakāśād eva sattvāt.*

⁹⁶ See SŚŚ 4.29 and Jñānaśrīmitra’s comment (JNĀ 449.21–450.1), translated in section viii of the appendix.

that they are manifestly opposed. “We do not deny it,” Jñānaśrīmitra responds: “that is what we call variegation (*citra*)! Self-awareness does not tolerate in reality (*tattvataḥ*) the individual differences (*pratisvaṃ bhedaṃ*) among blue and yellow and so on that are expressed by the word variegation.”⁹⁷ Blue and yellow manifest, no doubt, and this is why we know for certain they are real. They do not, however, manifest as opposed.

Jñānaśrīmitra pushes the point. What is the opponent’s “imposition of opposed properties” (*viruddhadharmādhyāsa*) supposed to mean? In the first place, it might refer to two properties that are opposed (*viruddhau dharmau*). But then, are those two properties opposed because they have two different substrata (*āśrayadvāreṇa*), or because they have different natures (*svarūpeṇa*)? Insofar as they manifest in a single moment of awareness, self-awareness proves that blue and yellow do not have different substrata, and when self-awareness is accepted as proof, no other means of knowledge may be introduced. Further, if it is supposed that they are opposed by nature but still share a single substratum, this too is absurd, for two properties that share a single locus are not opposed but are rather in a “friendly” relation. If, on the other hand, “opposed properties” means properties of two opposed things (*viruddhayor dharmau*), this is even farther from the truth, for any difference between two things—indeed, the very positing of two separate entities—is thoroughly refuted by self-awareness.⁹⁸

v. Difference and Non-Difference
a) Jñānaśrīmitra’s Proof of Non-Difference

⁹⁷ JNĀ 460.14–16: *nanu puraḥ spaṣṭākāraṃ nīlapītādiviruddhadharmādhyāsi bhāsamānaṃ katham apahnōtuṃ śakyate? nedam apahnuyate, ata eva citraṃ ucyate. tasya citraśabdābhidheyasya nīlapītādeḥ pratisvaṃ bhedaṃ tattvato na kṣamate, svasaṃvittir ity ucyate.*

⁹⁸ See JNĀ 460.16–461.1, translated in section xv of the appendix.

This last point relies again on the obscure idea that in self-awareness, there is no experience of difference. Jñānaśrīmitra defends this in an extended discussion of non-difference in SSŚ 4. He argues that, when we suppose the external world exists, we may differentiate the contents of cognition according to their causal capacities (we differentiate blue from yellow, as we saw above, insofar as blue satisfies a particular need yellow does not); still, when we turn to consciousness itself, where only self-awareness is a means of knowledge, “awareness is only a property of itself, it is its own nature; it is quite adventurous to say it is not in itself differentiated into blue and yellow, and yet it differentiates those two!”⁹⁹ What does it mean that cognition itself does not make differences, and that non-difference is all that is manifestly experienced? How does Jñānaśrīmitra prove this point? This is of great importance for Jñānaśrīmitra’s view: not only does it help make sense of his peculiar reading of the non-duality of variegation; if he can prove that difference is not real, he does away once and for all with Ratnākaraśānti’s attempt to establish a real difference between manifestation and content. Further, the asymmetry between the supposed external world, where we may provisionally accept differentiation, and consciousness, wherein there is no difference, grounds Jñānaśrīmitra’s view that the neither-one-nor-many argument targets only physical reality, not mental content or cognition.

In SSŚ 4,¹⁰⁰ an opponent presses him on this point, asking how it is that the *citrādvaita* is positively established, regardless of the refutations of others’ reasoning Jñānaśrīmitra has given.

He may show his opponents are wrong; but how does Jñānaśrīmitra prove he is right? The

⁹⁹ JNĀ 457.4: *saṃvedanaṃ tu svadharmā eva svabhāvāt mā nīlapīṭayor na bhidyate*. Cf. JNĀ 457.1–2: *bahir api hi bhidyamānaiva buddhir arthān bhinatti. na cātra buddhisvarūpe pramāṇāntarāṇām avakāśaḥ svasaṃvedanād anyatra*. “For, externally, cognition that is itself being differentiated differentiates objects. But for the nature of cognition, no means of knowledge other than self-awareness has any scope.”

¹⁰⁰ The opponent’s objection is translated in section xiii of the appendix, Jñānaśrīmitra’s response in section xiv.

opponent to the *citrādvaita* has a common-sense view of why blue and yellow in the cognition of variegation cannot be unitary: they are different simply on the evidence of direct perception. One sees straight away in the cognition of a butterfly wing that blue and yellow are different. They may be united in a single moment of cognition insofar as that is caused by a one and the same collection of conditions, but nevertheless perception itself differentiates blue from yellow.

One implication of Jñānaśrīmitra’s Sākāravāda, however, is that different moments of cognition are differentiated from each other by their contents.¹⁰¹ When variegation is manifest to cognition, variegation constitutes that cognition as the cognition it is. When blue is manifest, it constitutes that cognition. So too when yellow is manifest. How is it then that a form of direct perception differentiates blue from yellow in a single moment of cognition of variegation? Subsequent moments of cognition might reflect and posit that blue and yellow are distinct, but this can only be a conceptual construction given the passing away of the initial moment of variegation. At t_1 , we cognize variegation, and variegation constitutes that cognition as such; at t_2 , we turn our attention to blue, and that cognition is now constituted differently; at t_3 , we turn our attention to yellow. At each moment, distinct cognitions arise constituted by different contents. They are not held together in a single unitary awareness. There is no direct perception of the difference between blue and yellow in the cognition of variegation; rather, there is the initial perception of variegation, then the perception of blue, then the perception of yellow. While

¹⁰¹ Jñānaśrīmitra makes this point in a characteristically difficult verse ringing the changes on the root *bhid*, which he then spends some time commenting on in the ensuing prose; again, see section xiv of the appendix for SŚ 4.55 and the following discussion. Jñānaśrīmitra’s verse, at JNĀ 453.22–25, reads: *adhyakṣam eva hi bhinatti śiteḥ sitaṃ cet tadbhidyamānam athavābhīdam eva bhīdyāt / bhede ’nyaleśam api naiti’ kuto bhinattu bhīdyād abhedi mana ity api kasya śakyam // i naiti] MS; neti JNĀ. “If you say, ‘Surely perception itself differentiates white from blue,’ should that perception differentiate while being differentiated, or as not differentiated? If perception is differentiated, then it does not approach even the slightest bit of something else—from what or how should it differentiate? The idea that mind that is not differentiated can give us difference—who could say this?” We’ll consider some of the ways Jñānaśrīmitra unpacks this verse in what follows. Note that, as we’ll see below, Ratnakīrti cites a line from this verse as especially definitive of the proof of non-difference in his *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa*.*

conceptual construction might suggest otherwise, these cognitions all in fact have no information about each other: a given cognition knows only itself. It is thus absurd to say that a single direct cognition gives evidence of the difference between blue and yellow.¹⁰²

This implies that cognition is not limited by any term or relatum (*avadhi*).¹⁰³ If a given cognition knows itself totally and exclusively, where is there room for knowledge of some other term or relatum, faced with which cognition would be limited and thus differentiated? Such a limit is not cognized in self-awareness, Jñānaśrīmitra stipulates, and so difference cannot be established. He writes, “Due to the presence of what should cognition differentiate [between blue and yellow]? For a limit (*avadhi*) is not cognized.”¹⁰⁴ An opponent responds that the cognition of a limit is not in fact necessary: the cognition of blue in itself, or by its very nature, just is the cognition of the difference between blue and yellow. To be blue is, after all, to be non-yellow—what is the point of the cognition of two separate terms?¹⁰⁵

In response, Jñānaśrīmitra explains that difference is a *two-place relation*. Two terms have to exist for there to be difference. When speaking precisely about difference, we say that *x* is different from *y*. In such a formulation, we may say that *y* is the *avadhi*, the limiting factor, the

¹⁰² JNĀ 457.5–6: *pratyātmaṃ bhidyamānaṃ tu bhindyāt. kevalam anyānyavārtāvīrahāt citrapratibhāsa evāsaṃbhavī tadeti kuto bhedasthitiḥ*. “Perhaps cognition that is differentiated one from the next (*pratyātma*) could differentiate [between blue and yellow moments of cognition]. However, since different cognitions have no information about each other, the appearance of variegation itself would then be impossible. How could this prove difference?”

¹⁰³ The term *avadhi* is difficult to render. It can mean limit or boundary, but also sometimes functions as the limit *in a particular relation*, that is, the term of a relation or a relatum.

¹⁰⁴ JNĀ 457.6–7: *kutaḥ sakāśād bhinattu avadher apratīyamānatvāt*.

¹⁰⁵ JNĀ 457.7–10: *nanuḥ kim atrāvadhīpratītyā kartavyam yata eva tasya na pratītis tata eva tasya tato bhedasthitiḥ. na cānyopalambhe 'pi pararūpeṇa bhāvo bhidyate, kiṃ tu tādātmyena pratītir evānyato bhedapratītiḥ sā cāpratīte 'pi parasmīnavikaleti na bhedapratītikṣatiḥ. i nanu] MS; na ca, JNĀ. “‘Surely,’ you may object, ‘what is the point of the cognition of a limit here? Precisely because there is no cognition of that [limit], there is the establishment of the difference of one thing from another. A thing is not differentiated as having another nature only when there is the apprehension of something else; rather, when you cognize a thing as having its own identity, that itself is the cognition of its difference from something else, and that cognition of difference is not defective even when the other thing is not cognized. Hence, there is no harm to the cognition of difference [even when the limit is not cognized].’”*

second term in the relation. Given Jñānaśrīmitra's definition of existence as manifestation, where that second term is not manifest, it does not exist. And so, as Jñānaśrīmitra writes, "precisely because what is not manifest does not exist, there is no proof of difference depending upon what is not manifest."¹⁰⁶ That is, something cannot be different from something that does not exist.

In order to establish this point, Jñānaśrīmitra details the logic of difference to show that a difference-relation cannot hold between something existent and something non-existent. In elaborating this point, he tells us that to establish that two things are *different (bhedasthiti)* is different from saying only that something *is not* something else (*aikyaniṣedhamātra*).¹⁰⁷ We may say a pot *is not* a hare's horn, but this is different from saying a pot is *different from* a hare's horn. Because difference is a two-place relation, it requires the presence of two relata. This is because it is also a *symmetrical* relation: if we could say that a pot is different from a hare's horn, we should also be able to say that a hare's horn is different from a pot. But this absurdly picks out a non-existent entity as the existent subject of a sentence.¹⁰⁸ If we are willing to say that something that is not cognized exists, then we might provisionally apprehend difference. But this, Jñānaśrīmitra points out, is tantamount to the external realist position that things that are not being cognized nevertheless exist, and surely this cannot be accepted by one who holds that there is only cognition (*viññaptimātratānaya*).¹⁰⁹ The idealist should accept, then, that all that exists is

¹⁰⁶ JNĀ 457.15: *nāprakāśād asattvād eva tadapekṣā bhedasamsthitiḥ*.

¹⁰⁷ Lit. "the mere negation of oneness." This should be understood as the mere negation that one thing is some other thing, rather than the negation of the relation of a unity between two things, in order to avoid entailing for this "mere negation of oneness" the problems Jñānaśrīmitra points out regarding difference.

¹⁰⁸ In Sanskrit terms, in a symmetrical relation of difference, either relatum should be able to be placed in the *prathama* and the *pañcami*; that is, we may say either *x* is different from *y* or *y* is different from *x*. See JNĀ 457.23–24: *tatho vyāvartata iti hi prathamārthaḥ pañcamyartho vā sādharmaṇa eva, vastudharmatayā kalpitadharmatayā vā*.

¹⁰⁹ See JNĀ 457.11–12: *yadi tāvad apratīyamānasyāpi sattvapakṣāpekṣayedam abhidhīyate tadā bāhyavāda eva yuktam etat, na viññaptimātratānaye*. "To start with, if you are saying this with reference to the position that a thing exists even though it is not cognized, then that is appropriate just for the doctrine of external realism, not for the doctrine that there is only cognition."

the present, unitary moment of consciousness.¹¹⁰ When variegation constitutes that moment of consciousness, the separate cognitions of blue and of yellow are not manifest. Because they are not manifest, they do not exist, and so they cannot be held up as terms in a difference-relation. The same is true when only blue constitutes a moment of consciousness: yellow is not manifest in that cognition, and so it does not exist as something blue may be differentiated from. When it is not manifest, yellow is as unreal as a hare's horn, a sky-flower, the son of a barren woman.¹¹¹

It is only through subsequent conceptual construction that we mistakenly understand things to be different.¹¹² Having refuted the apprehension of difference, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us that the mere *positing* of the apprehension of difference (*bhedagrahavyavasthāmātra*) is relative to a determination that comes later (*paścimaniścaya*), or else we might say recollection (*smṛti*).

Either way, it is erroneous: “there is the apprehension of what was apprehended on the part of another [moment in the] continuous flow of cognition in reliance upon the determination of unity with respect to what is not apprehended.”¹¹³ That is, a given moment of cognition erroneously apprehends a past moment as unified with itself. That past moment is *past*, it is not present to be apprehended, and yet recollective conceptualization constructs this illusory unity in the stream of cognition. Only on the basis of this illusion, wherein different moments of cognition are mistakenly judged to occur together, can we say blue and yellow are different.

¹¹⁰ Jñānaśrīmitra develops this point explicitly at a number of places, as in SŚŚ 3, but see his clear statement in this context at JNĀ 458.10–13: *pūrvāparayoḥ sahānupalambhe 'pi bhedaḥ prasidhyati eveti vyaktam ātmapratāraṇa-mātram etat. pūrvāparatvasyāprakāśāt prakāśasya ca pūrvāparatvāyogāt. tasmād asattvād eva nātītādivedanaṃ nāma, prakāśasyaiva sattvāt.* “To say, ‘Though earlier and later are not apprehended together, the difference between them is indeed established,’ is mere self-deception. For there is no manifestation of earlier- and later-ness, and what is manifest cannot be earlier or later. Precisely due to this non-existence [of earlier and later], there is no sensation of the future and so on, for only manifestation exists (*prakāśasyaiva sattvāt*).”

¹¹¹ See the prose passage immediately following SŚŚ 4.56 translated in section xiv of the appendix, or JNĀ 457.15–26, or for a lengthy discussion of the symmetrical nature of the difference-relation and the impossibility of saying some *x* is different from some non-existent *y*.

¹¹² See JNĀ 459.25–460.9 for this explanation of how it comes about that we posit difference, translated in section xiv of the appendix.

¹¹³ JNĀ 460.3: *dhārāvāhijñānāntarasya grhītagrahaṇam agrhīte 'py ekatvaniścayāpekṣayā.*

v. **Difference and Non-Difference**
b) **Ratnakīrti's Refutation of Other Mental Continua**

One surprising consequence of this view is famously defended by Jñānaśrīmitra's student Ratnakīrti in his *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa* (SAD), the *Refutation of Other Mental Continua*.¹¹⁴ While this work begins with a refutation of the inference for other minds (RNĀ 145.1–147.5), Ratnakīrti spends the latter half of the work (starting at RNĀ 147.6) developing his teacher's view of non-difference in relation to a positive argument against the existence of other mental continua. Were another continuum to exist, it would have as its nature difference or non-difference from my own continuum. Another mental continuum cannot be *non-different* from my own—that would make it my own!—and so we must suppose the other continuum is *different*. But given the logic of difference Jñānaśrīmitra develops, this difference should be a symmetrical two-place relation: as the other mental continuum is different from mine, so too my own mental continuum should be different from others'. Because this difference from other mental continua is not manifest in my own mental continuum, Ratnakīrti argues that other mental continua do not exist.

Ratnakīrti presents this argument with characteristic precision, so we might give part of it here in full. Ratnakīrti writes,

Some say, "If this is so, because there is no proof of another continuum, since we don't see any defeating argument either, let there be doubt with respect to this." They should

¹¹⁴ On this work, see Yūichi Kajiyama, "Buddhist Solipsism: A free translation of Ratnakīrti's *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa*" *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 13, no. 1 (1965): 9–24; Masahiro Inami, "The Problem of Other Minds in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition" *JIP* 29 (2001): 456–483; Jonardon Ganeri, *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, & the First-Person Stance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203–221.

consider this defeater we will put forth. If another continuum were possible, then one's own continuum must necessarily be different from that other continuum. Otherwise, there would be no difference between that supposed other continuum and one's own continuum which is manifesting to oneself. But there is no non-difference between the two. Hence, it follows that, just like universals, hare's-horns, etc., there is the total absence of the other continuum, which is defeated as being different or non-different from one's own continuum. So how can there be any doubt? It follows that one's own continuum too must invariably possess a difference relative to another continuum.¹¹⁵ And this difference that is intrinsic to one's own continuum should necessarily appear when one's own continuum manifests. Otherwise, even given the imposition of the opposed properties, *manifest* and *not manifest*, how could the difference between one's own continuum from another continuum become the nature of one's own continuum?

Moreover, this difference does not manifest. For if [in one's own continuum] the manifestation of difference [from another continuum] were accepted, it would be difficult to deny the manifestation of another continuum which is the limit (*avadhi*) of that [relation of difference].

If “This is different from that” were the nature of one's own mind, then there would be the manifestation of one's own mind having a limit. Otherwise, it could not be apprehended as having that nature. [SSŚ 4.58 (JNĀ 458.21–22); cf. SSSū 4.149]

In difference, there isn't even a trace of the other. From what could it be differentiated? [SSŚ 4.55c (JNĀ 456.24) = SSSū 4.185c]

Everything stated here, from “Some say, ...”, ought to call to mind the words of the *Śrī Sākārasaṃgraha* [and *Sākārasiddhi (ādi)*], which illuminate the words [of Dharmakīrti, perhaps PV 3.220–221 in particular]. For just as there appears no difference from a hare's horn (insofar as that doesn't appear), likewise there also appears no difference from another continuum, which does not appear given that what appears is just one's own continuum. For when one's own continuum appears, there is no trace of a distinction in relation to another continuum, which [trace of difference] would not exist in relation to a hare's horn. Moreover, since the appearance of one's own continuum is the same relative to the hare's horn and another continuum, it is impossible to establish that relative to a hare's horn, neither difference nor non-difference appears, whereas relative to another continuum, there is in fact a difference that appears. For difference is provisionally established by denying the absence of difference and non-difference; in the same way, it is proper [to provisionally establish] the manifestation of difference too only given the denial of the manifestation of the absence of both difference and non-difference. And it is not experienced that way. So it is just a linguistic fiction to say, “Difference manifests.” The logic of Prajñākaragupta on this point should also be

¹¹⁵ Here we see the importance of the symmetry of the relation at work.

understood in more detail in *The Refutation of the Appearance of Difference* (*bhedapratibhāsādūṣaṇa*).¹¹⁶

Ratnakīrti here refutes the existence of other continua in relation to one's own continuum using Jñānaśrīmitra's logic of difference—indeed, even citing a lines from SŚ 4's proof of non-difference in the process. He first supposes that, were another continuum to exist, one's own continuum should be different from that other continuum. This difference, then, should manifest in one's own continuum if it is to exist, given Jñānaśrīmitra's definition of existence as manifestation. But this difference is not manifest: when there is the manifestation of one's own mental continuum, there is no manifestation of *difference from* another continuum. The reason there cannot be such a manifestation of *difference from* is that this would imply the manifestation of *the other continuum itself*, the limiting factor or relatum (*avadhi*) in the difference-relation. This is because, with Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti recognizes difference to be a two-place relation: were difference from another continuum to manifest in my own awareness, the relatum of that difference-relation, the other continuum, should manifest too. But this is absurd. Another

¹¹⁶ Compare this passage with Jñānaśrīmitra's view of non-difference, reconstructed above and translated in section xiv of the appendix, and notice Ratnakīrti's citations of his teacher here. RNĀ 147.6–147.30: *evam tarhi santānāntarasādhakasyābhāvād bādhakasyāpi kasyacid adarśanād bhavatu tatra sandeha eveti kecit. tair itaṃ bādhakam abhidhīyamānam avadhīyatām. yadi hi santānāntaraṃ saṃbhavet tadā tato bhedenā svasantānasyāvaśyaṃ bhavitavyam. anyathā svasantānād api prakāśamānāt tasya parasantānābhimatasya bhedo na syāt. na cābhedas tayor iti svasantānāt bhedābhedābhyām bādhyasyaⁱ parasantānasya sāmānyaśaśaviṣāṇādivad abhāva evāyātateⁱⁱ katham sandehaḥ. tasmāt parasantānāpekṣayā svasantānasya bhedo 'py avaśyambhāvyaḥ. sa ca bhedaḥ santānasya svabhāvaḥ svasantāne pratibhāsamāne niyamena pratibhāseta. katham aparathā pratibhānāpratibhānalakṣaṇaviruddhadharmādhyāse 'pi svasantānasya parasantānād bhedaḥ svabhāvatām āsādhayet. na cāsau bhedaḥ pratibhāsete. bhedapratibhāse hi upagamyamāne tadavadhibhūtasyāpi parasantānasya pratibhāso durapahnavāḥ syat. asmād bhinnam itīdam cet svarūpam svasya cetasaḥ / sāvadher asya bhāsaḥ syān na vā grāhyaṃ tadātmanā // bhede 'nyaleśam api naiti kuto bhinnāḥ / evamādhikam aśeṣam iha pravacanapradīpa-śrīśākārasaṅgrahādivacanam anusmaryatām. yathā hi svasantānamātre parisphurati śaśaviṣāṇād asphurato na bhedaḥ pratibhāti tathā parasantānād api sphuraṇaviraḥiṇo na bhāty eva bhedaḥ. na hi parasantānāpekṣayā kaścid viśeṣaleśaḥ svasantānasya parisphurati yo nāsti śaśaviṣāṇāpekṣayā. na ca śaśaviṣāṇāparasantānāvapekṣya samāne svasantānapratibhāse śaśaviṣāṇāpekṣayā na bhedo nāpy abhedaḥ pratibhāti. parasantānāpekṣayā tu bheda eva bhātīty evam avasthāpayitum śakyam. bhedābhedayor abhāvaparihāreṇa hi yathā bhedo vyavasthītaḥ tadvad bhedapratibhāso 'pi bhedābhedābhāvapratibhāsavilakṣaṇa evocito bhavitum, na ca tathānubhūyate. tathāpi bhedaḥ pratibhātīti vacanaracanam etat. bhāṣyakāranyāyo 'py atra bhedapratibhāsādūṣaṇe vistarato 'vagantavyaḥ. ⁱ bādhyasya] em.; ⁱⁱ abādhyasya, RNĀ, MS; ⁱⁱⁱ āyātate] MS; āyāte, RNĀ. Perhaps this work of Prajñākaragupta's refers to the lengthy section of the PVA ad PV 3.221 studied in Inami's "Nondual cognition," though I am not at all certain of this.*

continuum, then, is as unmanifest as a hare’s horn or any other non-existent entity we may choose to posit. It is only convention, Ratnakīrti reminds us, that has as its nature the conceit that difference is grasped.¹¹⁷

vi. Conclusion: Prajñākaragupta’s *Citrādvaita*

In the course of his *Refutation of Other Mental Continua*, Ratnakīrti refers to Prajñākaragupta as an authority on the refutation of difference, right alongside Jñānaśrīmitra. Jñānaśrīmitra of course acknowledges his debt to Prajñākaragupta as well. As we saw in chapter 1, Jñānaśrīmitra thinks of Prajñākaragupta as the director of the drama that is his proof of the Sākāravāda: he calls him the *sākārasiddhinayanāṭakasūtradhāra*. Jñānaśrīmitra is but an actor on the stage Prajñākaragupta has set. He reminds us of this in the conclusion of his discussion of non-difference and the *citrādvaita*. Toward the end of SSS 4, he states what he has established through his definition of existence as manifestation and his discussion of difference and non-difference: “Therefore, there is no means to establish difference at all. Self-awareness itself is the means of establishing non-difference and defeating difference.”¹¹⁸

He then tells us that this is what Dharmakīrti’s verses intended all along.¹¹⁹ He presents one last interpretation of PV 3.220–221, now explicitly citing Prajñākaragupta’s understanding

¹¹⁷ RNĀ 149.10: *bhedagrahaṇābhimānarūpā saṃvṛtisⁱ. saṃvṛtis] em.; saṃvṛstti RNĀ.*

¹¹⁸ JNĀ 460.26–461.1: *tasmān na bhedasādhanam kiñcit. abhedasādhanam tu svasaṃvedanam eva bhedaśādhanam ca.*

¹¹⁹ See the full translation of this discussion of Prajñākaragupta and Dharmakīrti translated in section xvi of the appendix.

as grounding his own.¹²⁰ Prajñākaragupta says of the *citrādvaita*, as Jñānaśrīmitra presents his text here,

Or else [cognition] is not variegated (*na citra*) because it cannot be posited as different from something non-variegated (*acitra*). Therefore, there is only self-awareness alone, without duality, for what is other (*apara*) does not exist.¹²¹

As Jñānaśrīmitra unpacks it, the point of this obscure statement is that even to think that a manifold cognition *is manifold* is to presume dualistically the opposition between being manifold and being unitary. This dualism is not manifest in self-awareness. Prajñākaragupta, then, means to establish not the unity of the cognition of a manifold but *solely non-duality* as the nature of self-awareness.¹²² Another way Jñānaśrīmitra puts the point is by saying that the negation in *advaita*, *non-dual*, is not an implicative negation (*paryudāsa*) that implies being one rather than two; rather, it is an existential negation (*prasajyapratishedha*) of duality or difference all told.

Jñānaśrīmitra then cites Jayanta's (c.10th century?) *Sub-Commentary* (-*Ṭīkā*) on Prajñākaragupta to confirm what he takes the point here to be. Jayanta writes, "Even if it has neither a unitary nor a manifold nature, [appearance] exists insofar as it consists of apprehension, due to the dictum that existence is apprehension."¹²³ Dharmakīrti's verses on variegated

¹²⁰ See JNĀ 461.2–14 for Jñānaśrīmitra's final interpretation of PV 3.220–221, translated in section xvi of the appendix.

¹²¹ JNĀ 461.15 and JNĀ 462.11: *na vā tac citram, acitrād bhedena vyavasthāpanāsambhavāt. [...] tasmāt svasaṃvedanam eva kevalam advaitam aparasyābhāvāt.* Cf. PVA 290.13–14. Notice that Jñānaśrīmitra reads *svasaṃvedanam* for *saṃvedanam* in PVA; compare Inami, "Nondual cognition," 184–185.

¹²² See JNĀ 462.5–7, where Jñānaśrīmitra comments on Prajñākaragupta's comment (here printed in bold): *athavā tadgrāhyagrāhakābhimataṃ nīlapītādī vā citrasabdābhidheyam na citraṃ, na nānā, acitrāt svasaṃvedanād dhetor bhedena vyavasthāpanābhāvād iti nānātvaniṣedhamātram iṣtam, pareṇa caikatvaniṣedho 'dhyakṣād eva kṛta' ity ubhayavinirmukta eva prakāśaḥ. i kṛta] MS; kuta JNĀ.* "Or else (*athavā*) what is accepted as object and subject, or blue, yellow, and so on, which is referred to by the word 'variegated' (*citra*), is in fact not variegated, not multiple (*nānā*), because cognition cannot be posited as different since self-awareness is non-variegated (*acitra*); hence, only the negation of being multiple (*nānātva*) is intended, and the opponent has already performed the negation of being unitary (*ekaiva*) on the basis of perception; hence, manifestation is released from both [being unitary and being multiple]."

¹²³ JNĀ.462.15–16: *tīkā cātra ekānekarūpaparihṛtasyāpy upalambhātmatayopalambhaḥ satteti nyāyāt sad eveti.* See Inami, "Nondual cognition," 191, for the Tibetan parallel in Jayanta's *Ṭīkā*.

cognition, then, do not mean to say that the cognition of a manifold is a unity; rather, they mean to say that cognition is neither unitary nor manifold, and yet it indubitably exists insofar as it is manifest in a single, unitary, self-aware cognition. Whatever is manifest is absolutely non-dual, devoid of even the possibility of the manifestation of difference.

Jñānaśrīmitra concludes his chapter on the *citrādvaita* by bringing the director on stage. Prajñākaragupta's influence had been in the background throughout the twists and turns his interpretation of Dharmakīrti's verses had taken over the course of SSŚ 4. Now, having defended the definition of existence as manifestation and having thoroughly refuted every notion of difference, he lets Prajñākaragupta address the audience, showing once and for all his superiority to Ratnākaraśānti's vain efforts to establish a difference between manifestation and content. Ratnākaraśānti's last stand in his VMS, his attempt to use variegation to establish difference, fails, and Jñānaśrīmitra has tried to refute every other argument Ratnākaraśānti did in fact offer (or even might conceivably offer) through his criticism of manifestation's peculiar "indefeasibility" and his inquiry into the true nature of error and determination. Still, before turning to the buddhological consequences of Jñānaśrīmitra's non-dualism and his interpretation of the *citrādvaita*, we may note the incredibly rich dialogue he has had thus far with Ratnākaraśānti's work. However brilliant and complex Jñānaśrīmitra's view is, it is at almost every turn developed in direct response to his colleague and fellow Yogācāra at Vikramaśīla.

Chapter 5: The Wonders of Non-Duality, The Wonders of Buddha: Jñānaśrīmitra's Buddhology

i. Introduction: Buddhahood Really Has Appearances

Jñānaśrīmitra ends the fourth chapter of his *Sākārasiddhi* by returning to the first lines of the work. There, he had silently borrowed Dharmakīrti's homage-verse from the *Pramāṇavārttika*, using it as his own panegyric to the Buddha. Dharmakīrti had written, "Homage to Samantabhadra, he who brings fortune to all, whose profound and elegant form has cast off the net of conceptual constructions, whose radiance shines in all directions!"¹ That Jñānaśrīmitra returns to this verse here may come as a surprise. We saw in the preceding chapter that SSŚ 4 is dedicated to decidedly philosophical topics: the exposition and defense of the *citrādvaita*, or what we understood as the non-duality of variegation; the argument proving that no experience of difference is real; and an extended engagement with an especially obscure section of Dharmakīrti's work in an effort to show that the Master (*ācārya*) himself had intended as much. What does the non-duality of variegation and the impossibility of manifest difference have to do with Dharmakīrti's seemingly generic homage-verse?

Jñānaśrīmitra makes the connection clear in his introduction to his gloss of Dharmakīrti's verse, and in so doing he spells out the ramifications of his preceding arguments. "For even the properties of Buddha" he writes, "do not really exist with the nature constructed by other cognitions, since they exist only as being knowable through self-awareness (*svasaṃvedyatayaiva*

¹ JNĀ 367.3–4: *vidhūtakaḷpanājālagambhīrodāramūrtaye / namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantasphuraṇatviṣe //*

sattvāt).² Over the course of SSS 4, Jñānaśrīmitra had been discussing variegated appearance, the *citrākāra*, and the solely constructed nature of difference in our cognition of such variegated appearances. But now, Jñānaśrīmitra lays his cards on the table: not only are the different colors in a butterfly wing variegated and yet non-dual; so too, the variegated properties of Buddha are non-dual—the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, the powers, the dharma, and so on. They do not exist as differentiated, despite the fact that conceptual cognition might construct them as distinct properties. They truly exist only insofar as they are manifest to self-awareness, wherein no difference may be admitted.

This had been Jñānaśrīmitra’s intention all along in his *Sākārasiddhi*: to show not only that cognition must in every instance have appearances, but to show that that highest form of cognition, buddhahood itself, has appearances. “Therefore,” he writes, “the proof of only the Blessed One who has appearances (*sākārasyaiva bhagavataḥ*) is without defeat. This is established. And thus the meaning of Dharmakīrti’s homage-verse can be established.”³ The *Sākārasiddhiśāstra*’s title is most obviously taken to mean *A Treatise Proving that Cognition Has Appearances*. But now, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us it might also be taken to mean *A Treatise Proving*

² JNĀ 464.18–19: *buddhadharmāḥ api hi buddhyantaraparikalpitena rūpeṇa santa eva na, svasamvedyatayaiva sattvāt*. ⁱ *buddhadharmā*] MS, *buddhidharmā* JNĀ.

³ JNĀ 464.20–21: *tasmāt sākārasyaiva bhagavataḥ siddhir bādhāvinākr̥teti sthitam. tathā ca namaskāraślokaśyārthasiddhiḥ*. While the full passage is translated in section xvii of the appendix, I also give here the elegant, poetic gloss Jñānaśrīmitra then gives of Dharmakīrti’s homage-verse. Dharmakīrti had written: *vidhūtakaḷpanājālagambhīrodāramūrtaye / namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantasphuraṇatviṣe //*. Jñānaśrīmitra takes advantage of a longer meter to construct an elegant verse that glosses each part of Dharmakīrti’s original. He writes (JNĀ 464.22–25): *sānuvyañjanalakṣaṇairⁱ adhigataudāryaṃ nijenātmanā yad gambhīram ananyagocaratayā śūnyaṃ prapañcormibhiḥ / nirmāṇaiś ca yataḥ sphuranti jagatīṃ jñānatviṣas tan na cālikatvena kalaṅkitaṃ vapur ato bhadrāṃ samantān muneh //ⁱ sānuvyañjanalakṣaṇair*] MS, *sānnavyañjanalakṣaṇair* JNĀ. “That which has realized its elegance [*audārya*, for Dharmakīrti’s *udāra*] through its own major and minor marks which are innate to it; which is profound [Dharmakīrti’s *gambhīra*] insofar as it is not in others’ scope, empty of the waves of elaborations [*śūnyaṃ prapañcormibhiḥ*, glossing Dharmakīrti’s *vidhūtakaḷpanā*]; from which the rays of gnosis [*jñānatviṣ*, filling out Dharmakīrti’s *tvīṣ*] emanate [*sphuranti*, for Dharmakīrti’s *sphuraṇa*] throughout the world through the *nirmāṇakāyas* (*nirmāṇaiḥ*)—that body [*vapus*, for Dharmakīrti’s *mūrta*] is not stained by unreality (*alīkatva*). Thus, this body of the Sage is excellent from every angle [*bhadrāṃ samantāt*, glossing Dharmakīrti’s *samantabhadra*].”

that Buddha Has Appearances. Indeed, this is what Dharmakīrti’s verse, with which Jñānaśrīmitra began his work, was intended to show all along.

The emphasis given by the particle *eva* (translated above with “only”) excludes the position that Buddha does *not* have appearances: Buddha is *sākāra*, not *nirākāra*. With this, Jñānaśrīmitra claims that not only Ratnākaraśānti’s philosophical view, but also his *buddhology* has been refuted. Let us recall then what Ratnākaraśānti had said about the appearances Buddha’s so-called form-bodies (*rūpakāyas*) present. As we saw in chapter 2, section ii, in the view Ratnākaraśānti presents consistently throughout his works on tantra and philosophy, the *dharmakāya*, or the embodiment of buddhahood as the real state of affairs Buddha realizes, is devoid of appearances. Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment manifests this real state of affairs—meaning, on Ratnākaraśānti’s view, that there is the experience of manifestation devoid of appearances (*prakāśamātra*). This state, however, has two necessary outflows (*niṣyandas*), which (to an extent) share in the *dharmakāya*’s nature as real insofar as they naturally flow from it. First, there is the *sambhogakāya*, the embodiment of buddhahood in the blissful enjoyment of reality that is shared by high-level bodhisattvas and Buddha. Second, there is the *nirmāṇakāya*, or the embodiment of buddhahood in magical emanations—the embodiments experienced by ordinary beings. Both these embodiments present forms or appearances to those who experience them, and to that extent the natural purity of the *dharmakāya* is occluded. The form-bodies are, we saw Ratnākaraśānti admit, a little bit mistaken. But still they are necessary insofar as Buddha’s enlightenment is meant to lead other sentient beings out of the sufferings of *saṃsāra*. Compassion is an essential part of buddhahood, and that compassion, cultivated over the course of the Buddha’s practice before enlightenment, must manifest in appearances. Even if those

appearances are the natural outflow of the *dharmakāya*'s innate purity, coupled with the fact that they are produced by Buddha's compassion, still their being appearances is enough for Ratnākaraśānti to claim they are erroneous.⁴

Most basically, Jñānaśrīmitra refuses to accept that Buddha's *sambhogakāya* in particular is at all mistaken. He sees that Ratnākaraśānti is forced to this position by his denial of the reality of appearances: whatever else we may say of them, the form-bodies present images, they appear in certain ways set forth in scripture, and if Ratnākaraśānti is to be consistent in his denial of the reality of all images, these images too must be unreal. While Ratnākaraśānti's consistency in this regard may be admirable, Jñānaśrīmitra refuses to accept this conclusion. Buddha's embodiment of awakening in the blissful enjoyment of reality is real; the existence of the manifest appearances through which reality is so enjoyed cannot be denied. Jñānaśrīmitra grounds his position on the fundamental works on Yogācāra buddhology he (like other eleventh-century Buddhists) attributes to the tenth-level bodhisattva Maitreya: the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, and, importantly, the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, aka *Mahāyāna Uttaratantra*. On the basis of these works, Jñānaśrīmitra argues that not only is Buddha's manifest and illustrious embodiment in its purified characteristics primary—this being the body that enjoys the dharma and through which others can enjoy the dharma—it is ultimately the only conceivable notion of Buddha's experience of buddhahood.

This last point follows directly from the engagement with Dharmakīrti in SSŚ 4.

Jñānaśrīmitra's proof of the non-duality of variegation is a proof that regards both experience in

⁴ In addition to the discussion above in chapter 2, one should consult again Greg Seton's *Defining Wisdom: Ratnākaraśānti's Sāratamā* (D.Phil Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2015), 110–123, which devotes careful attention to Ratnākaraśānti's theory of the Buddha's embodiments with reference to the Yogācāra-Perfection of Wisdom material that is his and Jñānaśrīmitra's shared scriptural source.

general and the experience of buddhahood in particular. Jñānaśrīmitra thus finds it incumbent upon himself to give an account of buddhahood that coheres with his view of consciousness. Unsurprisingly, this account differs from Ratnākaraśānti's in almost every respect. If there is an underlying intuition grounding Jñānaśrīmitra's view, we will see over the course of this chapter that it is this: Buddha's miraculous role as a teacher is of basic importance not only for our understanding of buddhahood as we experience it third-personally; it is of basic importance also for our understanding of Buddha's own experience of buddhahood. This view of Buddha's experience, moreover, is consistent with what all conscious experience ultimately is: the non-duality of wondrous variegation.

ii. The Basic Priority of the *Sambhogakāya*

In Jñānaśrīmitra's view—and contra much of the Indian Mahāyāna tradition, Ratnākaraśānti included—the *sambhogakāya* is the most fundamental embodiment of buddhahood.⁵ Buddha's embodiment of awakening as the conscious enjoyment of reality, an enjoyment shared with bodhisattvas of the tenth and highest stage, is more basic than the embodiment of awakening as the real state of affairs Buddha realizes. This latter, the *dharmakāya*, is but a means (*sādhana*) to

⁵ Kazuo Kano, in his very fine recent studies of the transmission of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from India to Tibet, first articulated this remarkable aspect of Jñānaśrīmitra's buddhology. We will use some of the passages he has studied as a point of departure. See both Kano's *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness: rNgog Blo-Idan-shes-rab and A Transmission of the Ratnagotravibhāga from India to Tibet* (Vienna: ATBS, 2016), and his "Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*" (*Tōyōbunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 96 [2016], 7–48), and compare Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), and John Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997). Ryo Nishiyama has pointed out to me parallels in the Pure Land tradition in Japan, and indeed, certain associated sūtras, like the *Avatamsaka*, do indeed highlight the Buddha's marvelous manifestation over the (Jñānaśrīmitra will argue) inert reality of Buddha's *dharmakāya*. While Jñānaśrīmitra himself grounds his view on what came to be known as the five Maitreya texts, as well as other works in the Yogācāra tradition, a thorough consideration of his sūtric influences is surely a desideratum.

the attainment of the former, the true goal (*sādhya*). Jñānaśrīmitra is explicit in this regard. Both the *dharmakāya* and the *sambhogakāya* can be called ultimately existent (*paramārthasat*), but in two different senses of the word *artha*: the *dharmakāya* is the *object* of ultimate gnosis (*paramajñānaviṣaya*) while the *sambhogakāya* is the ultimate *goal* (*paramasādhya*).⁶ The object of gnosis—reality (*tattva*), emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the way things are (*tathatā*), non-duality (*advaita*), etc.—is an abstract state of affairs shared by all cognition: every cognition, whether the defiled cognition of ordinary sentient beings suffering ignorance in saṃsāra or the purified cognition of the Buddhas, has this emptiness of duality as its nature. The *dharmakāya* is the embodiment of buddhahood as this reality, the fact that buddhahood is itself this innate state of affairs common to all cognition, only now devoid of conceptualizations.⁷

The *sambhogakāya*, however, is the enjoyment of the direct awareness of this reality. It is the direct experience, through self-awareness, of the emptiness of cognition. As Jñānaśrīmitra puts his conclusion, “The Lord is the *sambhogakāya* alone. He is one by whom the *dharmakāya* has been directly realized through self-awareness. For while some other state exists, that alone is

⁶ See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 67; JNĀ 503.11–12: *svārthaparārthau dharmasambhogāv anūdyā paramārthakāyavyavahāra eva vidhīyate, paramajñānaviṣayatvāt paramasādhyaivā ca tayoh*. The context of this particular discussion is noteworthy: Jñānaśrīmitra is here glossing a line in *sragdharā* from a work he attributes to Nāgārjuna, the *Kāyatrayastava*-*stotra*, viz.: *vande sambhogakāyaṃ tam aham iha mahādharmarājyapraṭiṣṭham*. In his *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, Jñānaśrīmitra’s famous colleague at Vikramaśīla Nāropā cites the verse as well, introducing the series of verses that contain it with *uktaṃ cāryamañjuśrīpādais tantrottare*. There, the full verse, the second of the *Kāyatrayastava*, runs: *lokātūtām acintyām sukṛtaśataphalām ātmano yo vibhūtiṃ parśanmadhye vicitrām prathayati mahatīm dhīmatām prītiheṭoh / buddhānām sarvalokaprasṛtam aviratodārasaddharmaghoṣaṃ vande sambhogakāyaṃ tam aham iha mahādharmarājyapraṭiṣṭham*. See Francesco Sferra and Stefania Merzagora’s *The Sekoddeśaṭīkā by Nāropā (Paramārthasaṃgraha)* (Rome: Is. I. A. O., 2006), 170–171. Jñānaśrīmitra’s discussion of the verse continues on the same page, where he cites *pādas* a and b at JNĀ 503.17–18. For modern scholarship’s doubts regarding the attribution of this verse to Nāgārjuna the author of the MMK, see Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, 56–57; for a translation of the four-verse work (with excerpts from the supposed-autocommentary), see Karl Brunnhölzl, *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions* (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 18–21.

⁷ JNĀ 433.7–10: *avaśyaṃ hi prakāśamānam etac citraṃ śūnyatayā sāksātkartavyam. tāvataiva bodhisiddhir iti kim apareṇa? na ca svasaṃvedanād anyat sāksātkāri. sā ca tathatā saṃkleśavyavadānāvasthāsādhāraṇas cittadharmā iti svābhāvikaḥ sahaḥ prakṛtir iti cābhidhīyamāno ’pi vyavadānāpekṣayā dharmakāyavyavahāra-gocaraḥ*. As Kano notes, Jñānaśrīmitra later refers to this as the *tathāgatadhātu*: see Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 60–61.

the goal. However, the many efforts with regard to Him as one to be refuted (*bādhyā*) are in vain.”⁸ So long as one has not attained awakening—so long as the defiled states of *samsāra* exist—the *sambhogakāya*, by which reality is realized, is the goal of practice and philosophical inquiries into reality. Ratnākaraśānti attempts to show that the illustrious manifestation of the *sambhogakāya* is unreal fail.

It is as basic to Jñānaśrīmitra’s buddhology as it is to his view of cognition that this direct experience of reality has appearances. The embodiment of buddhahood as the enjoyment of reality is an *experience*, and we have seen that any experience involves the presence of appearances to cognition, either in a causal role leading us away from cognition itself and out into the realm of determination and externally directed activity, or as immediately manifest to self-awareness. This particular experience, wherein reality (here the *dharmakāya*) is directly realized through self-awareness (*svavittisākṣātkṛtadharmakāya*), is of the latter kind: reality is immediately manifest to self-awareness in certain appearances. For reality, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us, is but a *property* (*dharma*) of the appearances in which it manifests; the appearances are thus the *locus* (*dharmin*) of that property, the thing reality is a property of. Emptiness, the non-existence of duality, implies something that is non-dual, and this is the manifest appearance attained at the culmination of the path: the *sambhogakāya*.⁹ Emptiness “makes as its basis precisely that final appearance that has been brought close by the assistance of the accumulation of merit, which

⁸ JNĀ 435.4–7: *sambhogakāyasthita eva nāthaḥ svavittisākṣātkṛtadharmakāyaḥ / daśāntaratve hi tad eva sādhyam bādhye tu bandhyo vividhaḥ prayāsaḥ //*

⁹ This is a theme throughout the SSS, but note especially the passages adduced by Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 58–61. A verse in the SSSū Kano alludes to, SSSū 3.21, puts the point in the clear terms of the theory of non-apprehension: *bhūtale kalasābhāvā bhūtalādhyakṣasādhanāḥ / sambhoge ca dvayābhāvāḥ sambhogādhyakṣasādhanāḥ //* “The absence of a pot on the ground is established by the perception of the ground, and the absence of duality in the *sambhogakāya* is established by the perception of the *sambhogakāya*.” In Kano’s passage (4), this point is supported with reference to RGV 1.154–155 and the RGVV. See for instance Jñānaśrīmitra’s citation of RGVV ad 1.154–155, JNĀ 487.25–488.1: *evaṃ yad yatra nāsti, tat tena śūnyam iti paśyati, yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati, tat sad itāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti.*

produces the major and minor marks [of the *sambhogakāya*] which are delimited as the locus.”¹⁰

The accumulation of merit on the path produces the appearances that characterize the enjoyment of reality, while emptiness of duality is a property of those appearances.

This seemingly inconsequential point about properties and their loci has far-reaching consequences for Jñānaśrīmitra. First of all, it gives priority to the *sambhogakāya*. The *sambhogakāya* is the locus of reality’s manifestation: it is the *sambhogakāya*’s appearances that are empty of duality. Without the *sambhogakāya*, reality is as good as useless. Reality, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us, “has fulfilled its purpose just by means of the manifestation of its locus.”¹¹ The mere fact that there is no duality does nothing on its own. It is only when that fact manifests in the concrete, purified appearances that adorn the *sambhogakāya*—the appearances through which that reality is enjoyed—that non-duality has any liberative effect.

To this extent, and in line with Jñānaśrīmitra’s general non-dualism, the *dharmakāya* has the *sambhogakāya* as its *identity* (*tādātmya*). Ratnākaraśānti had denied this, saying instead that the *sambhogakāya* is the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya*. The two have a causal relation (*tadutpatti*) insofar as the *sambhogakāya* arises from the *dharmakāya*. For him, the form-bodies arise out of the formless state of consciousness that constitutes the *dharmakāya* due to the Buddha’s compassion: this formless state is of no use to others (it is *svārtha*, not *parārtha*), and so the Buddha exhibits purified worldly cognitions with forms for the sake of leading others to enlightenment. For Ratnākaraśānti, then, the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāyas*

¹⁰ JNĀ 433.12–13: *dharmitā*’*niyatata*llakṣaṇādiniṣpādakapuṇyasambhārasahakārikāraṇopanītam antimaṃ tam evākāram āśrayīkaroti. ⁱ *dharmitā*- em. Thakur] *dharmatā*- MS.

¹¹ JNĀ 434.20: *tasya ca pratibhāsinaiva dharmiṇā caritārthatvāt*. See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 58.

display the purified properties of Buddha—which are mistaken despite being effective means to leading others to enlightenment.

In Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, this gets things wrong on a number of counts. First, Ratnākaraśānti gets the order of things wrong: it is the *sambhogakāya* that is more basic than the *dharmakāya*. Further, rather than a causal relation (*tadutpatti*), the relation between the two is one of identity (*tādātmya*). This follows from the claim that the *dharmakāya* is but a property of the *sambhogakāya*, the thing thus characterized. The color blue, for instance, is nothing on its own; it is a property of particular blue things, and so it has as its identity the blue things in which it is instantiated. So too, the *dharmakāya* (= reality = emptiness = non-duality) is but a property of the appearances that manifest as non-dual in the *sambhogakāya*’s enjoyment of that reality. To illustrate this point, Jñānaśrīmitra has an opponent ask, “How is there no difference between the goal and the means?” How, that is, is the *sambhogakāya*, the goal, identical to the means? The answer, he tells us, is “because it is just the direct realization of reality that is the goal, and because precisely the cultivation of that is the means; or else, because if reality does not exist or if it is not ascertained, then it would follow that both goal and means would be lost.”¹² That is, if reality did not exist, the cultivation of the direct realization of reality would not be possible. Alternatively, if reality is not realized in the appearances of the *sambhogakāya*, it is as good as non-existent. Either way, because the *dharmakāya* is a property of the *sambhogakāya*—because the reality of non-duality belongs to particular appearances that are non-dual—the *dharmakāya* has that as its identity.

¹² JNĀ 434.18–20: *ananyabhāvo*ⁱ 'pi kuta iti cet? tattvasākṣātkārasyaiva sādhyatvāt. tadbhāvanāyā eva ca sādhanatvāt, tadabhāve 'niścaye vā tayor eva lopāsakteḥⁱⁱ. ⁱ *ananyabhāvo* em. Kano] *anantabhāvo* JNĀ; ⁱⁱ *lopāsakteḥ* MS] *lopāsakteḥ* JNĀ. Cf. *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 58, fn.58.

It is only the *nirmāṇakāyas* that arise from the *sambhogakāya* and so are related to it causally. Here again, Jñānaśrīmitra upsets the usual order of things. The *dharmakāya* alone is not able to produce these magical emanations. Reality must be directly realized through appearances for the magical emanations of Buddha to arise, and that direct realization, again, is the *sambhogakāya*. It is thus the *sambhogakāya* that is ultimately productive of the magical emanations that teach the dharma and lead ordinary sentient beings to liberation.¹³

The extent to which Jñānaśrīmitra overturns conventional understandings of the priority of the Buddha's embodiments can be seen by considering his discussion of a particularly important canonical passage attributed to Maitreya by Jñānaśrīmitra and his colleagues. John Makransky has shown that *Abhisamayālamkāra* (AA) 8.1 took on special significance as a locus classicus for discussions of the enumeration of the Buddha's embodiments. This verse tells us, in Makransky's translation, "The embodiment of the Sage in his essence: Its identity is the primordial nature of the undefiled dharmas [or "properties"] that are obtained in utter purity."¹⁴ Commentators were divided on whether this verse was meant to express the nature of the *dharmakāya*, as Vimuktisena and Ratnākaraśānti understand it,¹⁵ or whether it in fact identified a fourth embodiment of buddhahood, the *svābhāvikakāya*, "the embodiment of the Sage in his essence." This separate *svābhāvikakāya* was understood by this view's proponents, such as the influential commentator Haribhadra, to mean the nature of buddhahood as it is ultimately, as

¹³ See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 58, 65.

¹⁴ Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, 115. Makransky gives the text of the verse: *sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ / svābhāviko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛtilakṣaṇaḥ //* Jñānaśrīmitra presents the same: JNĀ 433.19–20.

¹⁵ For Vimuktisena's interpretation of the verse, see Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, 196–199; for Haribhadra's, 225–230; for Ratnākaraśānti's, 271–272. On Ratnākaraśānti's interpretation, see Seton's helpful discussion, *Defining Wisdom*, 112–116.

opposed to the nature of buddhahood as Buddha experiences it conventionally. This latter was instead referred to as the *jñānātmakadharmakāya*, or “the *dharmakāya* that consists of gnosis.”

With this, Haribhadra solves a problem that is part of the deep grammar of Mahāyāna buddhology. If the *dharmakāya* is really just the embodiment of buddhahood as the ultimately real state of affairs Buddha realizes, how is it that Buddha is really aware of anything at all? Isn't this just an insentient fact about how things really are rather than a conscious experience? Ratnākaraśānti solves this problem by holding close to Yogācāra: the state of affairs realized by Buddha *is itself an experience*, an ultimately real conscious state with the phenomenal characteristic of innate bliss. The *dharmakāya* is not, for him, some insentient state of affairs. Haribhadra's Mādhyamika denial of the ultimate existence of consciousness does not afford him this solution, so he instead argues that the *dharmakāya* is two-fold: first, the *svābhāvikakāya*, or the insentient state of affairs—emptiness—that is the ultimate reality embodied by Buddha; second, the *dharmakāya* that consists of gnosis, which is to say for Haribhadra a conventionally real experience of the undefiled properties of buddhahood.¹⁶

Enter Jñānaśrīmitra. Jñānaśrīmitra refuses both these positions. First of all, contra Haribhadra, Buddha's experience of buddhahood's undefiled properties is ultimately real. For Jñānaśrīmitra, those properties are the *dharmakāya* and the experience of them the

¹⁶ For this discussion of Haribhadra's two-body interpretation of the *dharmakāya*, see Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, 211–257. Makransky summarizes the stakes clearly: “In the three-*kāya* formulation, then, the essential realization of Buddhahood (*svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*) was entirely beyond conceptual construction and differentiation. The list of undefiled dharmas was understood just as a phenomenal description of a Buddha's gnosis, a description from *our* point of view, not a Buddha's. But according to Haribhadra's four-*kāya* formulation, Buddha perceives his own realization in terms of those dharmas. For Haribhadra, the list of undefiled dharmas becomes not just a description of Buddha's gnosis from our phenomenal point of view, but a description from a Buddha's own point of view. [...] The set of undefiled dharmas is distinguished as a separate *kāya* (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) precisely because it is an appearance, within the realm of conventional truth, for Buddhas themselves” (237–238). I thank Dan Arnold for pushing me to see the special relevance of the *jñānātmakadharmakāya* to this discussion of Jñānaśrīmitra.

sambhogakāya. There is no need to bifurcate the *dharmakāya* such that one aspect of it is ultimately real and another conventionally real: the self-aware manifestation of variegated appearance exists in reality, and insofar as Buddha’s undefiled properties manifest to self-awareness, they too ultimately exist. But, as ever, Jñānaśrīmitra thinks Ratnākaraśānti is wrong as well. Ratnākaraśānti is only able to explain the manifestation of the undefiled properties of buddhahood by saying they contain a tiny bit of error: they are *appearances*, and all appearances are, for him, erroneous; even those that naturally flow from the *dharmakāya* are erroneous to an extent.

Jñānaśrīmitra cites AA 8.1 as proof that the *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya* are identical. One might adduce the peculiarity of this claim just from the fact that it is absent from Makransky’s book-length discussion of a great number of Indian and Tibetan interpretations of this verse and its context. Indeed, Jñānaśrīmitra’s interpretation does not seem to fit the context of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* at all naturally. But, as ever, he is undeterred. An opponent first introduces the verse, asking how it can be said to support the view that what we call emptiness is but a property of the appearance of the *sambhogakāya*.¹⁷ In response, Jñānaśrīmitra re-parses the verse. He writes,

The *sambhogakāya* is not disregarded because it is generally implied [in VIII.1 of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*]: “[The *dharmakāya*] is the innate nature of those properties (*dharmā*) that have attained purity of all their appearances [or “in every respect” (*sarvākāra*)].” However, the *sambhogakāya* is conditionally posited as a separate embodiment: because it is counted as the culmination of omniscience (*sarvākārajñatā*-), it is counted as separate. Therefore, having distinguished between property and locus, there is the conditional positing of two embodiments [viz. the

¹⁷ JNĀ 433.18–21: *nanu, sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ / svābhāviko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛtilakṣaṇaḥ // [AA 8.1] iti siddhāntaḥ, katham yatho’ktākārasya śūnyatākhyo dharmā iti ucyate? i yatho- MS] paro- JNĀ.*

dharmakāya and the *sambhogakāya*]. The *dharmakāya* has a connection of identity with Buddha [i.e. the *sambhogakāya*], while the *nirmāṇakāya* arises from it.¹⁸

The verse speaks of the *sambhogakāya*, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us here, insofar as it posits the *dharmakāya* as the nature of properties: to speak of a property generally implies (*sāmānyena nirdeśāt*) a property-possessor. So where the verse speaks of the innate nature of properties, it points to the locus of those properties, here the *sambhogakāya*.¹⁹ Once again, the *dharmakāya* is relegated to the side of a property, the *sambhogakāya* to the side of the thing that instantiates that property. The conditional positing of the *dharmakāya* and *sambhogakāya* as separate is based on the false differentiation between property and locus. In reality, the innate nature of the appearances that arise from the culmination of the Buddha's practice—the purified appearances that arise in the Buddha's omniscience—is no different from the appearances wherein that nature manifests.

Jñānaśrīmitra also defends this prioritization of the *sambhogakāya* by overturning conventional Yogācāra wisdom (or Ratnākaraśānti's construal of it, at least) regarding the doctrine of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*) in one of his few discussions of the topic. The variegated states of cognition that exist before enlightenment, he tells us, are the so-called dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*). This is also known as the construction of the unreal

¹⁸ JNĀ 434.8–12: *abhisamayālamkāre ca, ye dharmāḥ sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ prāptās teṣāṃ prakṛtiḥ / iti sāmānyena nirdeśān na sambhogatyāgaḥ. sa tu prthakkāyatvena vyavasthāpyata iti sarvākārajñātāparyanta-parigaṇanāt prthag eva parigaṇitāḥ. tasmād dharmadharmibhāvena bhittvā kāyadvayavyavastheyam. tad asya bhagavati tādāmyam sambandho, nirmāṇasya tu tadutpattiḥ.*

¹⁹ For another usage of *nirdeśāt*, 'points to' or 'implies,' in this context, see a complementary passage at JNĀ 487.22–24: *kiṃ tu dharmeṇa dharmīnirdeśāt tathāgatadhātuśabdena śūnyatādharmaṃ cittavivartagrāhya eva grāhyaḥ, kalpanāniveśini śūnyatāmātre kasyacit prakṣepādiśāṅkāviraḥāt.* See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 60–61, and "Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*," 46. At the latter, Kano translates the passage: "However, because a property (*dharmā*) points toward its possessor (*dharmīn*), one should understand (*grāhya*) that the word 'Buddha-nature' (*tathāgatadhātu*) [bears reference] only to [an image] that is grasped in the process of the development of a thought (*cittavivartagrāhya*) which has emptiness as its property; for no one could even think of the possibility of [misguidedly] superimposing and [excluding] with regard to pure emptiness, which is not involved in mental construction (*kalpanā-aniveśin*)."

(*abhūtaparikalpa*) or simply conceptual construction (*vikalpa*)—a reference, that is, to the constructed nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*). It may be thought, with Ratnākaraśānti and many other interpreters of the three-natures, that enlightenment or the perfected nature (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*) amounts to the absence of conceptual construction in the dependent. But Jñānaśrīmitra rejects this straightforward picture. Rather, he says, “At the end [of the path], though [cognition] is still variegated, it is no longer referred to in that way”—cognition, that is, is no longer said to be the construction of the unreal, conceptual construction, *or dependent*—

because it is no longer the cause of false conceptual construction. Instead, it is said to be devoid of the nature of that. Even though [cognition] might arise due to dependence upon causes in a general sense, nevertheless it is no longer called *dependent* given the absence of dependence upon habituations to the unreal.²⁰

In general terms we may be tempted to say that Buddha’s cognition is dependent insofar as it arises with unique and marvelous appearances conditioned by past practice and the accumulation of merit. But we would do better to avoid this appellation, for it is no longer dependent upon anything *unreal*. “Rather,” Jñānaśrīmitra avers, “it is called *enjoyment* (*saṃbhoga*) because it is characterized by the enjoyment of *dharma*”—where this might mean in the first place the Mahāyāna dharma, the Buddha’s teaching, but also the *dharmakāya* qua reality and the *dharmakāya* qua property—“and because it is being enjoyed together with bodhisattvas on the tenth and highest bodhisattva-stage.”²¹ Enlightenment is not the dependent nature emptied of the constructed: it is simply the *sambhogakāya*, wherein dependence is no longer at issue. “Further,” Jñānaśrīmitra concludes, “because there is no causality in reality (*tattvataḥ*), where can there be

²⁰ JNĀ 433.13–16: *tatra prāg avasthāyām citram eva tatparatantram ucyate. abhūtaparikalpo vikalpa iti coktaḥ. paryante tu citra eva vitathakalpanāyām aprayojakatvān na tathocyate. tadrūparahitas tūcyate. hetupāranatryamātrasaṃbhove ’pi cāsadvāsanāpāranatryābhāve paratanthro ’pi nābhidhīyate.*

²¹ JNĀ 434.16–17: *kiṃ tu saṃbhoga iti, dharmasaṃbhogād daśabhūmibhiḥ saṃbhujyamānatvāc ca.*

any dependence?”²² There is no causality, no dependence, when it comes to Buddha’s true embodiment taken as it really is. Causality, we have seen Jñānaśrīmitra argue in the last chapter, is not ultimately real.²³ It is only the best conventional notion of existence we have. Once again, Buddha is most basically the embodiment of buddhahood in the enjoyment of reality; reality has as its identity the appearances that characterize that enjoyment. There is no causal relation between the two: when we are dealing with the ultimate nature of things, causality cannot come into our story. The relation between the *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya* is one of identity.

We might let Jñānaśrīmitra summarize his view. In a passage from SŚ 6, he brings together the logic of non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) and the scriptures of Maitreya to establish the priority of the *sambhogakāya* and the *dharmakāya*’s identity with it:

Just as the [valid judgment of non-apprehension], “It is true there is no pot on the ground,” has fixed the object to be the bare ground, so too “There is no duality here” means that a form of awareness is devoid of duality or its being two: having precisely this in view, there is the exclusion of duality, and this is fixed with respect to a real form. The conclusion in the *Treatise (śāstra)*²⁴ is that, regarding a property, it is the apprehension of a locus that is a means of knowledge. So,

Relying upon a constructed difference between property and locus,
both these two, Buddha and dharma,
are said to exist.

The saṅgha is the appearance of the *nirmāṇakāyas*.

Hence, the three jewels are provisionally established.

However, in reality there is only an identity between Buddha and dharma [viz. the *sambhogakāya* and the *dharmakāya*]. Hence, we find what is said in *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* 9.62ab with its *Bhāṣya*:

“The essential embodiment (*kāyaḥ svābhāviko*) is considered

²² JNĀ 434.17: *tattvato vā hetupalabhāvāt kva pāratantryam iti.*

²³ See chapter 4, section iv, c, and Kyuma’s “Jñānaśrīmitra on the Definition of Existence.”

²⁴ That is, very likely a work of Dharmakīrti’s, though I have not been able to trace this particular citation (if it is a citation). All of Dharmakīrti’s major works, however, have lengthy discussions of *anupalabdhi* which lead to a conclusion very much like what is expressed here.

equal, subtle, and bound together with that.

It is essential to all buddhas, the same insofar as it is without distinction. It is subtle insofar as it is difficult to know. It is bound together with that, i.e. with the *sambhogakāya*.” Regarding this, the connection among real things should be understood to be only an identity.²⁵

Just as we apprehend the absence of something in a particular place by ascertaining the bare place and conceiving of the absence as a property of that place, so too the *dharmakāya*, the absence of duality, is but a property of the *sambhogakāya*, the appearances that are so empty. The difference between the three embodiments of Buddha—here mapped on to the three jewels, the objects of refuge and so the basis of any person’s being Buddhist—is said to be constructed. Really, the identity of the three embodiments can be reduced to what is most fundamental: the *sambhogakāya*, the true identity of the *dharmakāya* and the cause of the *nirmānakāyas*. The *dharmakāya*, as the MSA and MSABh say, is inseparable from the *sambhogakāya*.

iii. The *Sambhogakāya* and Wondrous Non-Duality (*citrādvaita*)

Like Ratnākaraśānti, Jñānaśrīmitra considers there to be an essential connection between self-awareness and the experience of buddhahood. We have seen in the foregoing, however, that the two philosophers consider that experience to be very different. For Ratnākaraśānti, it is the

²⁵ JNĀ 494.23–495.7: *yathā hi pradeśe ghaṭābhāvaḥ satya itī kevalaḥ pradeśa itī arthaniṣṭhā, tathā dvayābhāvo ’treti dvayena dvayatvena vā rahitaṃ jñānarūpam itī arthaḥ. etad evābhisandhāya dvidhāpohaḥ, tasya ca vasturūpe niṣṭhā. dharmigrāhi ca dharme pramānam itī nirṇayaḥ śāstre. tena dharmadharmiṇoḥ, kalpitaṃ bhedaṃ āśritya buddho dharmas ca tāv ubhau / saṃgho nirmānakāyābha itī ratnatrayasthitiḥ // vastutas tu buddhadharmayoḥ tādātmyam eva. etena yaḥ sabhāṣyaḥ sūtralaṃkāraḥ, samaḥ sūkṣmas ca saṃbaddhaḥ kāyaḥ svābhāviko mataḥ / [MSA 9.62ab] svābhāvikaḥ sarvabuddhānāṃ nirviśiṣṭatayā samaḥ. sūkṣmo durjñānatayā, tena sām̐bhogikena kāyena saṃbaddha itī [MSABh ad 9.62] tatra tādātmyam eva vāstavaḥ saṃbandho boddhavyaḥ. Thakur reads the (unmetrical) first line of the *Bhāṣya* as part of the MSA verse cited here; I have separated it, reading only MSA 9.62ab as verse. Note that Jñānaśrīmitra does seem to switch the order of the words *nirviśiṣṭatayā samaḥ* from what is preserved in the MSABh, which reads *samaḥ nirviśiṣṭatayā*, making the gloss clearer.*

experience of the innate purity of the *dharmakāya*, consciousness devoid of appearances (*prakāśamātra*), experienced as innate bliss. For Jñānaśrīmitra, the *dharmakāya* is but the inert nature of cognition; the direct realization of it through self-awareness is the *sambhogakāya*, the most basic embodiment of buddhahood, and this realization has variegated and illustrious appearances. These appearances are the major and minor marks and other characteristics that are said in scripture to adorn the *sambhogakāya*, characteristics that mark Buddha's excellence (*audārya*) cultivated on the path.²⁶ It is precisely this excellence that Jñānaśrīmitra takes Ratnākaraśānti to challenge when he claims that all appearances—even those of the *sambhogakāya* are—unreal.

Ratnākaraśānti's line of argument on this point—regarding buddhology in particular and not just appearances in general—is given thorough consideration throughout the SSŚ, where his view is given voice in stronger (and, we might say, less tactful) terms than Ratnākaraśānti himself allows. Still, though he does not shout it from the rooftops, Ratnākaraśānti must admit that the *sambhogakāya*, insofar as it is characterized by the enjoyment of appearances—both on the part of Buddha and on the part of high-level bodhisattvas who experience this embodiment of buddhahood—is at least a little bit erroneous. Otherwise, the complete purity of enlightenment would be impossible: appearances are in every instance erroneous, and so if enlightenment in its essence does not transcend appearances, its purity simply cannot be attained. There would only

²⁶ For clear presentations of the classical Yogācāra doctrine of the *sambhogakāya* with its major and minor marks, various powers, etc., see especially Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 127–146 and Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied*, 119–120. Jñānaśrīmitra is most interested in explicitly grounding his reworking of the significance of the *sambhogakāya* on the Yogācāra sources considered in these works. As noted above, which sūtras Jñānaśrīmitra sees himself as defending—whether, for instance, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* might be of particular importance to him—is an issue outside the scope of my present knowledge. Indeed, as we'll have opportunity to note below, we might also ask which *tantras* Jñānaśrīmitra is unpacking in this regard.

ever be error, never total liberation from error. The *dharmakāya* alone then, and not the *sambhogakāya*, is the inherent purity of enlightenment.

Jñānaśrīmitra presents this position not by citing Ratnākaraśānti, but by giving voice to what he took to be Ratnākaraśānti's true intentions and the real consequences of his view. If the Sākāravāda is true and appearances are in every case real, an opponent objects to Jñānaśrīmitra,

“Then as long as there is awareness, there is an appearance, and as long as there is an appearance, there is error caused by activity toward the external: there could never be purification! But if appearances are unreal, then when there is the final disappearance (*atyantam atyaye*) of appearances due to the elimination of the mass of spontaneous habituations, only manifestation will remain, which is just like the sky, without appearance. This is what we call purification. In your view that appearances are real, this is quite hard to obtain!”²⁷

Jñānaśrīmitra is untroubled by such an objection. With his characteristic rhetorical flourish, he responds,

Fine—what are we to do with a person such as this, who is so eager for the destruction of the *sambhogakāya* with its magnificent activity? For if habituations to the unreal are destroyed, let there be no conceptualization, which is false by nature; or let there be no outward-directed activity.²⁸

The opponent here (Ratnākaraśānti in spirit if not to the letter) is crazed in his desire to eliminate the *sambhogakāya*—there can be no other explanation for such an absurd position. For the elimination of the habituations that keep us bound in saṃsāra does indeed amount to the cessation of striving after false conceptualizations and externally directed activity, the hallmarks of ignorance. But this does not mean that appearances all told vanish. As Jñānaśrīmitra continues,

²⁷ JNĀ 409.13–16: *evam tarhi yāvadbodhas tāvad ākāro yāvac cākāras tāvad bahiḥpravṛttikṛtāi bhrāntisthitir iti na kadācid vyavadānam. alīkatve tv ākāraṇāṃ svaprabhavavāsanāsamūhasamudghātād atyantam atyaye nirābhāsam ākāśasamkāśaṃ prakāśamātram avaśiṣyata iti vyavadānam ucyate. ākārasatyatāmate tu durlabham etad iti cet. ⁱ bahiḥpravṛttikṛtā] MS; bahiṣṭhā vṛttikṛtā JNĀ.*

²⁸ JNĀ 409.16–18: *bhavatu kiṃ tādrśā tena kartavyaṃ mahāprārambhasambhogakāyavilopalolupenāsadvāsanā-samudghāteⁱ hi prakṛtīvatataḥ saṃkalpa eva mā bhūd bahiḥpravṛttir vā. ⁱ samudghāte] MS; samuddhāte JNĀ.*

If there is the arising of those particular appearances that are positive (*abhimatākāra-viśeṣa*) due to the power of the cultivation of particular mental appearances and through the energetic striving for the accumulation of what is pure (*śubhasaṃbhārābhiyoga*)—what is the fault with these appearances? And there is no rule to the effect that, because we see faults regarding some appearance, it is always so.²⁹

Some appearances are bound up causally with the production of externally directed activity; other appearances are cultivated through strenuous effort on the path such that they are not so bound up. What’s wrong with saying some appearances are deluded while others, the products of energetic cultivation on the path, are positive? Summarizing his view, Jñānaśrīmitra writes,

The mind that has reached
an indescribable peak of development
is variegated by the splendor of the major and minor marks
and belongs to one for whom the wealth of repeated practice
of countless meritorious deeds is fully manifest—
that is the nature of the perfectly awakened one.
It is the storehouse of excellent qualities,
and devoid of the mass of impure appearances
that are connected to habituations to the unreal.
But it is not at all without appearances (*anākāra*).³⁰

Attaining the *sambhogakāya* does indeed require cutting off the production of the impure appearances that arise from our habituations to *samsāra*. But this does not mean cutting off *all* appearances. Rather, the *sambhogakāya* results from the cultivation of the *right* appearances, in particular the variegated major and minor marks and the other qualities of the Buddha that characterize the enjoyment of reality. These appearances, then, are manifest to self-awareness in the proper sense of *manifest* we discussed in the last chapter: they are ultimately real in so manifesting, and they are no longer bound up with determination.

²⁹ JNĀ 409.18–20: *cittākāraviśeṣabhāvanāyāḥ śubhasaṃbhārābhiyogasya ca sāmāthyād abhimatākāraviśeṣasya samudaye kīdr̥ṣo doṣaḥ. na ca kadācid ākāre doṣadarśanāt sarvadā tanniyamaḥ.*

³⁰ JNĀ 409.22–25: *yātaṃ kāmcit pariṇatisīkhāṃ lakṣaṇavyaṅjanaśrīcitraṃ cetaḥ śubhaśatasamullāsātābhyāsa-bhūmaḥ / saṃbuddhātmāḥ guṇanidhir asadvāsanāsamṇibaddhā śuddhākāraprakararahitaṃ na tv anākāram eva // i saṃbuddhātmā] MS; saṃbaddhātmā JNĀ.*

Ratnākaraśānti would counter that these marks of the *sambhogakāya* cannot constitute the excellence or the profundity of buddhahood, for insofar as they are appearances, they can be defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument. As Jñānaśrīmitra puts the familiar objection,

“But surely,” you may say, “since the appearances of the major and minor marks of the Buddha (*lakṣaṇādyākārāṇām*) are unreal since they are defeated by the neither-one-nor-many argument, where is their loftiness (*audārya*)? Further, there is the undesirable consequence of the appearance of something unreal (*asatkhyāti-*)[which you, Jñānaśrīmitra, have denied], because [the appearances of the major and minor marks] are erroneous insofar as they have the nature of a cognition in which there is the appearance of something unreal—where is their profundity (*gāmbhīrya*)?”³¹

But this, as we expect by now, cannot right. Given the attention Jñānaśrīmitra has paid to the proper scope of the neither-one-nor-many argument, he has many responses to this line of objection available to him. The one we might consider most fundamental for our purposes, however, concerns the *citrādvaita*.

In the last chapter, we understood the *citrādvaita* to be the indubitable non-duality of variegation. On the basis of Dharmakīrti’s discussion of the unitary nature of variegation in PV 3.220–221, along with Prajñākaragupta’s interpretation of this passage, Jñānaśrīmitra had argued that an opponent (like Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, or Ratnākaraśānti) who would apply the neither-one-nor-many argument to appearances is wrong for doing so, for such an opponent has not understood that external objects and cognition are different in kind. Cognition is given as a phenomenal unity, and this is nothing but the unitary nature of the variegated appearance manifest in a given moment of self-aware cognition. To analyze the appearance into its component parts is to mistake the appearance for the external object it might be thought to

³¹ JNĀ 426.7–9: *nanu vyāpakānupalabdhibādhitatvāl lakṣaṇādyākārāṇām alīkatvāt kvaudāryam? asatkhyātiprasaṅgaś ca asatpratibhāsijñānasvabhāvatvena bhrāntatvāt kva gāmbhīryam?* Note the reference to Dharmakīrti’s *gāmbhīra* and *udāra* here, the two characteristics of the Buddha’s body (*mūrti*) he refers to in his *namaskāraśloka*. Jñānaśrīmitra had just reiterated the importance of these two characteristics, to which the opponent responds with this objection.

represent. But when we have realized the truth of idealism and eliminated external objects from our ontology, we are left solely with the non-dual manifestation of appearances—appearances whose variegation contains not a bit of difference.

Now we are poised to understand a felicitous ambiguity Jñānaśrīmitra introduces into this idea. In SSS 4, before he introduces the verses from Dharmakīrti he engages with for much of the chapter, Jñānaśrīmitra defines the *citrādvaita* for us. He writes,

It is *advaya*, non-dual, because there is no object and subject,
or else because insentience is transcended,
and because it is neither unitary nor manifold.

It is *citra*, variegated, because it is wonderful (*āścāryataḥ*),
insofar as it has appearances (*ākāra*).

This is known as *citrādvaita*, the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition.
It is like a king: we speak of it as singular (*ekadhvani*) on the basis of convention.
Further, in reality, it is not manifold.

In true convention (*satsaṃvṛtau*), being manifold serves no purpose.³²

As we might expect given our discussion in the last chapter, the *citrādvaita* refers to the non-duality of cognition in the first place, for the three reasons Jñānaśrīmitra lays out here: cognition is ultimately devoid of object and subject; it is utterly opposed to insentient matter—that is, it is just self-awareness; and it is beyond even the duality of having a unitary or manifold nature.

Jñānaśrīmitra goes on to clarify that while the word *citra* typically means *variegated*, it here also has the sense of *wonderful* or *amazing*; for it is wonderful that even though it is neither unitary nor manifold, consciousness nonetheless exists.³³ That is, *despite* being neither unitary nor manifold, as Jñānaśrīmitra is willing to admit for reasons we will come to in a moment,

³² JNĀ 444.12–15: *grāhyagrāhakahānito 'dvayam idaṃ yad vā jaḍasyātyayād ekānekahateś ca sākr̥titayā citraṃ tathāścāryataḥ / citrādvaitam iti smṛtaṃ nṛpativac caikadhvaniḥ sāmṛto 'nekatvaṃ ca na tattvato na ca phalaṃ tenāsti satsaṃvṛtau' //ⁱ satsaṃvṛtau] MS, satsaṃvṛtā JNĀ. Compare Jñānaśrīmitra's discussion of this verse, SSS 4.18, translated in full in section iv of the appendix.*

³³ Again, see Jñānaśrīmitra's discussion SSS 4.18, translated in the appendix.

consciousness with appearances *still exists*: this is what makes the manifestation of non-dual appearances *wonderful*.

In the last chapter, we considered some of the reasons why Jñānaśrīmitra thinks that something that is neither-one-nor-many might still exist: most fundamentally, because having a single or multiple nature—the pervader in the neither-one-nor-many argument’s “non-apprehension of the pervader” (*vyāpakānupalabdhi*)—is not in fact a valid definition of existence when we are concerned with cognition. Rather, manifestation alone establishes existence: in the realm of cognition, to exist is to manifest, and to manifest is to exist.³⁴ Here, however, Jñānaśrīmitra takes a different tack. The obscure statement in his verse, “It is like a king: we speak of it as singular (*ekadhvani*) on the basis of convention,” is meant to explain how something might be neither-one-nor-many and yet manifest. Explaining this line, he says, “In convention, we say the Blessed One is singular (*eka*), as was said before.”³⁵ This “as was said before” refers (I believe) to the discussion at the end of SSS 3 we saw in the last section, wherein Jñānaśrīmitra shows that Buddha’s *dharmakāya* is but a property of the more fundamental *sambhogakāya*. We might refer to the Buddha by referring to his properties—as for instance when we call him awakened (*buddha*) to reality—just as we refer to a king by referring to one of his principal properties, his heroic energy (*pratāpa eva rājā*). But when we refer to Buddha by his different properties—saying he is Buddha or the Victor or the Blessed One or adorned by this or that mark—this does not mean that he is in fact multiple: we understand straight away that

³⁴ See chapter 4, section iv.

³⁵ JNĀ 444.16–17: *eko bhagavān iti samvṛtau vā, yathoktaṃ prāk*.

multiple properties constitute the identity of a single thing, just as we understand that reference to the many properties of a king implies a single thing.³⁶

Further, in the case of the Buddha, it is the conventional conception of his being a single entity that serves a purpose in the first place, not the multiplicity of his characteristics. As Jñānaśrīmitra goes on to clarify, it is in fact of fundamental soteriological importance that the Buddha is singular despite being adorned by his manifold characteristics: one goes for refuge *in the single Buddha*, not in separate parts of him. The practitioner determines him to be a single thing, and this is the object of devotion on the path; it is not as if there are as many buddhas as there are major and minor marks.³⁷ Nevertheless, his manifold marks *are experienced*: the *sambhogakāya* is the embodiment of buddhahood as the enjoyment of these very marks, the direct experience of them in self-awareness. The Buddha is hence both manifold and singular: “For as we see that the Blessed One is described as singular, so too his capacities are said to be four, his marks thirty-two—what harm is there for us?”³⁸ That is, it is no problem that the Buddha, who ultimately consists only of consciousness, is both manifold and singular. The Buddha’s many properties are identified with a single embodiment. An opponent who objects

³⁶ See Kazuo Kano’s discussion and translation of this passage (2) (=JNĀ 434.11–24) in his “Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,” as well as *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 58–59. Kano discusses Jñānaśrīmitra’s use of a relevant line from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* here, viz. RGV 1.128, cited at JNĀ 434.23–24: *lakṣaṇādicitratā hi cakravartinīty uttaratantram*. “For the [Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāna-]Uttaratantra states that, ‘There is multiplicity, such as the major marks, in the [single] Cakravartin king.’”

³⁷ JNĀ 444.17–19: *na caivam anekavyavahāreṇopayogaḥ. yathā hi sa bhagavān āśrayaṇīyo mayā, mayāpi ca tathaiva bhāvyaṃ ity ekatvādhyavasāyinī pravṛttir upayogavatī, tathā nānekatvena kiñcit phalam ākalayāmaḥ. prthakkarmaṇī kvacid vyāpṛter asiddheḥ. i prthakkarmaṇi] MS; prthagdharmiṇi JNĀ*. “Alternatively, in convention we say the Blessed One is singular, as was said before. The conventional usage of “manifold” is of no use in that case. ‘I must take refuge in the Blessed One and I must be just so [viz. enlightened, just like the Blessed One]’—the type of activity that determines [that the Blessed One] is singular is useful in such a case, and it is not the case that, in the same way, we notice a result due to [the Blessed One’s] being manifold; for there is no instrumental activity directed toward distinct objects of action.”

³⁸ JNĀ 455.3–5: *yathā hy eko bhagavān ucyate, tathā catvāri vaiśāradyāni, dvātriṃśallakṣaṇānītyādi dṛśyate eveti kā kṣatir asmākam?* For this both-one-and-many reading PV 3.221 leading up to this statement about the Buddha’s marks, see JNĀ 454.22–455.3, especially SSS 4.38–39 and Jñānaśrīmitra’s interspersed prose, translated in section xii of the appendix.

that this implies the Buddha is neither unitary nor manifold may be perfectly right: after all, given the dualistic opposition between being unitary and being manifold, to be manifold is to be not-unitary and to be unitary is to be not-manifold. And yet, despite being neither unitary nor manifold, the Buddha's single body manifests with its manifold marks, and this manifestation makes its existence indubitable.

This is what Jñānaśrīmitra means by saying the word *citra* in the *citrādvaita* means *wondrous* (*āścarya*).³⁹ It is as if the manifestation of the *sambhogakāya* defies logic: it is neither one nor many, yet it indubitably, marvelously exists. The Buddha's manifestation in the enjoyment of the dharma through the appearances marking the *sambhogakāya* exhibits a fact about cognition that is so surprising that Ratnākaraśānti (in addition to Mādhyamikas like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) failed to recognize it: the logic of having a unitary or manifold nature, however intuitive it may seem when applied to external objects, no longer applies when we are dealing with appearances in the realm of cognition.

This wondrous character is central to the Buddha's cultivated excellence, to what marks his uniqueness: the teaching of his dharma. David Fiordalis has shown some of the ways the Buddha's teaching is made central to his miraculous character in the Buddhist tradition. In Pali sources and in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, for instance, the Buddha's teaching the dharma is singled out as his most significant miracle, that superpower that sets him apart from all other

³⁹ For background on the wondrous character of the Buddha, see David Fiordalis, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist narratives and doctrine," and Luis Gómez, "On Buddhist wonders and wonder-working," *JiABS* 33:1–2 2010 (2011), 381–408 and 512–554 respectively. See too Fiordalis, *Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature* (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008), especially 161–217. I thank Fiordalis for his comments on an earlier version of these remarks.

magicians, teachers, gods, or supernatural beings.⁴⁰ That the *citrādvaita* may be understood as the wondrous non-duality of the Buddha's appearance is best construed as part of this long tradition: the Buddha is wondrous because the *sambhogakāya* manifests in the enjoyment of the teaching of Mahāyāna dharma.

It is only the *sambhogakāya* that so captures the uniqueness of the Buddha as teacher for a number of reasons. First, Jñānaśrīmitra maintains that any coherent account of buddhahood must explain the special distinction of Buddha's realization vis-à-vis our ordinary cognition. The profundity of the *dharmakāya*, the reality the Buddha realizes, cannot account for this. Emptiness is innate (*prakṛti*), and so that innate nature is shared by all cognition, whether defiled in saṃsāra or purified by the path.⁴¹ It may be understood as the Buddha-nature or the Buddha-element (Jñānaśrīmitra uses both *tathāgatagarbha* and *tathāgatadhātu*): it is that innate reality present in all cognition, a reality that is there to be realized for buddhahood to be attained. But while the *dharmakāya* may be said to explain the innate purity (*prakṛtiviśuddhi*) of cognition, it is not this that marks the Buddha as special. This innate purity is present in all sentient beings. Rather, it is the purity of the Buddha's immaculate characteristics (*vaimalyaviśuddhi*) that makes the Buddha Buddha. This is the purity of the *sambhogakāya*.⁴²

The Buddha's excellence as a teacher depends upon this appearance to sentient beings. Reality itself, or the inert emptiness of duality Jñānaśrīmitra takes the *dharmakāya* to be, does not appear unless it is a property of the *sambhogakāya*. Even if we concede to Ratnākaraśānti his

⁴⁰ See especially Fiordalis, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist narratives and doctrine." In his *Miracles and Superhuman Powers*, Fiordalis observes that this question of uniqueness is a constant part of inquiries into the miraculous in Buddhist circles: "One of the questions raised by Buddhist discourse on miracles and superhuman powers is what makes the Buddha unique" (164)—though this uniqueness and its connection to the miraculous was of course dealt with in very different ways by Buddhists over the course of Buddhist history in India, as Fiordalis explores in detail.

⁴¹ JNĀ 434.6–7; JNĀ 499.14–16. See Kano's passage (7), *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 65–66.

⁴² See Kano's passages (4) and (7), *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 60–61, 65–66.

view that the *dharmakāya* is the realization of pure manifestation that gives rise to the *sambhogakāya*, still he must admit that it is only with the emanation of the *sambhogakāya* that the Buddha’s teaching begins. “The Buddha is a means of knowledge,” Jñānaśrīmitra writes, “only because he teaches [the dharma] in heaven”⁴³—that is, only because he manifests in the enjoyment of the dharma he shares with high-level bodhisattvas in heavenly realms. For this reason, Jñānaśrīmitra can conclude that,

The culmination of activity [on the path]
is nothing but the *sambhogakāya*.
The good-qualities are fixed
exclusively to the *sambhogakāya*.
Taste or inclination (*ruci*) is fixed
exclusively to the *sambhogakāya*.
Authority (*mānam*) is enjoyed by that alone. [...]
Those for whom only the *dharmakāya* is the Buddha
have stolen away their own teacher,
whose radiant characteristics can only be understood
from a straightforward reading of scripture.⁴⁴

Why must Ratnākaraśānti persist in decrying the *sambhogakāya*? Who would have faith in a formless Buddha? Who would take refuge in that? “In that delightful city of the Akaniṣṭha heaven,” Jñānaśrīmitra writes, “rich in the distinguished appearances of that world, above the Pure Realm, there the Buddhas awaken—otherwise, why is it not said that the Buddhas awaken in the formless realm?”⁴⁵ Tradition tells us the Buddhas awaken in heavenly realms, displaying

⁴³ JNĀ 431.4: *svargopadeśād eva hi bhagavān pramāṇam*. Isaacson recommends revising *svargopadeśād* to *svargāpavargamārgopadeśād* on the basis of a parallel in the *Arthavinīścayāsūtranibandhana*, 246.8–9: see Bhikṣu Hejung’s forthcoming edition. Either way, I think we should gloss *svarga* in the compound as locative, referring to the *locus* where the Buddha, embodied as the *sambhogakāya*, teaches the dharma—or, with Isaacson’s revision, the path to liberation (*apavargamārga*). I prefer this to reading *svarga* as the *object* of the Buddha’s teaching.

⁴⁴ JNĀ 431.6–10: *sambhoga eva paryavasānam vyāpārasya, guṇās tadekaniyatās tadekaniyatā ruciḥ / tadekarasikaṃ mānam [bādhenaiiva samah parah] // para eva jino yeśāṃ taiḥ svaśāstāpi hāritaḥ / rjukramagrḥīto ya āgamāl lakṣaṇojjvalaḥ // ⁱ rasikaṃ MS] niyataṃ JNĀ.*

⁴⁵ JNĀ 434.26–435.2: *dehabhogapraṭiṣṭhākāraviśeṣaśālini, akaniṣṭhe pure ramye śuddhāvāsopari sthite / budhyante tatra sambuddhā ārūpyeṇa kim anyathā // ⁱ -praṭiṣṭhākāraviśeṣa- MS] -praṭiṣṭhāvīśeṣa- JNĀ.* As Hejung notes in his forthcoming edition, this verse plays on a verse from the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, 3551, where the last *pāda* runs instead *nirmītas tv iha budhyante*, “It is the *nirmāṇakāyas* that awaken here in our world.”

marvelous appearances in wondrous divine cities, sharing the dharma there with bodhisattvas. Buddhas do not awaken in realms *without* appearances, as they would if Ratnākaraśānti had his way.

This view is given elegant poetic form in one of the introductory verses to the *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra* (SSSū) we did not discuss in chapter 1. In the fourth verse,⁴⁶ Jñānaśrīmitra writes:

*āveṇikākhilaguṇābharaṇābhirūpa-
rūpasvavittiyadhigatāmaladharmadhātuḥ /
dhātutrāyīhitalatānikaraikakandaḥⁱ
kandarpaketur avatād akaniṣṭhaniṣṭhaḥ // SSSū 1.4 //*

ⁱ *kandaḥ*] MS; *kanda-* JNĀ.

May he who dwells in the Akaniṣṭha heaven protect us—
he who has comprehended the stainless *dharmadhātu*
through his own self-awareness (*svavitti*),
the nature of which is beautifully decorated
with all the qualities that only a Buddha has;⁴⁷
he who is that Banner of Love (*kandarpaketu*)
that is the single bulb from which emerges
the bundle of vines that is the benefit of the whole universe.

Jñānaśrīmitra’s whole buddhology is encapsulated in this verse. The *dharmadhātu*, the inert reality Buddha realizes, is the *dharmakāya*. This is realized through self-awareness. It has as its nature or its identity the *sambhogakāya*, that embodiment that is decorated with the magnificent qualities of Buddha, his major and minor marks, and so on. Out of this emerge the *nirmāṇakāyas*, which spread throughout the universe owing to Buddha’s compassion. It is this embodiment of Buddha, the *sambhogakāya* dwelling in the Akaniṣṭha heaven, who is here asked

⁴⁶ This fourth verse, a verse of benediction, may in fact be read as the first verse in a sense: the first three verses of SSSū are separated by a space in the manuscript, as if meant as a preface to the work which is then introduced with the following verses, starting with this elegant benedictory verse.

⁴⁷ For *āveṇikaguṇa*, “qualities only a Buddha has,” see Edgerton’s *Dictionary of Buddhist-Hybrid Sanskrit*, s.v.

for protection: Ratnākaraśānti's unreal emanations of the inert Dharmakāya can do nothing for us.

iv. What Is It To Be Like the Sky?: Simile and Scripture

We are now in a position to address a final response Ratnākaraśānti might offer to Jñānaśrīmitra's incessant criticisms. Given the importance of buddhology to Ratnākaraśānti's system and the extent to which he endeavors to ground his view of consciousness on the particular understanding of buddhahood he finds expressed in both canonical works of Yogācāra and tantras like the *Hevajra*, when Jñānaśrīmitra claims at the very beginning of his SSŚ that bare manifestation (*prakāśamātra*) is never known by perception or inference, Ratnākaraśānti might be tempted to respond: "Well, it *is* known through the experience of buddhahood! You and I, Jñānaśrīmitra, might not have perceived it, and we might think it is imperceptible given our worldly notion of perception, but the experience of bare manifestation is taught as the highest attainment in the works of the bodhisattva Maitreya and in the *Hevajra Tantra*. How then can its existence be doubted?"

It is Jñānaśrīmitra's task, then, not only to refute Ratnākaraśānti's view that bare manifestation is possible; he should also refute his notion that scripture teaches that buddhahood may exist without appearances. "Scripture tells us," he would respond in my imagined dialogue, "that the experience of buddhahood is not as you say." And indeed, Jñānaśrīmitra does aim to counter Ratnākaraśānti's view of buddhahood head-on through an investigation of scripture: Ratnākaraśānti's view fails not only on logical grounds (*yukti*), but also on scriptural ones

(*āgama*). If Jñānaśrīmitra can show that Ratnākaraśānti’s view of buddhahood is not supported by scripture, and further that any passage the Nirākāravādin might adduce really supports Jñānaśrīmitra’s view that the wondrous appearance of the *sambhogakāya* is the primary embodiment of buddhahood, he will have gone far in establishing his position. Combine this scriptural support with Jñānaśrīmitra’s arguments we considered in the last chapter, and the Sākāravāda is established: consciousness and buddhahood both have appearances.

These interpretive arguments can sometimes hinge on minutia: small points of grammar or the unpacking of technical terms and similes can have profound consequences. One simile in particular will be our initial focus here, a simile whose importance in Ratnākaraśānti’s discussions of buddhahood we had opportunity to note in chapter 2, section ii: what is it to be like the sky (*khasama, gaganavat, vyomopama, etc.*)? Ratnākaraśānti claims it means the total absence of appearances. To be sky-like is to be *nirākāra*, plain and simple. As the luminous sky is naturally pure, devoid of clouds, mist, and dust, so too the luminous mind is naturally pure, devoid of appearances. And as the sky is unending, extending in every direction, so too the mind pervades everything.

In the voice of an opponent, Jñānaśrīmitra has Ratnākaraśānti put this interpretation of sky-like to work in a discussion of meditative cultivation. If Ratnākaraśānti were to say that buddhahood is bare manifestation devoid of all appearances, Jñānaśrīmitra might fairly ask, given that our cognition exists now *with* appearances: “How do you accomplish your appearanceless (*anākāra*) goal?”⁴⁸ Using what means of cultivation, that is, do you go from

⁴⁸ JNĀ 429.24: *katham anākārasya sādhyasya siddhiḥ?*

cognition with appearances to this supposed contentless state? What makes appearances disappear? Meditation on the sky, the opponent might claim. An opponent says,

“But when something is cultivated in some way, it becomes vivid (*sphuṭībhavati*) in that way. Hence the mind, when it is cultivated as having the appearance of the sky (*vyomākāra*), will become vivid in that way. And that is indeed without appearance (*nirākāra*) because it is well known that the sky is devoid of appearance (*-ākāraviraha*). Hence, how is the goal not accomplished?”⁴⁹

Appealing to the Dharmakīrtian notion of yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*), Jñānaśrīmitra’s opponent here (again, Ratnākaraśānti in spirit if not to the letter) might claim that repeated cultivation of this unique appearanceless manifestation—the sky—might make the mind appearanceless too.⁵⁰ A man pining after the image of his absent beloved becomes inflamed with passion; so too, the practitioner who continuously thinks about the appearanceless sky is able to eliminate appearances from the mind, the mind taking on the form of this special object.

Jñānaśrīmitra first reminds his opponent that an appearanceless goal isn’t worthy of the name. An appearanceless goal is unestablished, Jñānaśrīmitra writes, “Because there is no purpose if—abandoning that body, the *sambhogakāya*, which is not touched by the faults of *saṃsāra*, blazing with the major and minor marks—you wish to be the sky.”⁵¹ In our world, aims are accomplished only in relation to appearances: the goals of our activity, however inconsequential, appear to us, and the means to reach them appear to us too. How is it that, for the Buddha, aims might be accomplished *without* appearances? The opponent might respond that

⁴⁹ JNĀ 429.25–26: *nanu yad yathā bhāvyaṭe tat tathā sphuṭībhavatīti vyomākāram api cittaṃ bhāvyaṃānaṃ tathā sphuṭībhaviṣyati. prasiddhākāravirahāc ca nirākāraṃ tad eveti kathaṃ sādhyāsiddhiḥ? i sādhyāsiddhiḥ MS] sādhyāsiddhiḥ JNĀ. Cf. SSSū 1.86: yad yathā bhāvyaṭe cetaḥ tat tathaiva sphuṭībhavet / vyomākāram api syāc cen na prayojanaḥānitaḥ //*

⁵⁰ For Jñānaśrīmitra’s own discussions of *yogipratyakṣa*, see Jeson Woo’s “Buddhist theory of Momentariness and Yogipratyakṣa” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 55 (2012): 1–13, and “On the yogic path to enlightenment in the later Yogācāra” *JIP* (2014): 499–509.

⁵¹ JNĀ 430.1–2: *saṃsāradoṣair asprṣṭaṃ lakṣaṇavyaṅṅjanojjvalam / ātmabhāvaṃ viḥāya tvaṃ viḥāyastvaṃ yadīcchasi //* = SSSū 1.87. Note the play here in *pādas* cd: *viḥāya tvaṃ viḥāyastvaṃ*.

it is based on the interpretation of scripture. But, Jñānaśrīmitra asks dismissively, “when is scripture a refuge with regard to an issue that has been defeated by reason?”⁵² The ability to accomplish the aims of others is linked to the cultivation of the particular distinguished appearances that lead other sentient beings to liberation:

The power to accomplish an aim becomes excellent due to a special appearance (*ākāravišeṣa*) produced by merit and gnosis; when that [special appearance] reaches its culminating point, the power to accomplish an aim, too, should be precisely at its culminating strength. How can that [power to accomplish the aims of others] be cut off from [its special appearance]?⁵³

The ability to accomplish the aims of others is invariably linked to appearances; indeed, it is precisely the cultivated appearances of the *sambhogakāya* that so lead others from suffering.

This is the literal meaning (*mukhyākṣara*) of scripture. In another bit of biting rhetoric, Jñānaśrīmitra opines that if his opponent were skilled in his use of logic, perhaps he could contort scripture in the direction he wants, resorting to another line of interpretation (*vyākhyāntarāśraya*); however, the weakness of his reasoning has already been laid bare.⁵⁴

The opponent responds that the appearanceless sky-like body *must* be the goal, for there is no other way to avoid defeat by the neither-one-nor-many argument. ““Nevertheless, we must exclusively resort to (*bhaktavyam eva*) that [sky-like] body,”” the opponent claims,

“Out of a fear of defeat. And because it cannot be defeated, it is just that [sky-like body] that is capable for achieving others’ goals. Hence, it should be achieved. For the very same reason, even within saṃsāra, the power to achieve a goal is something that relies on just that [viz. something without appearances] as a means.”⁵⁵

⁵² JNĀ 430.7–9: *idānīm ākārād evārthasiddhiḥ paratas tu nirākārād iti ka evaṃ pratyeṣyati syādvādād anyatra? āgamād evam iti cet. kva yuktibādhite ’rthe śaraṇam āgamaḥ?*

⁵³ JNĀ 430.9–10: *punyajñānasamvalitākāravišeṣeṇa viśiṣyamānārthasaktiḥ tatprakaraṣaparyante svayam api prakaraṣaparyantavartiny eva syāt, katham tato vicchidyeta?*

⁵⁴ See JNĀ 430.11–12: *na cāgamo ’pi mukhyākṣara īdṛgarthaḥ, vyākhyāntarāśrayas tu yuktiprāgalbhye bhavet, sā ca kṣīṇeti cintitam.*

⁵⁵ JNĀ 430.12–14: *tathāpi bādhabhayāt bhaktavyam eva tad vapuḥ, abādhatvāc ca tad evārthasamartham ity api sidhyatu, tata eva ca prāg api tadupāyiny evārthasaktir iti cet.*

Something accomplishes the aims of sentient beings and leads them to enlightenment, the opponent avers, and whatever that something is, it should not be subject to defeat. We can thus say it is sky-like, where this means appearanceless and pervasive or unending, because there is no other way to explain this indefeasible means to liberation. Rather than reiterate his point that cognition and appearances are not susceptible to the neither-one-nor-many argument, Jñānaśrīmitra instead takes this opportunity to make a general point about the nature of the buddhological similes given in scripture. “There is no kind of poetic convention (*samayaparakāra*),” he writes in a half-verse response to this line of thinking, “where you can remain and defeat will not strike.”⁵⁶ Poetic conventions that tell us a certain property is shared by two objects of comparison in a simile do not escape the reach of logic. If the opponent resorts to simile just to escape the reach of reasoned argument, his position is quite hopeless.

Take, for instance, pervasiveness (*vyāpi*), a property that Ratnākaraśānti might think is shared between the sky and his supposed sky-like *dharmakāya*. This property too can be defeated by reasoning and thus shown not to apply to buddhahood.⁵⁷ Cognition is not really all-pervasive, Jñānaśrīmitra argues in a later passage.⁵⁸ If the Buddha’s mind appears to be all-pervasive, that is but a special excellence of the attainment of buddhahood, not the way the Buddha’s mind really is. For pervasiveness is impossible, as Jñānaśrīmitra’s arguments against the existence of temporal sequence show: “Contact with something prior and posterior is not found in awareness,” he writes, so how could Buddha’s cognition be pervasive over time, or permanent?⁵⁹

⁵⁶ JNĀ 430.15–16: *na so ’sti kaścit samayaparakāro yatra sthitam nābhinihanti bādhaḥ /*

⁵⁷ See JNĀ 430.17–18: *tathā hi, yad vyomopamam anākāramⁱ, yadi tāvad khavad vyāpi tadvad evāśya dūṣaṇam /
i vyomopamam anākāram MS] vyomo ’yam analākāram JNĀ.*

⁵⁸ See SSS 4.34 and the following prose (JNĀ 453.21–454.7), translated in section xii of the appendix.

⁵⁹ JNĀ 453.27: *pūrvāpararūpasamsparśas tu samvedane nāstītiⁱ kuto nityatā? i samvedane nāsti em.]
samvedanenāsti JNĀ.*

Any other appeal to simile Ratnākaraśānti might attempt can be dealt with in a similar manner, Jñānaśrīmitra tells us.⁶⁰ So, where something is not experienced directly, and where it is not experienced with the help of these faulty similes either, how can it be cultivated? How can appearanceless cognition be cultivated if it is not experienced directly and all the examples meant to clarify it fall apart upon analysis?⁶¹

The properties of comparison in the simile of the sky can also be defeated by proper attention to the meaning of scripture. Jñānaśrīmitra claims that, where Maitreya’s canonical Yogācāra texts refer to the Buddha and the sky as appearanceless (*anābhāsa*, *nirābhāsa*), Maitreya means devoid of conceptualization (*nirvikalpa*).⁶² The *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (RGV) seems to confirm this where it says, at RGV 2.29, “like the sky, buddhahood is free from conceptualization.”⁶³ And Vasubandhu, in his commentary on another text attributed to Maitreya, the *Dharmadharmatāpravibhāga* (Jñānaśrīmitra gives *-pravibhāga* rather than *-vibhāga* as the title of this work; still, given convention, it will be abbreviated DhDhV), says the same, specifying that words like *arūpin* (“formless”) and *nirābhāsa* (“appearanceless”) are

⁶⁰ JNĀ 430.19–20: *jyotsnātaḍinmañijvālāsphuliṅgāditulāsv api // tadvad eveti saṃbandhaḥ*. The whole verse, then, runs: “If in the first place [appearanceless mind] is sky-like insofar as it is pervasive, then it is refuted just like space —also in the case of comparisons with moonlight, lightning, radiant jewels, flames, sparks, and so on, it is refuted in just the same way.”

⁶¹ JNĀ 430.21–23: *na svarūpeṇa yad dr̥ṣṭam dr̥ṣṭāntadvārato ’thavā / bhāvyam katham tadārūpeⁱ tulā teṣv eva kenacit // bhaviṣyati? rūpavirāgiṇo hi samyaṅmārgāparicāyādⁱⁱ eva śuddhibuddhyā tadbhāvanamⁱⁱⁱ. na tadbhāvanād eva vyāpakānupalambhasambhavabhayabhraṃśabhāgī. kiṃ bhūyaḥ? ⁱ tadārūpe em.] tadā rūpe JNĀ (Isaacson suggests the further emendation *tadārūpe*); ⁱⁱ *-mārgāparicāyād* MS] *-mārgāparicāyād* JNĀ; ⁱⁱⁱ *tadbhāvanam* MS_{ac}] *tajjñānam* MS_{pc} JNĀ. “How can what is not seen through its own nature or through an example be cultivated? As for something without form, can there be comparison with anything in those examples [listed in the previous verse: the sky, moonlight, lightning, etc.]? For, for a person who dislikes form, there is that cultivation [of the formless or appearanceless state] with the idea that it is pure *only due to his unfamiliarity with the right path*. It is not the case that one who dislikes form, just through that cultivation, can become one who has cast off the fear produced by the neither-one-nor-many argument. What more?”*

⁶² For this passage, see Kano’s edition and translation of this passage (and a related passage from the SSSū 2.65–75), “Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*,” 33–38, and his discussion, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 56–58.

⁶³ See Kano’s edition, “Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*,” 33: *āgantumalaprapañcavigameṇaiva hi viḥayaḥsādr̥śyam iti dar̥ṣitam prāk. ata eva mahāyānottaratantre nirdiṣṭenaiva sādharmaṇeṇa sarvatra vyomopamā, yathā vyapagatavikalpaṃ gaganavad ityādi. tasmān nākāraviraheṇa*. Cf. JNĀ 431.19–21.

characteristics of *non-conceptual* awareness (*nirvikalpajñāna*), not *appearanceless* awareness. Jñānaśrīmitra cites Vasubandhu as saying that, in Kano’s translation, non-conceptual awareness is “without form (*arūpin*) in the sense that it cannot be described (*nirūpayitum aśakya*) by the duality consisting in the relationship between the grasped and the grasper; and it is without appearances (*anābhāsa*) in the sense that it does not have any object.”⁶⁴ Jñānaśrīmitra adduces these proof-texts to show that, even where the opponent might try to sanction his view that the *sky-like* Buddha means the *appearanceless* Buddha by appeal to these sorts of passages (here the context is RGV 4.73–74, wherein both *nirābhāsa* and *arūpin* can be interpreted as properties of both the sky and Buddha), they should really be read in another way, in line with Maitreya’s true intentions as explicated by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

We should note a peculiarity about the particular scriptural sources Jñānaśrīmitra appeals to here. The RGV, as well as the DhDhV, are works that disappeared from buddhological discourse in India for some centuries after their composition. As Kazuo Kano has shown in fascinating detail, the RGV and DhDhV were resurrected in India in the eleventh century, possibly in or around Jñānaśrīmitra’s work. Tibetan tradition tells us Jñānaśrīmitra’s and Ratnākaraśānti’s famous student, Maitrīpa (aka Advayavajra, aka Maitreyañātha), discovered the two works shining through a crack in a stūpa he was directed to in a dream, and indeed Maitrīpa himself does cite the RGV.⁶⁵ Maitrīpa’s citation, however, is as if the work was already known to his audience: he does not name the text, but says simply “As it is said, ...” (*tad uktam ... iti*). As

⁶⁴ See Kano, “Jñānaśrīmitra on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,” 35–36; for the text, see *ibid.*, 34: *yathā tv ācārya-vasubandhupādair dharmadharmatāpravibhāge nirvikalpajñānalakṣaṇaprastāve dvayena grāhyagrāhakabhāvena nirūpayitum aśakyatvād arūpi, aviśayatvād anābhāsam iti vibhaktam, tatheha buddha iti prayukte ’py astu. akiñcanatvam apy āgantukarāgādivigamāj jñeyam. śeṣam aviruddham*. Cf. JNĀ 432.5–8. Note that, whatever we might think of the authorship of the DhDhV, Jñānaśrīmitra here attributes it to the Ācārya Vasubandhupāda.

⁶⁵ See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 43–54, for these stories about Maitrīpa and his citation of the RGV in his *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivarāṇa*.

Kano notes, “If knowledge of the RGV had widely spread before Maitrīpa’s time, as suggested by this quotation style, the rediscovery story of Maitrīpa, in which the RGV is portrayed as having long been forgotten by the Indian tradition, might seem doubtful.”⁶⁶ Indeed it does. Jñānaśrīmitra’s quotation style, on the other hand, is more explicit: as in the passage noted above, wherever he cites the RGV, he refers to another of the work’s names, the *Mahāyānottaratantra*, or simply *Uttaratantra*, as if his audience was not as familiar with this work as he assumes they were with, say, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* or *Pramāṇavārttika*. When and how exactly these works resurfaced will no doubt remain unknown, and there is no decisive evidence Jñānaśrīmitra himself rediscovered the RGV. Still, Jñānaśrīmitra’s many citations would seem to be the earliest we have from this period of the text’s resurrection in India.

Whatever Jñānaśrīmitra’s role in popularizing the RGV, his choice of scriptural passage is all the more remarkable for the fact that Ratnākaraśānti does *not* cite the work.⁶⁷ Recall that Ratnākaraśānti gave special distinction to Maitreya, whose insight into reality he held in higher esteem than that of Asaṅga’s and Nāgārjuna’s given his status as a tenth-level bodhisattva. Ratnākaraśānti had claimed his view expressed a proper interpretation of Maitreya’s works—by

⁶⁶ Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 53. For a sense of Jñānaśrīmitra’s position on the RGV vis-à-vis other 11th- and 12th-century Indian authors, see Kano’s table of Indian quotations of the RGV and RGVV, *ibid.*, 186–187.

⁶⁷ Kano, in *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 71–96, deals with a text attributed to Ratnākaraśānti in its Tibetan translation, the **Sūtrasamuccayabhāṣya Ratnālokālaṃkāra*, which *does* cite the RGV. Given the inconsistency between the **Sūtrasamuccayabhāṣya Ratnālokālaṃkāra* and Ratnākaraśānti’s other works regarding *ekayāna* versus *yānatraya*, Kano argues that the work is not by our Ratnākaraśānti, the Nirākāravādin and opponent of Jñānaśrīmitra. However, even if Kano were proved wrong, the absence of reference to the RGV in Ratnākaraśānti’s central works like the PPU, the MuĀv, the *Sāratamā*, the MAU, MAV, etc., is striking: given that he and Jñānaśrīmitra were colleagues at the same university and he was a teacher of Maitrīpa, it is hard to imagine Ratnākaraśānti never having heard of the RGV, given the circles he was part of at Vikramaśīla. The thought that he would not bother engaging with a text known to him to be by Maitreya just because it posed problems for his *yānatraya* doctrine, for instance, seems very dubious to me given Ratnākaraśānti’s ingenuity as a commentator: giving a proper interpretation of Maitreya’s view was central to his project, and the fact that a text did not easily line up with his view certainly never discouraged him (see for instance his Yogācāra interpretation of Nāgārjuna!). So did he doubt the authorship of the RGV? Or was the text resurrected after he had written the works of his that have come down to us? Perhaps future discoveries will shed light on these questions.

which he meant the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, and the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*.

But Jñānaśrīmitra (as was his wont) aims to outdo Ratnākaraśānti in this regard, showing that not only those canonical works of Maitreya's, but even the state-of-the-art RGV—a work that was perhaps unknown to Ratnākaraśānti, or whose authorship or authenticity he may have doubted—confirms his Sākāravāda.

Though Jñānaśrīmitra refers to these sources throughout the SSS, the sixth and last chapter (entitled *The Non-Duality of Both [Madhyamaka and Yogācāra]*⁶⁸) is devoted to the topic in detail. An indispensable source for the intellectual history of Indian Buddhist thought in its last centuries, the chapter deserves a book-length study of its own. Jñānaśrīmitra cites, and comments with characteristic ingenuity on, what he takes to be basic works in the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions in an endeavor to show that Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, and Nāgārjuna are all in basic agreement regarding the ultimate reality of self-awareness, the *citrādvaita*, the priority of the *sambhogakāya*, and the truth of Sākāravāda.⁶⁹ He cites Maitreya's works with special frequency (with the commentaries by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu), but he also refers to Nāgārjuna's *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, *Paramārthastava*, and (what he attributes to him) the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* and *Kāyatrayastava*, as well as Dignāga's *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*; Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta are referred to here as well, but they had been dealt with especially in SSS 4.

⁶⁸ JNĀ 513.7: *ubhayādvaita'paricchedaḥ ṣaṣṭhaḥ*. ⁱ *ubhayādvaita*- MS] *ubhayadvaita* JNĀ. Note that throughout the MS of the JNĀ, there are marginal Tibetan translations of the chapter titles. Here, unsurprisingly given the proper MS reading, the Tibetan translation reads *gnyi ga 2 med pa le'u*.

⁶⁹ See Jñānaśrīmitra's summary verse and short prose comment, JNĀ 506.5–10, and Thakur's introduction, 4.

Throughout SSS 6, issues of buddhology are central. We can consider one particularly relevant example of the sort of scriptural debate Jñānaśrīmitra engages in in this chapter.⁷⁰ At one point, Jñānaśrīmitra’s opponent (again, Ratnākaraśānti in spirit if not to the letter) suggests that the purified appearances that adorn the *sambhogakāya* arise from the *dharmakāya*: the magnificent appearance of the Buddha has its source in reality. Jñānaśrīmitra tells us that Maitreya himself ruled out this position in MSA 6.4. There, Maitreya asks: “How is it that beings, directly aware of the dependent origin of things, still resort to another cause (*anyakārita*)? What kind of darkness is this through which the real goes unseen while the unreal is observed?”⁷¹ Jñānaśrīmitra claims this is meant to refute the view that the *dharmakāya* is the source of the Buddha’s manifestation, the “other cause” (*anyakārita*) referred to here. The opponent comes back by setting the context of the verse made clear in Vasubandhu’s MSABh, telling Jñānaśrīmitra that Maitreya meant by “another cause” only to refute the non-Buddhist belief in the self (*ātmavāda*): the *self*, the opponent claims, is what Maitreya meant to say people falsely resort to.

Without missing a beat, Jñānaśrīmitra responds: “Is there any belief in the self aside from this Nirākāravāda?”⁷² Belief in the self entails in particular thinking the self is permanent (*nitya*) and pervasive (*vibhu*, *vyāpi*)—both properties the Nirākāravādin attributes to the *dharmakāya*. The Nirākāravādin claims he accepts only scripturally sanctioned forms of permanence and pervasiveness: in MSA 9.66, for instance, Maitreya teaches that the *dharmakāya* is permanent in

⁷⁰ For the beginning of this passage, concerning the RGV and the proper interpretation of *ātmavāda*, see Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 62–65, which considers JNĀ 495.15–497.1.

⁷¹ JNĀ 495.17–22: *pratītyabhāvaprabhave ’py ayam janaḥ samakṣavṛtti śrayate ’nyakāritam / tamaḥprakāraḥ katamo ’yam īdr̥śo yato ’vipaśyan sad asan nirīkṣate //* [= MSA 6.4]. For the translation (which I’ve revised slightly), see Jamspal et al., *The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2004), 50.

⁷² JNĀ 495.22–23: *nanv ayam ātmavādhādikāreṇa sūtralaṅkāraślokaḥ. kiṃ ato ’py anya ātmavādo nāma?*

its nature (*prakṛtyā* [...] *nityatā*), and Vasubandhu confirms this in his MSABh.⁷³ As for pervasiveness, the opponent appeals to RGV 1.49–50, which teach the all-pervasive (*sarvatraga*) character of the *dharmakāya* by once again comparing it to the sky.⁷⁴ If Maitreya taught these to be characteristics of the *dharmakāya*, how can Jñānaśrīmitra say this is but a non-Buddhist belief in the self?

Jñānaśrīmitra demurs, of course. Instead, the characteristics of permanence and pervasiveness are meant to refer just to the *dharmakāya*'s conventional nature. The view that the *dharmakāya* is a real entity (*dravya*) possessed of these characteristics is meant to be abandoned as one progresses to the realization of the *sambhogakāya*. Maitreya does not mean to say the *dharmakāya* is an entity. So long as the opponent holds on to this idea, he has not abandoned the mistaken belief in the self. Ultimately, the *dharmakāya* has its identity only in the *sambhogakāya*, and in reality, the properties discussed in RGV 1.50 refer not to the *dharmakāya* but to the *sambhogakāya*, for it is the *sambhogakāya* that is adorned with forms.⁷⁵ Indeed, Jñānaśrīmitra says here,

⁷³ JNĀ 496.6: *prakṛtyāśraṃsanenāpi bandhena ca nityatā / iti atra ca bhāṣyam prakṛtinityatā svābhāvīkasya, svabhāvenaiva nityatvāt.* = MSA 9.66cd with MSABh. See Jamspel et al., *The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature*, 97. Vasubandhu names the *svābhāvīkākāya*, though (contra Haribhadra) both Jñānaśrīmitra and his opponent here take this to be another name for the *dharmakāya*. Ratnākaraśānti appeals to this sort of permanence in his discussion of the *dharmakāya*'s being “indestructible” (*vajra*) when commenting on the opening passage of the HT. See MuĀ_{ved} 14, *ata eva ca dharmakāyaḥ prakṛtinityatayā nitya ucyate*. See Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 68, and our discussion in chapter 2 above.

⁷⁴ JNĀ 496.8–16: *vibhutā cokaiva yathottaratantram, sarvatrānugataṃ yadvan nirvikalpatayā nabhaḥ / cittaprakṛtivaimalyadhātuh sarvatragas tathā // [= RGV 1.49] anena kiṃ darśayati? taddoṣaguṇaniṣṭhāsu vyāpi sāmānyalakṣaṇam / hīnamadhyaviśiṣṭeṣu vyoma rūpagateṣv iva [= RGV 1.50] // iti. rūpagateṣv ity atra mṛdrajatasu- varṇabhājaneṣv iti bhāṣyam* [= RGVV ad 1.50]. “Pervasiveness is indeed spoken of, as for instance in the *Uttaratantra*: ‘As it is like space, which is all-pervading, insofar as it is without conceptualization, hence the reality of the innate purity of the mind is all-pervading [RGV 1.49]. What is taught by this? It pervades with the same characteristic the faulty, the virtuous, and the ultimate, just as space occupies all forms, whether inferior, middling, or distinguished [RGV 1.50].’ The *Commentary* tells us that ‘occupies all forms’ means ‘whether consisting of clay, silver, or gold.’” Cf. Takasaki’s translation of these verses, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra)* (Rome: IsMEO, 1966), 223–224.

⁷⁵ Jñānaśrīmitra says in this regard, “Where it says [in RGV 1.50] ‘[just as space occupies all forms,] whether inferior, middling, or distinguished,’ this implies the thing that instantiates these properties (*dharminirdeśa*),” which is to say the *sambhogakāya*. JNĀ 496.23: *atrāpi hīnamadhyaviśiṣṭeṣv iti dharminirdeśaḥ*.

Even if the *dharmakāya* did exist, it would be hard to avoid statements like, “In the first place, the truth is the apparent portion (*ākārabhāga*) of the object worthy of faith (*śraddheya*).” The *dharmakāya* has a mere conventional existence, while the worthy object of faith alone is real.⁷⁶

The Nirākāravādin must either admit that his appearanceless *dharmakāya* is not worthy of worship, given that it is a non-Buddhist view, or else he should concede that it has appearances—that is, concede that the Sākāravāda is really the truth.⁷⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra then concludes this section of dispute by saying:

Therefore, let there be this other view of the Nirākāravādins—namely, that the goal has as its nature a mind with every sort of causal efficacy that is like the sky: absolute, stainless, and unending. What is the use of associating with that other view? For what sort of Buddhist position on reality (*bauddhatattvashthiti*) is it, given that it transgresses the system of our leader, the Ārya Maitreya? For in short,

Maitreya taught that this variegated (*vicitra*) triple-world is mind.
Precisely the duality, known and knower, is false.
He praised driving away (*nudan nunāva*)
only what is restricted to reification and nihilism.
The *sambhogakāya* is the splendor (*lakṣmī*)
that has as its innate aim the cause of the welfare of others.⁷⁸

Jñānaśrīmitra tells us here that Maitreya and the tradition stemming from his work argue definitively for the primacy of the *sambhogakāya* and the ultimate truth of its wondrous

⁷⁶ JNĀ 497.1–2: *sattve 'pi ca śraddheyasyākārabhāgas tāvat satya iti durvārah. sattāprajñāptimātram etat, śraddheyam eva tu vastusat.* I have been unable to trace this hard-to-avoid citation, though it seems Jñānaśrīmitra assumes it will be well known to his opponent.

⁷⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra plays on a verse of Dharmakīrti's to make this point: *nirākāratayā pumbhiḥ sarvathā syād asevyatā / ākāropagame mukhyaṃ gajasnānam idaṃ bhavet* // “Insofar as it is without appearance, it would never be worthy of people's worship. If the appearance is accepted, this would really be useless”—useless, that is, for establishing the Nirākāravādin's position. See PV 1.230: *asaṃskāryatayā pumbhiḥ sarvathā syān nirarthatā / saṃskāropagame mukhyaṃ gajasnānam idaṃ bhavet* // For this sense of *gajasnāna*, see Apte's entry, s.v.: “(lit.) bathing of an elephant; (fig.) useless or unproductive efforts resembling the ablution of elephants which, after pouring water over their bodies, end by throwing dirt, rubbish, and other foul matter.”

⁷⁸ JNĀ 498.4–10: *tasmān nirākāravādināṃ kevalavimalānantavyomanibhāṣeṣaśaktimatirūpaṃⁱ sādhyam iti darśanāntaram astu kim anyānuṣaṅgena? āryamaitreyaṇāyakanayātikrame hi kīdṛṣī bauddhatattvashthitiḥ? saṅkṣepataḥ sa hi, traidhātukaṃ dhiyam uvāca vicitraṃ atra saṃvedyavedakam iti dvayam eva mithyā / ropāpavādaniyataiva nudan nunāva sambhogam anyahitahetunijārthalakṣmīm* // ⁱ -matirūpaṃ em.] *mati rūpaṃ* JNĀ.

manifestation. If Ratnākaraśānti wants to deny this interpretation of the Buddha’s embodiments, that’s fine. But he might as well stop calling himself a Buddhist.

v. **Jñānaśrīmitra, Tantra, and the Limits of Faith**

On that same page, Jñānaśrīmitra offers another verse summarizing his defeat of the Nirākāravādin. It is a verse that might strike the reader as surprising. Jñānaśrīmitra writes,

When the forms of awareness (*saṃvidākṛti*) are rejected (*nirākṛtā*),
there is no way of mantras (*mantranīti*),
nor a way of perfections (*pāramīnaya*).
Thus, its refutation cast aside, may only this position be pleasing,
adorned with the precious qualities of heaven (*svarguṇaratnabhūṣaṇā*)!⁷⁹

Jñānaśrīmitra here makes the second of only two explicit references to tantra, the way of mantras (*mantranīti* or *mantranaya*), that I have been able to identify in his voluminous SSŚ. The first, in the voice of an opponent, in fact opens SSŚ 6 (recall that this chapter is entitled *The Non-Duality of Both [Madhyamaka and Yogācāra]*). There, a Mādhyamika worries that the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka are contradictory systems, so only one (the latter) can really be true while the other (the former) was taught just as an expedient means for certain audiences. To this worry, the opponent adds a comment regarding tantra, saying:

Moreover, the system (*samaya*) of the way of mantras (*mantranaya*), which is extremely profound, is [in your view] based on those two positions [Yogācāra and Madhyamaka],

⁷⁹ JNĀ 498.22–25: *nirākṛtāyām iti saṃvidākṛtau na mantranītir na ca pāramīnayaḥ / tad astu saiva sthitir astadūṣaṇā manoḥnatā svarguṇaratnabhūṣaṇā* // As ever, Jñānaśrīmitra’s playfulness adds insult to injury: *nirākṛti* is another word for *nirākāra*, while *nirākṛtā*, here at the start of the verse, means “rejected.” It is as if the *nirākṛtinaya* was made to be *nirākṛta*.

between which there is such a large contradiction. Hence, how can there be peace of mind even if one is Buddha (*samantabhadre 'pi*)?⁸⁰

That is, if both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka are equally true and yet contradictory, the profound way of mantras would falter at its philosophical foundations. Not even Buddha could have any confidence in what's true. The opponent here assumes Jñānaśrīmitra will be unhappy with this outcome, so surely only one position, the Madhyamaka, is ultimately the case. Jñānaśrīmitra responds that this is not so, for the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are not contradictory: they teach

⁸⁰ The whole passage is given in the next footnote. It is not clear to me precisely what we should understand by *samantabhadra* here. *Samantabhadra* is the name of a particular Buddha, and it is also a name important for the lineage of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* I believe Jñānaśrīmitra was affiliated with, as we'll see in a moment. That said, *samantabhadra* may also be an epithet of Buddha generally, and so refer just to Buddha, for he is one who is wholly auspicious, or whose auspiciousness pervades the universe in all directions. As we've seen, Jñānaśrīmitra begins the SSS with Dharmakīrti's homage verse from the PV, where Dharmakīrti refers to Buddha by this epithet (see JNĀ 366: *vidhūtakaḥpanājālagambhīrodāramūrtaye / namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantasphuraṇatviṣe*; compare Jñānaśrīmitra's gloss on this verse, JNĀ 434.22–25), and at the beginning of SSS 5, the Mādhyamika opponent refers to buddhahood generally (I believe) with the word *samantabhadratvam*. See JNĀ 466.4–5: *tadabhāve kutaś citrā citrādvaitavyavasthitih / na vā samantabhadratvam ālikyāparihārataḥ //* “In the absence of self-awareness (*tad*), how can there be the wondrous establishment of the *citrādvaita*? Otherwise, there is no state of buddhahood (*samantabhadratva*), for there is no abandonment of unreality.” For these reasons, I translate *samantabhadre 'pi* here as “even if one is Buddha,” though I recognize it may have other connotations lost in this translation.

one and the same reality. The chapter then sets about proving this with many scriptural appeals, as we saw in the last section.⁸¹

Midway through this discussion, Jñānaśrīmitra makes the aforementioned remark in his summary verse, noting that the Nirākāravāda is cast aside insofar as it cannot account for the way of mantras or the way of perfections. Jñānaśrīmitra, however, had made no reference to the way of mantras in the preceding: he had cited works of Maitreya's and Nāgārjuna's to show that they have a unified view of reality and of the middle way, but he had not cited a single tantra. Compare this with Ratnākaraśānti's work. As we saw above in chapters 1 and 2, Ratnākaraśānti refers to Maitreya, Nāgārjuna, and other philosophers in his tantric commentaries, and in his PPU—the work Jñānaśrīmitra cites and criticizes at such length, a work devoted to the (we might expect non-tantric) way of perfections and Yogācāra—he appeals to the superiority of the way of mantras in its introduction, and he concludes the work with reference to the *Guhyasamāja*

⁸¹ JNĀ 483.2–10: *atha tathāvidhaślāghāspadaṃ madhyamām upakramya, samyag yogācāradarśanam etat pariniṣṭhitam iti ko 'yaṃ kramah? naiṣa doṣaḥ, asyāpi bhagavataivoktasya nītaneyavibhāgakāritayā tadvyākṛtair āryair yuvarājaprayantaiḥ pratigrhītasyācāryaiḥ prasādhitasyollāghaślāghatvāt. sākārasiddhiś ceyam upakrāntā. nanu tathāpi parasparavirodhidvayam api na satyam, tatraikahrdayo 'pi svayaṃ daiśiko bhagavān vineyāpekṣayā neyam apy upadiśet. bhūmilābhinas tu drṣṭasatyāḥ katham ekaikapakṣapātinaḥ ekaikatadeśanāt? viśiṣṭānyadeśane hi parānurodhād etad iti syāt. paramagambhīraś ca mantranayasamaya ete eva sthitī samāśritya yayor iyan virodha iti, katham hrdayanirvṛtiḥ samantabhadratve 'pi? ucyate, virodhaḥ pauraṣeyo 'tra vastv ekam ubhayasthitau / samāropāpavādāntamuktam hi munisāsanam //ⁱ sthitī MS] sthito JNĀ. “‘Now, having begun with the Middle Way, which is a fit recipient of such praise, you have ended up with this Yogācāra view as correct. What sort of sequence is that?’ This is not a fault, for it is healthy to praise this Yogācāra view—which was taught by the Blessed One himself; which has been accepted by the Āryas, culminating with Maitreya, who were predicted by the Buddha (*tadvyākṛtair*) as the ones who would make the distinction between the provisional and definitive teachings; and which has been proved by Dharmakīrti. Further, this proof of the Sākāravāda is precisely what I started with [at the beginning of this SSS]. ‘But even so, both of these cannot be true inasmuch as they contradict each other. Even if he himself has his heart set upon one among these two positions (*tatraikahrdayo*), the Blessed One, the teacher, might teach [not only the definitive teaching he has his heart set upon, but] also a non-definitive position with reference to [the needs of] those to be trained. However, those who obtains the stages of the bodhisattva [like Nāgārjuna and Maitreya] who have seen the truths—how is it possible that they should be partial to one or the other position? For if there were the teaching of the other particular position, then one might think that, ‘This is in accordance with others [viz. with the audience’s needs].’ [This, however, was not the case.] Moreover, the system (*samaya*) of the way of mantras (*mantranaya*), which is extremely profound, is [in your view] based on just these two positions [Yogācāra and Madhyamaka], between which there is such a large contradiction. Hence, how can there be peace of mind (*hrdayanirvṛtiḥ*) even if one is Buddha (*samantabhadratve 'pi*)?’ We reply: The contradiction here is only in people. Reality is one in both positions, for the teaching of the Sage is free of both the extremes of superimposition and nihilism.”*

Tantra. Jñānaśrīmitra makes no such gestures here, even though the opponent he refutes so thoroughly in every other respect does. Why this omission?

There is perhaps a simple elegance to the thought that Jñānaśrīmitra was a *philosopher's* philosopher, not a tantric practitioner at all, and so for this reason he makes only passing reference to the way of mantras to appease his overzealous colleague. But there is evidence that suggests this is not the full story. Jñānaśrīmitra makes explicit reference to tantric concepts in his *Vṛttamālāstuti*, the work we discussed in chapter 1, section ii, b, that is devoted to illustrating and defining 150 different Sanskrit meters while praising the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī through double entendre. The most explicit reference comes in verse 134, exemplifying the half-equal meter (*ardhasamavṛtta*) *ketumatī* (“carrying the flag”):

Your body,
carrying the flag,
shines everywhere
with the shimmering, pleasing, luminous
arrow, lotus, sword, jewel, and wheel,
which have as their ultimate purpose
the aims of others!⁸²

As the commentator Śākyarakṣita makes explicit, this list of signs refers to the signs of the deities in the maṇḍala of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*: Mañjuśrī is here said to shine with these signs because he is in fact at the center of this maṇḍala, merged with Akṣobhya and surrounded by Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava, and Vairocana.

It is notable that these deities are named in the context of a praise of Mañjuśrī: this helps specify the tradition of the *Guhyasamāja* Jñānaśrīmitra would seem to have associated with.

⁸² Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* on Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti* (2),” 23: *paritaḥ spuradbhir abhirāmair aṁśumayaiḥ parārthaparamārthaiḥ / pavipadmakhaḍgamaṇicakraiḥ ketumatī vibhāti tava mūrtiḥ // Śākyarakṣita comments (23–24): parārtha eva paramo ’rthaḥ prayojanaṃ yeṣāṃ taiḥ. pavipadmakhaḍgamaṇicakrair akṣobhyāmītābāmoghasiddhiratnasambhavavairocanacihnaiḥ ketumatī tava mūrtiḥ pañcātmikasamājamāṇḍale vibhāti. kiṃbhūtaiḥ parita ityādi sugamaṃ. See our following discussion.*

Mañjuśrī, aka Mañjuvajra, was central to the Jñānapāda tradition of the *Guhyasamāja*. This tradition seems to have had special prominence at Vikramaśīla. Jñānapāda, aka Buddhajñāna, aka Buddhaśrījñāna, (fl. late-8th–early-9th centuries), the founder of this tradition, was a student of Haribhadra.⁸³ After his study of the way of perfections with this esteemed scholar, he traveled throughout India in search of tantric teachings. Though he studied with human teachers and lived for a time with a human consort, the exegesis of the *Guhyasamāja*'s practices he went on to teach is said to have been revealed to him by Mañjuśrī himself. He also had a prominent political life: Tāranātha reports that he (along with Haribhadra) was taken on by king Dharmapāla (r. ca. 775–812) as one of his preceptors, and that he in fact performed the rituals for the consecration of Vikramaśīla itself, where he was appointed the first Vajrācārya.⁸⁴ His disciple and successor at Vikramaśīla, Dīpaṅkarabhadra, continued both his tradition of *Guhyasamāja* exegesis and his attention to the appeasement of the monarch.⁸⁵ The Jñānapāda lineage seems to have continued to hold sway at Vikramaśīla throughout the institution's history, as if part of the founding charter of this university for tantric studies.

Not only was this tradition begun by Mañjuśrī's reported revelation to Jñānapāda: Mañjuśrī is also central to this tradition's *Guhyasamāja* maṇḍala. As one extant Sanskrit commentary on Jñānapāda's foundational *Samantabhadra nāma sādhana* outlines the generation

⁸³ For a recent study of Buddhajñānapāda, see Catherine Dalton's *Enacting Perfection: Buddhajñānapāda's Vision of a Tantric Buddhist World* (PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2019).

⁸⁴ See Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age," 93–94. Sanderson notes there a particularly striking example of the sway Jñānapāda seems to have held with Dharmapāla: "We also learn that, having seen omens of the future ruin of the dynasty under Dharmapāla's grandson, [Jñānapāda] persuaded the king to institute a regular fire-sacrifice (*homāḥ*) to be performed under his guidance by the Tantric officiants of [Vikramaśīla] with the purpose of ensuring that the dynasty would be long-lived and consequently that Buddhism would be widely disseminated. It was performed, we are told, for many years at huge expense." For other stories about Jñānapāda, including tales of his travels, see Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 367–374; Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 309–316; and Szántó, "Early Works and Persons Related to the Jñānapāda School," *JIABS* Volume 36/37 2013/2014 (2015): 537–561; in addition now to Dalton's *Enacting Perfection*.

⁸⁵ Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age," 106–107.

of this maṇḍala’s five principal deities, Akṣobhya (whose signs are an arrow [*kuliśa*=*pavi*], sword, lotus, and jewel) merges with Mañjuśrī at the center; Vairocana (whose signs are a wheel, sword, lotus, and jewel) is to the east; Ratnasambhava (an emerald [*haritamāṇi*], lotus, sword, and wheel) is to the south; Amitābha (a red lotus, sword, jewel, and wheel) is to the west; and Amoghasiddhi (sword, wheel, lotus, and jewel) is to the north.⁸⁶ As Śākyarakṣita suggests, Jñānaśrīmitra praises Mañjuśrī in his form as Mañjuvajra in *Vṛttamālāstuti* 134: he praises him, that is, in his tantric form at the center of the Jñānapāda tradition’s *Guhyasamāja* maṇḍala.

Other verses have a similar resonance, though they are less tradition-specific. Take for instance Jñānaśrīmitra’s illustration of *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, a favorite meter of his and so one we can expect he would compose here with special attention. In verse 106, he writes:

May Mañjuśrī protect you—
 Mañjuśrī, who is the moon regarding the swell of the ocean
 of the choicest lineage of buddhas;⁸⁷
 Mañjuśrī, by whom stories of the God of Love are put to shame
 when he embraces his consort, Wisdom (*prajñāṅganāsaṃgama*);

⁸⁶ See Kimiaki Tanaka, *The Sanskrit Commentary on the Samantabhadra nāma sādhanā of Buddhajñānapāda* (Tokyo: Watanabe Publishing, 2017), 49, 78–95. The deities’ signs are consistent with those Jñānaśrīmitra gives—so long as we understand Śākyarakṣita’s commentary to imply that only Akṣobhya has the *pavi*, the first member of Jñānaśrīmitra’s compound, as his sign, whereas all the other deities have the other four signs, with some added specificity (e.g. Ratnasambhava’s *green* jewel [=emerald], Amitābha’s *red* lotus, etc.). Compare in this regard Dīpaṅkarabhadra’s *Guhyasamājamāṇḍalavidhi*, ed. S. S. Bahulkar (Sarnath: CIHTS, 2010), vv.69–74. This work, by Jñānapāda’s student and successor at Vikramaśīla, seems to have had a lasting influence at that university: see Daisy Cheung’s forthcoming dissertation, for instance, on Ratnākaraśānti’s commentary on it. (The central place of Dīpaṅkarabhadra’s work in the Jñānapāda lineage at Vikramaśīla is marked by the unusual fact that Ratnākaraśānti would write a commentary on a work attributed not to the Buddha but written by an earlier professor.) Dīpaṅkarabhadra’s verses alone do not spell out precisely what all the signs are, however. Compare too Abhayākara Gupta’s *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, where the Mañjuvajra maṇḍala is given pride of place as the first maṇḍala considered in this encyclopedic manual. For the various signs of these deities in Abhayākara Gupta’s presentation, see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya’s edition (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1949), 2–3, and Yong-Hyun Lee’s edition (Seoul: Baegun Press, 2004), 4: there, the central deity, Mañjuvajra, is said to hold a sword, arrow, blue lotus, bow, and countless variegated jewels (*asiśarendīvaracāpadhara* [...] *vicitraratnādyābharāṇa*); Vairocana a white six-spoked wheel, sword, jewel, and lotus (*sitāṣṭāracakrāsimaṇīkamaladhara*); Ratnasambhava (=Ratneśa) a nine-faceted emerald, sword, wheel, and lotus (*navāṃśamarakataratnāsīcakrapadmadhara*); Amitābha a red lotus, sword, jewel, and wheel (*raktapadmāsi-maṇīcakradhara*); and Amoghasiddhi a sword, wheel, jewel, and lotus (*khadgacakraṃṇīkamaladhara*). My thanks to Harunaga Isaacson, Ryūta Kikuya, and Daisy Cheung for giving me many insights into this tradition of the *Guhyasamāja* and the significance of Jñānaśrīmitra’s verse.

⁸⁷ That is, just as when the moon is present the waters of the ocean rise, so too when Mañjuśrī is present the luster of the lineage of the buddhas shines more brightly.

Mañjuśrī, bearing the conduct of the sun
when he disgraces the night that is terrible ignorance,
bearing the play of the tiger in the battle against the deer
that are the worldly obscurations.⁸⁸

Mañjuśrī is here said to put to shame *even the God of Love himself* with the passion of his embrace. Jñānaśrīmitra picks up on this same theme in verse 153, the last verse of praise, which illustrates a meter named *anaṅgagrīḍā* (“amorous play”):

Moreover, may the body bearing the compassion that has no superior,
which is as though made up of a heap of moonlight—
may that body experience
the amorous play of the embrace of his beloved,
proud Wisdom.⁸⁹

Other instances of such connotations can be found throughout the *Vṛttamālāstuti*, sometimes augmented by Śākyarakṣita in his commentary, other times left unexplained, as apparently unremarkable instances of tantric rhetoric in this metrical treatise.⁹⁰

From his own words, then, Jñānaśrīmitra would seem to have had some tantric affiliation. This is further confirmed by tradition. Tāranātha reports that, though Jñānaśrīmitra started his life as a scholar of the Saindava Śrāvakas (who were in fact sometimes violently hostile to tantric teachings), he later studied Mahāyāna sūtra *and tantra*.⁹¹ Gos Lo tsā ba adds some specificity,

⁸⁸ Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* on Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti* (2),” 6: *pāyād vo varabuddhavamśajaladher vṛddhau sudhādīdhitir mañjuśrīḥ paribhūtanamanmathakathaḥ prajñāṅganāsamgame / bhīmabhrānti-vibhāvarīparibhave bibhrad yatim bhāsvato viśvakleśakuraṅgasaṅgaravidhau śārdūlavikrīḍitam //* This verse provides a nice example of the way Jñānaśrīmitra defines the caesura (*yati*) through double entendres: this meter, *śārdūlavikrīḍitam*, has (*bibhrad*) a caesura (*yatim*) after the twelfth syllable, here referred to by a sign for the number twelve, the sun (*bhāsvato*). See Śākyarakṣita’s comment, Hahn, *ibid.*, 6: ***bhāsvato bhāsvati dvādaśa yatim bibhrat***. On the other hand, Mañjuśrī bears (*bibhrad*) the conduct (*yatim*) of the sun (*bhāsvato*), clearing away the darkness of ignorance with his light.

⁸⁹ Hahn, “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* on Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti* (2),” 32: *kiṃ ca prauḍhaprajñāpreyasy-ālīṅgenānaṅgagrīḍam / uḍupatirucinicayamayam iva vapur anatisayakarūṇam iha vahad anubhavatu //* Note that this is an especially striking instance of an irregular meter wherein the first two lines have eight long syllables each and the last two lines sixteen short syllables each.

⁹⁰ For some instances where Śākyarakṣita clarifies Jñānaśrīmitra’s tantric intentions, see his comments on vv. 78, 82, 119, and 125, in Hahn’s “Śākyarakṣita’s *Vṛttamālāvivṛti* on Jñānaśrīmitra’s *Vṛttamālāstuti* (1)” and “(2).”

⁹¹ See Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism in India*, 302–303. Regarding the Saindava Śrāvakas’ hostility toward tantra, see *ibid.*, 279, and compare Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age,” 239–240.

informing us that Jñānaśrīmitra taught in the Jñānapāda tradition—something we might expect given the prominence of this tradition at Vikramaśīla.⁹²

There are many instances of the use of Jñānaśrīmitra’s ideas in contemporaneous Indian tantric texts as well. As Francesco Sferra and Harunaga Isaacson show, Rāmapāla, disciple of Maitrīpa (aka Advayavajra, aka Maitreyaṅātha) and so grand-disciple of Jñānaśrīmitra, cites verses from the SŚS as support for a particular Sākāra view of the four blisses.⁹³ Indeed, Maitrīpa himself frequently refers to the Sākāravāda as a brand of Yogācāra, and in the *Sekanirdeśa* he makes explicit mention of Sākāravāda as having not only a particular position on consciousness and buddhahood, but on tantric practice as well. Though they disagree about the status of appearances, both the Sākāravādin and Nirākāravādin concur with Maitrīpa on the proper order of the four blisses (see *Sekanirdeśa* v.2, with Rāmapāla’s comment).⁹⁴ Rāmapāla’s citation of Jñānaśrīmitra’s work here suggests that he agrees with Ratnākaraśānti in viewing innate bliss as the third of the four blisses. Later, at *Sekanirdeśa* v.21, Maitrīpa gives an inexorably esoteric take on the difference between Sākāravāda and Nirākāravāda:

The [Reality taught by the] Sākāra[vādin] is [experienced when the Bodhicitta is] inside the penis, and the [one taught by the] Nirākāra[vādin] is [experienced when the Bodhicitta is] at its tip. Some teach that the [Reality taught by the proponents of the] Middle [Way] is [likewise experienced while Bodhicitta is in the penis or at its tip]. Our guru’s view [however] is that this is wrong.⁹⁵

⁹² Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 372–373.

⁹³ See *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyaṅātha (Advayavajra) with the Sekanirdeśapañjikā of Rāmapāla* (Naples: Università Degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale,” 2014), 268–270. Rāmapāla cites the final verse of SŚS 1 (see fn. 88) as well as one of the concluding verses of SŚS 6 (see fn. 96), as well as PV 3.221, Jñānaśrīmitra’s Dharmakīrtian touch-stone for the *citrādvaita* (see fn. 93). On the four blisses in Ratnākaraśānti’s work, see our lengthy discussion in chapter 2.

⁹⁴ In addition to our discussion above, chapter 2, section iv, see again Isaacson and Sferra’s introduction to *The Sekanirdeśa*, 97–100. Compare, too, Maitrīpa’s comment in the **Caturmudropadeśa*, translated in Isaacson and Sferra, *ibid.*, 391–393, where the both the Sākāravāda and the Nirākāravāda Vijñānavāda are said to represent (to Maitrīpa false) philosophical positions regarding tantra. For Maitrīpa’s other references to the Sākāravāda, in addition to the Nirākāravāda and the sub-classification of Madhyamaka to Mayopamavāda and Apratiṣṭhānavāda, see Isaacson and Sferra, *ibid.*, 103 fn.29.

⁹⁵ Isaacson’s and Sferra’s translation, *The Sekanirdeśa*, 293.

While they agree on the proper order of the blisses, then, Maitrīpa tells us that the Sākāravādin and Nirākāravādin disagree about precisely where the ejaculate (“the Bodhicitta”) is when the reality of innate bliss is experienced—and each falls short of Maitrīpa’s own Madhyamaka view. While Rāmapāla had associated the Sākāravāda with Jñānaśrīmitra in connection to the order of the blisses in *Sekanirdeśa* v.2, here he makes no such gesture. It is impossible to know if this verse accurately reflects Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, but it is striking that the Sākāravāda is given such esoteric specificity.

Jñānaśrīmitra’s famous student Ratnakīrti, too, was very possibly associated with the same *Guhyasamāja* tradition as his teacher. In a series of papers, Munenobu Sakurai has argued that a text attributed to a Ratnakīrti in its Tibetan translation, the **Śāsanasarvasvasādhana*, is in fact by *the* Ratnakīrti, logician and steadfast student of Jñānaśrīmitra. There is, I believe, good evidence for this. Take for instance Ratnakīrti’s instructions for cultivating the important mantra, *om śūnyatājñānavajrasvabhāvātmako ’ham*, “Om! I am the indestructible nature of the gnosis of emptiness!” This mantra has a central place in the Stage of Arising (*utpattikrama*), where it is used to dissolve all phenomena into emptiness so that the practitioner may reemerge as a deity. The discussion of the cultivation required to utilize this mantra is often an opportunity for a philosopher’s view of emptiness to be put to work practically in meditation.⁹⁶ Here, in Ratnakīrti’s *sādhana*, we find what we would expect from a student of Jñānaśrīmitra and the author of the *Citrādvaitaparakāśavāda*: a discussion of the non-duality of variegated appearances. Ratnakīrti says, for instance,

⁹⁶ For Ratnākaraśānti’s Nirākāravādin-spin on this, see Tomlinson, “The Tantric Context of Ratnākaraśānti’s Philosophy of Mind,” JIP 46 (2018): 355–372. See above, chapter 2, section iv, for a discussion of the two stages of post-initiatory practice.

Each sentient being is in its ultimate nature manifestation, for it is devoid of object and subject and cause and effect, since it is held that the variegated appearances (*rnam pa sna tshogs pa*, **citrākāra*) that remain so long as there is manifestation are nothing but non-duality. Therefore, the reality of the emptiness of conceptualizations of subject and object, cause and effect, and so on, is those variegated things (lit. “loci of variegation” [*sna tshogs pa’i chos can rnams*, **citrādharmins*]) that have as their identity only the non-duality of variegated appearances (*so so’i rnam pa gnyis su med pa tsam*, **nānākārādvaitamātra*).⁹⁷

Emptiness here is non-duality. There is no subject or object, no cause or effect: there is only the manifestation of non-dual variegated appearances, only *citrādvaitaparakāśa*. This sounds very much like the sort of reasoning the star-student of Jñānaśrīmitra would offer for the dissolution into emptiness in the Stage of Arising.

All this, then, lends some credence to the view that Jñānaśrīmitra was a tantric thinker: tradition tells us so, his contemporaries and students would seem to suggest it, and he himself makes tantric symbolism explicit in his praise of Mañjuśrī. Granted, it is possible that Jñānaśrīmitra’s students and contemporaries distorted his philosophical view in applying it in tantric contexts. Perhaps he used tantric symbolism not out of any special devotion but just from his knowledge of the goings-on at Vikramaśīla. He might have been the second so-called Central Pillar of this important tantric institution, with its lineage tracing back to Jñānapāda, but not have associated with tantra himself. All this is possible, but I am inclined to think this less likely than the simpler explanation that he was in fact a tantric thinker. Where McCrea and Patil tell us that “Jñānaśrīmitra was perhaps the most significant Buddhist intellectual of his period, and his

⁹⁷ **Śāsanasarvasvasādhana*, dPe bsdur ma, 22—1304–1305: *sems can so so don dam par rang bzhin gyis ’od gsal ba gzung ba dang ’dzin pa med pa rgyu dang ’bras bu med pa ji srid snang ba’i mthar thug pa’i rnam pa sna tshogs pa rnams gnyis su med pa tsam du ’dod pa’i phyir ro. de bas na so so’i rnam pa gnyis su med pa tsam gyi bdag nyid sna tshogs pa’i chos can rnams gzung ba dang ’dzin pa dang rgyu dang ’bras bu la sogs pa miha’ dag tu rtogs pas stong pa nyid kyi de kho na nyid do*. The mantra *om śūnyatājñānavajrasvabhāvātmake ’haṃ* occurs a few lines later. I intend to investigate in detail the connections between Jñānaśrīmitra’s *citrādvaita* and this text of Ratnakīrti’s, alongside Vāgīśvarakīrti’s *Tattvaratnāvaloka* and *-vivaraṇa* (which Ratnakīrti critiques), in a forthcoming paper.

works cover the full range of topics important to Buddhist philosophers,”⁹⁸ it may be fruitful to consider his effect on the world of tantra as well, a topic of central importance to other philosophers at Vikramaśīla.

Still, it is notable that, from what has come down to us, Jñānaśrīmitra seems not to have been a tantric author per se.⁹⁹ Despite Ratnākaraśānti’s explicit synthesis of tantric and non-tantric forms of Buddhism in both his commentarial and his philosophical work, and despite Jñānaśrīmitra’s thorough refutation of every other argument Ratnākaraśānti offers, whether logical or scriptural, Jñānaśrīmitra does not bring tantra to bear on his project in the SSS. I believe there is good reason for this, though it must remain a hypothesis given Jñānaśrīmitra’s near-total silence on the topic (or until further documents are discovered). Jñānaśrīmitra keeps

⁹⁸ *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India*, 2. Compare our discussion in chapter 1 of Jñānaśrīmitra’s place at Vikramaśīla and in the intellectual history of Indian philosophy and poetics.

⁹⁹ I am not here considering the *rDo rje theg pa’i mtha’ gnyis sel ba*, or **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa*, which is attributed to the *Ācārya Jñānaśrī (slob dpon Dznyāna shrī) in its Tibetan translation and which I am not confident is by our Jñānaśrīmitra. On this fascinating text, see Taiken Kyuma, Ryugen Tanemura, and Harunaga Isaacson’s *A Study of the Position of mantrayāna in Late Indian Buddhism*, A Report of Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (Mie University, 2008), as well as Kyuma’s and Tanemura’s resultant articles in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009): Kyuma’s “Superiority of Vajrayāna — Part I: Some Remarks on the *Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa* (*rDo rje theg pa’i mtha’ gnyis sel ba*) Ascribed to Jñānaśrī,” 469–486, and Tanemura’s “Superiority of Vajrayāna — Part II: Superiority of the Tantric Practice Taught in the **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa* (*rDo rje theg pa’i mtha’ gnyis sel ba*),” 487–514. Tanemura (ibid., 487) shows that the author of the **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa* aims to show the superiority of the *mantrayāna* to the *pāramitāyāna* insofar as the tantric path allows for the practitioner to inhabit rather than to abandon desire (it thus eschews weakening the faculties of the practitioner); it takes a negative attitude towards external actions like the worship of stūpas or recitations of texts (it thus eschews distracting the mind of the practitioner); and it involves the consumption of impure substances (it thus encourages grasping things as they really are: non-dual). For these reasons, it leads to liberation quickly. Among other scriptural references, the author appeals here to the *Guhyasamāja*. The author also pays special attention to the way the *mantrayāna* avoids the extremes of superimposition and nihilism (see section 5 in Kyuma’s synopsis, ibid. 467, as well as the translation in Kyuma et al., 64–65: this passage may be usefully compared to the opening of SSS 6 discussed above). Kyuma (ibid., 471–473) examines the attribution to Jñānaśrīmitra, as well as Jñānaśrībhadra: though both Tāranātha and Sum pa mkhan po attribute the text to Jñānaśrīmitra of Gauḍa and Central Pillar at Vikramaśīla (that is, our Jñānaśrīmitra), they also fail to distinguish between Jñānaśrīmitra and Jñānabhadra, which casts some doubt on their attribution. Further, Jñānaśrīmitra is referred to in the colophons of the Tibetan translations of the *Kāryakāraṇabhāvasiddhi* and the *Vṛttamālāstuti* by his full title, *mahāpāṇḍita* (*mkhas pa chen po*), and his full name (Dznyāna shrī mi tra or Ye shes dpal bshes gnyen), though it is of course possible another translator chose an abbreviation and ignored his full title. There is also the possibility there was another figure named simply Jñānaśrī, as Kyuma notes. For reasons of style and content, and for want of more definitive evidence, I leave this text aside here, though I would be happy to be convinced otherwise. Still, regardless of the authorship of the **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa*, Kyuma is absolutely right that, “If we try to describe the history of Indian Buddhism properly, it would be necessary to make clear how these two, i.e., tantric and non-tantric aspects are related to each other within the whole structure of each author’s thought or practice” (ibid., 469–470), Jñānaśrīmitra of Gauḍa included.

tantra out of his philosophical work—even when engaging in an intra-Buddhist debate with a prolific tantric author who appeals to the scriptural authority of certain tantras—because tantra and philosophy are for him discourses best kept separate. The meditative cultivations achieved in tantra may be an especially efficient means to reach high levels of realization, and philosophical analysis may be an important aspect of certain of those cultivations. But philosophy is a realm where logic reigns. Jñānaśrīmitra, in other words, sees Ratnākaraśānti’s embrace of tantra in his philosophical work as a product of overzealous faith.¹⁰⁰

That Jñānaśrīmitra was critical of Ratnākaraśānti’s faith we know. In chapter 1, we outlined certain aspects of the place of faith (*śraddhā*) in Ratnākaraśānti’s view. We saw there that Ratnākaraśānti urged (as ever) a middle path with regard to faith: he tells his students to

¹⁰⁰ Here, Jñānaśrīmitra’s view may be usefully compared with Sakya Paṇḍita’s in his *Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes* (*sDom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye pa*), granting of course the very different intellectual and political climate of Sakya Paṇḍita’s work (see his own discussion of this, *Clear Differentiation*, III.586–660). Sakya Paṇḍita argues in this polemical work that the three different scriptural traditions—the way of disciples (**śrāvakayāna*), the way of perfections (**pāramitāyāna*), and the way of mantras (**mantrayāna*)—must be kept separate (see especially III.479–516). He writes, for instance, “A wrongly practicing follower of the Great Vehicle Perfections cannot be confuted by the argument, ‘This conflicts with Mantra texts.’ By the same token, even if certain followers of the Mantra tradition practice wrongly, they cannot be refuted by pointing out a contradiction with Perfections scripture” (III.493–494). Tantra involves the practice of rites, the four initiations, and the two stages, while the way of perfections does not: one practices in one tradition or the other (III.120–132, 223–252). The way of mantras, further, *requires* initiation and pledges of secrecy (III.79–91, 101–104): one should not so much as listen to tantric texts without initiation, let alone undertake the practices they enjoin. One can imagine, then, that the use of tantric texts to justify a philosophical dispute within the realm of the way of perfections would be anathema to Sakya Paṇḍita, as it is perhaps to Jñānaśrīmitra as well. It is notable in this regard that Sakya Paṇḍita tells a story here about “the *mahāpaṇḍita* Jñānaśrī” (*mkhas pa chen po dznyāna shrīs*) III.479–486. This Jñānaśrī debated a non-Buddhist painter who represented the Buddha trampled under foot by Īśvara. Jñānaśrī refuted him on the grounds that the painter’s own non-Buddhist scriptures give no precedent for such a mural, while Buddhist tantras do indeed give precedent for Īśvara being trampled under foot by the Buddha. Sakya Paṇḍita uses this story to exemplify the proper use of scripture in debate. The fact that the Jñānaśrī of this story is referred to as a *mahāpaṇḍita* (*mkhas pa chen po*), makes successful appeal to the king, and that he is said to have “later refuted in debate the philosophical tenets of the Indian non-Buddhist sectarians and that the Buddha’s Doctrine came to flourish” (III.486), makes it not impossible that this is a story about Jñānaśrīmitra, though of course this is far from proven. See David Jackson’s *Enlightenment by a Single Means* (Vienna: VÖAW, 1994), 67–121, and Jared Douglas Rhoton’s translation, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002). One may compare too the occasional comment on the way of mantras in *Clarifying the Sage’s Intent* (*Thub pa’i dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba*), as when Sakya Paṇḍita tells his reader he will not here consider tantric teachings in this non-tantric context (e.g. 391, 511), or where he says: “Pleasant speech is to teach the Dharma for the sake of bringing others to maturity after you have gladdened them through generosity. This means to abandon incorrect doctrine and to teach without: [...] blending the points that do not agree—such as explaining the sense of the perfections and the mantra teachings as one” (529). See David Jackson’s translation in *Stages of the Buddha’s Teachings: Three Key Texts* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2015).

practice in those traditions that appeal to them, for which they have an ineffable taste or inclination (*ruci*), but urges them to accept only those Buddhist teachings that were in fact taught by the Buddha, and to reject those that were not. This discrimination should be grounded on reason. Those (like perhaps the early *Kālacakra* masters) who would propound texts on the grounds of faith alone and claim authority only in the transcendent insight of bodhisattvas must be rebuked. Still, the insights offered in tantras the Buddha really taught, and which can be given solid grounding in Yogācāra philosophy, have a place in our philosophical discourse.¹⁰¹

Jñānaśrīmitra, I believe, thinks Ratnākaraśānti takes this too far. At many places in the SSŚ, Jñānaśrīmitra has opportunity to criticize Ratnākaraśānti’s position for its smuggling in illogical conclusions, stacking the deck as it were in favor of certain views that have no rational support. In SSŚ 1, for instance, we saw that Ratnākaraśānti argues that bare manifestation cannot be defeated because to manifest is simply its nature, whereas an appearance like blue does not have that nature. Jñānaśrīmitra had a reasoned response to this line of argument.¹⁰² In the midst of this, he writes, “Enough with this dogmatic adherence (*abhiniveśa*)! If one adheres single-mindedly to this article of faith (*śraddheya*), ‘That is just the nature of that!’ [viz. manifestation is simply the nature of manifestation], then why is this not the case for the reality of blue, too, which is manifest?”¹⁰³ Here, he criticizes Ratnākaraśānti’s view for being based on nothing but a conviction that the nature of manifestation *just is* a certain way—despite Jñānaśrīmitra’s many refutations of the view. Later in the same chapter, we see Jñānaśrīmitra refer to Ratnākaraśānti’s commitment to the difference between manifestation and appearances as a conviction

¹⁰¹ See chapter 1, sections v and vi.

¹⁰² See our discussion in chapter 4, section ii.

¹⁰³ JNĀ 375.16–18: *tad alam abhiniveśavaśatayā. tasya tad eva rūpam iti śraddheyasya, saṅkalpaikaniveśino yadi tathā nirbhāsinaḥ kiṃ na tad // satyatvaṃ nīlasya.*

(*adhimokṣa*) that serves no purpose. Where Ratnākaraśānti thinks manifestation *just is* the nature of manifestation, Jñānaśrīmitra can say the same about the manifest appearance. “So, even given your conviction that there is difference, if your own experience, not being subject to defeat, establishes the existence of manifestation, what is the use of that?”¹⁰⁴ That is, if Ratnākaraśānti claims that it is simply his own indubitable experience that establishes the existence of his bare manifestation on the basis of his commitment to this idea, Jñānaśrīmitra can make the same appeal to *his* experience: how does this move the debate forward? Appeals to experience in an effort to ground one’s convictions have no place in philosophy. We could multiply the instances of this sort of rhetorical turn in SSŚ 1 and 2, the chapters devoted to refuting Ratnākaraśānti’s notion of difference and bare manifestation in detail: Jñānaśrīmitra repeatedly refers to bare manifestation as an object of faith,¹⁰⁵ or chides Ratnākaraśānti’s mere conviction that a particular view of error, or the Nirākāravāda generally, is true.¹⁰⁶

vi. Conclusion: Faith and Method

The cumulative effect of these rhetorical flourishes is to make Ratnākaraśānti sound like an overzealous champion of a view that has no rational defense. It is just out of *faith* that he thinks bare manifestation is possible; it is only his *conviction* that the Nirākāravāda is true that leads him to ignore Jñānaśrīmitra’s persuasive arguments to the contrary. Jñānaśrīmitra thus questions

¹⁰⁴ JNĀ 378.16–19: [*bhede eva hi vivādaḥ. tādrśī tarhi siddhiḥ nīlasyāpi kathaṃ bādhā? prakāśasya prakāśa eva rūpam ityādav uktam eva, śakyam ca nīlaprakāśasya nīlaprakāśa eva rūpam ityādi vaktum.*] *tato bhedādhimokṣe’pi yadi svāmubhavo bādhakam anavakāśīkurvan prakāśasattāṃ sādhayet, tathāpi kim anena? i bhedādhimokṣe* JNĀ fn. MS_{pc}] *bhedādhikṣepe* JNĀ MS_{ac}.

¹⁰⁵ See JNĀ 374.10–12; 383.19–20; 406.5–6; 408.24. We see here different phrases: *śraddhāmātraviṣaya*, *śraddhāgamyam*, or simply *śraddheya*.

¹⁰⁶ See JNĀ 390.11–13; 408.6.

Ratnākaraśānti's method: Ratnākaraśānti smuggles in his conclusions on the basis of faith, and however popular his view may have been with impressionable students at Vikramaśīla, Jñānaśrīmitra has seen through his ardent devotion. He would say that, while Ratnākaraśānti's faith has led to the construction of a powerful system worth spending the time to refute in detail, it has ultimately resulted in sloppy philosophy and bad buddhology. His own buddhology, on the contrary, is based on an exhaustive refutation of the cruel logic of the Nirākāravāda and a thorough examination of Dharmakīrti's philosophy filtered through Prajñākaragupta. The view of Maitreya is consistent with the philosophy of non-difference Dharmakīrti teaches, and, when his works are properly interpreted, it is clear Maitreya meant to prioritize the *sambhogakāya*, the marvelous display of Buddha in heaven.

What does it mean for Jñānaśrīmitra to accuse Ratnākaraśānti of smuggling in conclusions on the basis of faith? While some of Jñānaśrīmitra's comments may ring true with a familiar caricature of faith as a fervent belief that such-and-such is the case, we would do well to remember what faith is in the context of Yogācāra Buddhism. As we saw in chapter 1, section vi, faith *in a particular body of texts* plays a foundational role in Buddhist practice: in works like the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, faith that the Mahāyāna sūtras contain profound truths, for instance, leads the bodhisattva onto the Mahāyāna path, providing the strength to undertake practices that might otherwise seem impossible. Reason must come to confirm this faith: faith is not blind faith in the Yogācāra tradition. But faith is blind *in the beginning*: it begins affectively, with an indeterminate inclination toward and fondness for ideas taught in particular texts. By the eleventh century, Ratnākaraśānti uses this idea of faith with even more specificity: faith in a particular tantric

tradition leads the disciple to practice in that tradition, as faith in the way of perfections rather than the way of mantras might lead a disciple to practice in only that tradition.

Perhaps Jñānaśrīmitra means to suggest that Ratnākaraśānti's conviction that bare manifestation is possible is based on a textual corpus that requires a certain kind of commitment that, while important in practice, is outside the realm of philosophical inquiry. We have seen Jñānaśrīmitra appeal to faith many times in this chapter, referring to Buddha's embodiment in the *sambhogakāya* as the only worthy object of faith (*śraddheya*). He has appealed explicitly and favorably to the magnificent displays of the *sambhogakāya*, the importance of the Buddha *with appearances* as a teacher and as an object of refuge, and so on. Jñānaśrīmitra grounds his buddhological position on Maitreya's corpus, thus appealing to a body of scripture that has a place in philosophical discourse, texts that (doubts about the RGV aside) both he and his opponent hold to be authoritative. Ratnākaraśānti's faith, on the other hand, leads him to appeal to ideas taught in texts that it would seem are out of bounds in Jñānaśrīmitra's view. Philosophy may help a practitioner ground certain tantric practices on a foundation strengthened by rational inquiry and the conviction logic gives: if Ratnakīrti uses the rationally established truth of the *citrādvaita* to ground the meditation on emptiness in the Stage of Arising, that will only make that cultivation more effective. This is perfectly admissible. But tantric practice or the descriptions of buddhahood found in the tantras cannot be used to ground philosophical inquiry. Ratnākaraśānti may think he can do so insofar as he can ground the tantras so thoroughly on Yogācāra philosophy, bringing them in line with the unified view of Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Nāgārjuna. Jñānaśrīmitra, however, is not convinced.

Conclusion

I have here explored Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's views on consciousness and content in connection with their respective views on buddhahood and soteriology. This buddhological context is essential to making sense of their philosophy. These Buddhists do not consider the problem of consciousness in a void; rather, they develop and defend their respective views as part of the Buddhist tradition. This means, among other things, adopting the basic position that all beings are mired in the suffering and ignorance of cyclic existence, but that—despite disagreements and disputes about what enlightenment is and how best to attain it—buddhahood is possible. The way we ordinarily experience the world, the way we ordinarily come to know it, the way we ordinarily conceive of its metaphysical foundations—all this is fundamentally mistaken. Whatever else we may say about the role of philosophy on this path, then, it is most basically revisionary. Though most Indian Buddhist philosophers at the turn of the second millennium give an account of our ordinary epistemology and metaphysics and our practical action in the conventional world, their aim is not simply to confirm the truth of these. Their aim is rather to develop more and more subtle, sophisticated, and profound ways of seeing things till our ordinary approach to experience is replaced by an extraordinary one.

Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's insights into consciousness should be viewed in this light. Ratnākaraśānti does not mean to confirm common sense when he argues that subjective character or the “what-it-is-like-ness” of consciousness (its “warmth and intimacy,” as William James put it) is separable from intentionality. The basic intuition behind Ratnākaraśānti's arguments we considered in chapter 3—that this subjective character can be experienced on its

own, devoid of all mental content—should strike the reader today as deeply odd, as it would seem to have struck at least certain of his contemporaries. But the systematic view he develops is nevertheless one to be reckoned with. We saw in chapter 3 that Ratnākaraśānti joins the Mādhyamikas in targeting all content with the neither-one-nor-many argument, reasoning that it is in fact incoherent whether it is conceived of as external matter or a mental appearance. Content is defeasible, he argued—but the bare manifestation of consciousness is not. This much is indubitable: first, because, by the Dharmakīrtian tradition’s own lights, we should be able to distinguish between unreal content like universals and their manifestation in cognition; second, because this must be so for us to account for buddhahood, as we saw Ratnākaraśānti argue contra the Candrakīrtian in particular; and finally, because bare manifestation can in fact be experienced by the initiand in tantric practice, as we saw in chapter 2. The criterion of consciousness, then, must be rethought: it is not intentionality, as many would argue, because there is at least one instance of consciousness wherein all content has vanished. The criterion of consciousness is instead what remains in that contentless conscious state: bare manifestation.

That bare manifestation can be experienced for oneself when one is perfectly self-aware, and that it has the phenomenal characteristic of innate bliss when it is so experienced, is a further step beyond what may be called common sense. But Ratnākaraśānti’s work comes at a particularly exciting time in the intellectual history of the Buddhist tradition. While some might have thought it best to keep the work of philosophy separate from tantric practice and hermeneutics, Ratnākaraśānti sought to synthesize the truths Buddha taught in sūtra and tantra, as well as the philosophical methods taught to unpack those truths by the likes of Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Nāgārjuna. He brings non-tantric sources and philosophical argument to bear on his

interpretation of tantra, and he makes occasional explicit reference to tantric ideas in his philosophical works. This syncretism thus expands the tradition of texts that might count as suitable building blocks for philosophical theory: for Ratnākaraśānti, a Buddhist philosopher can (and perhaps should) reach beyond the Dharmakīrtian and Yogācāra text traditions when exploring not only the nature of practice and soteriology, but also the nature of mind.¹

Though Jñānaśrīmitra's work fits more squarely in the Dharmakīrtian and Yogācāra text traditions, he likewise develops a revisionary understanding of what should be taken as criterial in philosophy of mind. The implications of the unitary nature of consciousness that Jñānaśrīmitra draws out in his discussion of the wondrous non-duality of variegated cognition are by no means a confirmation of common sense. Jñānaśrīmitra means to transform both how we experience our activity in the world and how we experience experience itself. As we saw in chapter 4, he develops the view that the unitary nature of consciousness is in fact peculiar to consciousness: external reality, as it is mistakenly imagined in our conventional world, is divisible in a way consciousness is not. Consciousness is unitary, and this original unity is not something that can be broken. Indeed, consciousness is unitary in such a radical way that it is properly non-dual, beyond even the bifurcation of "unitary" and "manifold." He thus asks us to consider the phenomenal unity of contentful, variegated consciousness in a new light: something is truly present to consciousness only when it is non-dual in this peculiar way.

In relation to this, Jñānaśrīmitra's view of error also would have struck his readers as novel, though it may have a certain contemporary resonance. As we saw in chapter 4,

¹ On this notion of "text tradition," with special reference to Dharmakīrti's importance for Jñānaśrīmitra, see Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil's *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3–6.

Jñānaśrīmitra conceives of superimposition not as the imposition of one appearance onto another, as if two appearances could manifest to consciousness at one time, or as if consciousness could act as the agent of imposition. Neither of these options is possible so long as Jñānaśrīmitra holds on to the non-dual nature of wondrously variegated cognition. Rather, superimposition amounts to being thrown out into the world of conventional activities by our expectations facing appearances. Conditioned as they are by our suffering and ignorance in the conventional world, appearances contain within themselves some force that directs us away from their nature as simply the manifestation of a fundamentally non-dual cognition, and they thus lead us away from cognition and into the conventional world of action.

In chapter 5, we went on to explore the buddhological payoff of Jñānaśrīmitra's view of the wondrous non-duality of variegated cognition. Buddhahood itself, he argued, can be explained only by conceiving of Buddha as really appearing with particular, purified forms. The thought that buddhahood might ultimately be formless, and that the appearances that Buddha manifests are somehow mistaken, is anathema to Jñānaśrīmitra: the purified properties Buddha manifests are ultimately real, and Buddha's experience and enjoyment of them, the *sambhogakāya*, is ineluctably real as well. Jñānaśrīmitra is not at all afraid to engage in scriptural interpretation to establish this point, we saw, and he is equally unafraid to criticize the way Ratnākaraśānti relies upon scripture. His philosophical project is tied up with buddhological and soteriological concerns; still, he marks himself out as a Buddhist philosopher in a way that is opposed to Ratnākaraśānti's.

Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, then, each develop revisionary accounts of the criterion of consciousness in the context of their respective systematic Buddhist projects. Ratnākaraśānti

advances the view that the bare manifestation of subjective character, devoid of content, is that criterion, while Jñānaśrīmitra argues it is the non-dual manifestation of a variegated appearance, one that presents itself to the fundamental phenomenal unity of consciousness. Each of these views is offered not as a confirmation of the way we ordinarily experience the world, though both Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra give an account of this ordinary experience. Rather, both these philosophers aim to upset our ordinary conceptions of consciousness in explicating and justifying these novel notions of what is in fact criterial in philosophy of mind.

Yet the debates we've tracked here may leave contemporary readers unconvinced. What if the reader is not Buddhist? Has my insistence on a connection between philosophy and buddhology rendered this project of only antiquarian interest from the start? For some (myself included, no doubt), this antiquarian interest may already be enough. But what about for philosophers not so historically inclined? In my introduction, I suggested that western philosophers of mind are not in principle opposed to accounting for extraordinary phenomenology in their considerations of consciousness: blindsight, dissociative identity disorder, phantom limbs, and other experiences a philosopher may not have had nevertheless provide phenomenological data deemed relevant for philosophy. Thinking through these extraordinary cases, or other more far-flung thought experiments, leads to novel ideas in philosophy.

All the more so, then, is the study of different Buddhist philosophical systems in their respective buddhological contexts important for us today. Indian Buddhist philosophers like Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra do not work in a secular void, simply rehearsing familiar arguments in a foreign language; rather, their works are constantly inflected by peculiarly

Buddhist concerns. But to paraphrase Steve Collins: this makes their philosophy relevant not *in spite of* the fact that it is Buddhist, but precisely *because* it is founded on presuppositions radically different from our own. We change how we think by grappling with other philosophers' attempts to think through familiar problems on the basis of concerns very different from those we ordinarily have. This leads to rethinking these familiar problems, articulating new arguments, and possibly even discovering problems one might never have considered before without this engagement. It is my hope that the reader is left not only impressed by Ratnākaraśānti's and Jñānaśrīmitra's philosophical and scholastic acumen, but also encouraged to approach questions about idealism, intentionality, and consciousness in new ways.

Appendix:
A Translation of *Sākārasiddhiśāstra* 4,
the *Citrādvaitapariccheda*

In this translation of SSS 4, I have followed Bhikṣu Hejung’s magnificent recent draft edition (abbreviated with H). I make no efforts here at critically tracking the variant manuscript readings; Hejung has accomplished that and much more, as his forthcoming edition will show. In footnotes, I only mark where his edition significantly deviates from Thakur’s in JNĀ in such a way that the translation is meaningfully affected, so that readers of Thakur’s edition will see the changes in Hejung’s edition that ground my translation choices. I note Thakur’s page numbers in brackets. Hejung’s pagination is not yet set, so the reader may coordinate my translation with his edition by reference to the verse numbers he gives, which I give in brackets.

I had the privilege of reading this chapter through in its entirety first with Pradeep Gokhale in January 2017 in Sarnath while on a Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies Dissertation Fellowship. I read through much of it a second time with Parimal Patil while visiting Harvard the following year. Their help was absolutely invaluable in coming to terms with Jñānaśrīmitra’s view and developing this translation. Finally, I have most recently revised this translation on the basis of Hejung’s edition with the help of Harunaga Isaacson and other participants of the “Ratnākara Readings” workshop at Mahidol University, March 2019.

This translation is nevertheless quite provisional. Much remains to be understood in Jñānaśrīmitra’s difficult text, and I’ve surely made countless mistakes and interpretive errors here. Still, my understanding of Jñānaśrīmitra’s view presented in the body of this dissertation is in many ways based on my understanding of this chapter of SSS, and so I think it appropriate to

present my current understanding, such as it is. Since SSS 4 encapsulates many aspects of Jñānaśrīmitra’s view, I present this translation in the hopes that it will help readers better understand his position, his arguments in defense of it, and his relationship to Dharmakīrti’s text-tradition. At the very least, I hope this will help others understand Jñānaśrīmitra’s Sanskrit better than I have here.

* * *

The Fourth Chapter of *A Treatise Proving Sākāravāda:* The Non-Duality of Wondrously Variegated Cognition (*Citrādvaita*)

[i. The Conventional Nature of the Relation between the Object of Defeat and the Defeater]¹

[JNĀ 437] Alternatively, what is this unreality of even that whose nature is experience? If you say, “it is because there is a defeater,” what is defeated by what? “The heap of variegated appearances (*citrākāra*) is defeated by [the neither-one-nor-many argument, that is] the non-apprehension of the pervader (*vyāpakānupalambha*).”² Then this is protecting a cow that has already been sold!³

¹ These section headings, in bold and in brackets, are my own provisional effort to break up the text.

² The non-apprehension of the pervader at stake here is the neither-one-nor-many argument. To state it briefly, the argument is based on the establishment of a pervasion between existence (*sattā*) and having a unitary or manifold nature (*ekānekasvabhāva*). That is, for something to exist, it must have a unitary or manifold nature; existence, the pervaded, is pervaded by having a unitary or manifold nature, the pervader. When something is shown *not* to have either a unitary or manifold nature, the pervader is said not to be apprehended; thus, through the non-apprehension of the pervader of existence, it is inferred that existence is refuted too. Jñānaśrīmitra will show in this chapter, among many other things, that this pervasion doesn’t hold when we are considering cognition.

³ There can be no defeat, Jñānaśrīmitra will argue, once we’ve given up on or are no longer concerned with the mere conventional reality of the external; Ratnākaraśānti, who we may suppose is Jñānaśrīmitra’s principal opponent here, is thus trying to bring a conventional form of argumentation predicated on externality to bear on cognition (the ultimate) which doesn’t actually apply to cognition. To put it another way, perhaps we can say that the cow that’s sold is the relation between the object of defeat and the defeater, and it’s sold by ridding ourselves of object and subject duality (*grāhyagrāhakabhāva*) when we accept that there is only cognition (*vijñaptimātratā*): once you’ve given up on this sort of duality, Jñānaśrīmitra suggests, it’s ridiculous to try to protect it.

Because, even there⁴ in [Prajñākaragupta's] *Bhāṣya*, it is shown that the relation between the object of defeat and the defeater (*bādhyabādhakabhāva*) is conventional (*sāṃvṛta*), since it is proven that the manifestation of something non-existent (*asatkhyāti*) is contradictory.⁵ [4.1]

Moreover, in the first place, a cognition cannot at all defeat itself, because its awareness of its own nature (*svarūpasamvedana*) has strength (*bala*) [that cannot be undermined]. If one cognition is defeated by another cognition, then is it defeated by a cognition having the same object, or by one having a different object? Or by a cognition that occurs at the same time, or at a different time? The idea that a cognition with that same object defeats [another cognition with the same object] is incoherent.⁶ By a cognition whose object is different, too, how can there be defeat? [The two cognitions will be irrelevant to each other.] “[One cognition defeats another] simply by means of positing its own object [in cognition].” Why is that cognition not defeated by that?⁷ Nor can there be defeat by a cognition that exists at the same time. Since there is the direct appearance at the same time of many things of the same class or of different classes, what will defeat what? If the two cognitions are at different times, there is even less scope for defeat, as, for instance, two kings—one ancient like Mahāsaṃmata, one contemporary like Śrīharṣa[—obviously can't wage war with each other].⁸

⁴ *tatrāpy*] H; *tadvyāpy* JNĀ.

⁵ The manifestation of something non-existent is contradictory given the definition of existence as manifestation Jñānaśrīmitra discusses in this chapter. I here take this definition of existence as manifestation to be the reason for why the relation between the object of defeat and the defeater must be only conventional. Both these topics are discussed by Prajñākaragupta: the definition of existence in terms of manifestation will be grounded on Prajñākaragupta explicitly below; for the conventional nature of *bādhyabādhakabhāva* in Prajñākaragupta's *Bhāṣya*, see PVA ad 1.1, PVA ad 3.333 (especially 373.24 ff.), and (as Hejung notes) PVA ad 4.176.

⁶ Let us imagine a paradigmatic example of one cognition defeating another: a cognition of a shell shows an earlier cognition of silver to be mistaken. Jñānaśrīmitra argues here that it is incoherent to say, e.g., that if there is first a cognition of silver, a second cognition of silver refutes that first cognition.

⁷ Why not say that the former cognition refutes the latter, rather than the other way around? If they present different content, why not say that the cognition of silver refutes the cognition of the shell? Our second thoughts are not necessarily better than our first thoughts.

⁸ The relation between an object of defeat and a defeater requires simultaneity, but this, Jñānaśrīmitra will argue, is impossible.

“The meaning of defeat (*bādhā*),” you may object, “is that one cognition shows that another cognition is without its object; even if they belong to different times, defeat is not inconsistent.” If that object [e.g. silver] appears in that first cognition, then it is simply real, so how could it be defeated [e.g. by a subsequent cognition of a shell]? If on the other hand it does not appear [in the first cognition] then it is by itself already not real, so what is the use of another negation?⁹ “The defeat spoken of is not of the [directly appearing] object in that first cognition; we’re talking about the negation of a superimposition.” Because it is explained that superimposition, too, is shown to be mere convention (*vyavahāramātra*), defeat that has that as its basis does not go beyond the state of being conventional (*sāmvṛtatva*).¹⁰

“Error,” you may object, “is defined as the mere arising of another awareness in reliance upon the difference of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpādabhedā*); in just the same way, simply the arising of the content (*ākāra*) in cognition that says, ‘It is like this, not otherwise,’ will be defeat.” If this is so, in reality it is proven there is no defeat! This cognition has arisen by apprehending some form, fine; but it doesn’t defeat another cognition, nor does it establish another cognition, just like the cognition of sweetness neither defeats nor establishes the immediately preceding cognition of blue. “There is a distinction in the other case [where we judge ‘It is like this, not otherwise’]¹¹ due to the determination (*adhyavasāya*) of defeat.”

Precisely something proven to be established by determination is said to be conventional.

Therefore, the meaning of defeat is not demonstrating the cognition’s being empty of an object.

⁹ That is, if you say that what *appears* is really just shiny-ness, not silver or a shell, then the cognition of *silver* will already involve determination (*adhyavasāya*) rather than manifestation, and so it will be mistaken without need of a defeater.

¹⁰ *sāmvṛtatvam*] H; *sāmvṛtam* JNĀ.

¹¹ I.e. in the case of a cognition that defeats another cognition with the form, “It is like this, not otherwise,” as opposed to the case of blue and sweetness.

If you accept duality, then there might be a way forward on the basis of a difference between one cognition having an object and another cognition not having an object. But if you accept non-duality, then for cognitions which are conscious acts (*vedana*) that come to rest in only their own nature, it is quite adventurous to say one defeats another. And it was said [above, toward the conclusion of SSŚ 1],

[JNĀ 438] Just as there is no proof of one cognition due to another cognition, so too there is no defeat of one cognition due to another cognition.¹²

Should you say, “Surely the proof that there is only cognition (*vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*) is also established on the basis of other cognitions; just so, defeat will be established on the basis of another cognition,” that too has no substance. This is because a person who remains in convention (*saṃvṛtivyavasthita*) cannot stand firm without recourse to inference, for otherwise he could not perform engagement, disengagement, and so on with regard to anything. And if one relies upon inference, then the proof that there is only cognition follows inevitably. But when one completely rests in reality (*tattvapariniṣṭhā*), there is no scope for inference. So too, if defeat is accepted only at the level of convention, then again, given that something that is appearing is determined to be external, there would be defeat with reference to that [determined external object]. Whatever this [external object] is—whether a cognition or a material thing—defeat is established only with reference to it; still, there is then no operation of a proof (*sādhana*) that transcends the nature of the external (*bāhyarūpa*).¹³

¹² Cf. JNĀ 384.16–19.

¹³ Note the importance of this point: what is external is not just something *jaḍa*, an insentient material thing, but anything outside the present manifest moment of awareness—including other cognitions.

“What,” you may object, “is the purpose of an option (*vikalpa*) on this point?¹⁴ [For us, it is not that our defeater functions with respect to an *external* object, for,] with reference to a *mental form* (*buddhirūpa*) that is variegated (*citra*), [the inferential cognition] makes that into a property [via conceptual construction]; there is no application of a reason to the external.” Then this is like riding a horse, but forgetting the horse!

With reference to an awareness,
whatever is external to it is external to it—
it is useless to worry whether that
is awareness (*jñāna*) or an insentient material object (*jaḍa*). [4.2]

In every case, defeat¹⁵ is invariably related (*nāntarīyakā*) to the conditional positing of an apprehended object that is external (*bāhyagrāhyavyavasthā*). This is established.

“Surely,” you might object,
“our position is that the object of defeat is blue and so on;¹⁶
whether that is awareness or an insentient material thing—
such a worry is meaningless.¹⁷ [4.3]

And a defeater is not afraid, thinking
‘There is a form of awareness there!’
Even if later it is cognized that way,¹⁸
there will be no uprooting of [the defeater’s] power. [4.4]

Moreover, there is no rule that [the defeater] should depend
on the conditional positing of an apprehended object that is external.
This blue is defeated—
let it be external or let it be mind. [4.5]

Or let there be such a conditional positing: then too there is the defeat of this.
Will not an attack on a friend,

¹⁴ Viz. the option of referring to either cognition or an insentient material thing as having an external nature. The opponent objects that he had targeted the heap of variegated appearances, which is of the nature of cognition—and this, he justly supposes, isn’t something external.

¹⁵ *bādha*] H; *bādhaka* JNĀ.

¹⁶ *nīlādi bādhāyā viṣayo*] H; *nīlādibādhāyā viṣayo* JNĀ.

¹⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra’s worry about whether blue is awareness or an insentient material thing is irrelevant for the opponent, because the defeater targets it either way.

¹⁸ *tathājñāne*] H; *tathā jñāne* JNĀ. That is, if the object of defeat is realized to be awareness only after its defeat.

with the thought ‘He is an enemy!’,¹⁹
kill him?” [4.6]

We may say again that given the proof that there is only cognition (*viññaptimātratāsiddhi*), there is no room for a defeater. This is the main point. Given that proof, when there is the establishment of a defeater, which is invariably related to the conditional positing of object and subject,²⁰ nothing undesirable falls on us, because our target is proven when we see that insofar as that [conditional positing of object and subject] is mistaken (*viplava*), so too is the defeater.

Further, one cannot refute those two things being invariably connected:²¹ there is no defeat for something not made into an object, because the determination of defeat takes the form, “This is defeated by that.” The objectification (*viṣayīkaraṇa*) of the object of defeat (*bādhya*) is accomplished (1) by something other than the defeater (*bādhakād anyena*), (2) by the defeater (*bādhakena*), (3) by both,²² (4) by [the object of defeat] itself, (5) or by both [the object of defeat] itself and something else (*svapareṇa*). These are the options.²³ First (1), [JNĀ 439] if it is made an object of defeat by something other than the defeater, that is not defeatable at all. (2) If it is made an object of defeat by the defeater, what room is there for the defeater [to defeat its object]? For the nature of the making into an object *appears*. “But there is the appearance of its nature only insofar as it is being defeated.” This is contradictory. The *appearance* of the object of defeat’s nature means the *existence* of its nature, and something that is being defeated is *non-existent*. “These are both present in sequence.” Defeat cannot be first, because there is no

¹⁹ *vairibuddhyā*] H; *vairabuddhyā* JNĀ.

²⁰ *grāhyagrāhakavyavasthānāntarīyake*] H; *grāhyagrāhakavyavasthā nāntarīyake* JNĀ.

²¹ That is, one cannot refute the invariable connection between the relation between an object of defeat and a defeater (*bādhya bādhakabhāva*) and the conditional positing of object and subject (*grāhyagrāhakavyavasthā*). Jñānaśrīmitra then goes on to defend this invariable connection in what follows (hence the translation of the first *ca* as “further” and the second as a colon).

²² *bādhakenobhayena*] H; *bādhakenetareṇa* JNĀ.

²³ I’ve inserted numbers here and in the following paragraphs in an effort to keep track of these options.

cognition of something related [viz. the object to be defeated]. If instead the appearance of [the object of defeat’s] nature is first, then, because true existence is implied by just this much [viz. by its *appearance*], where is there defeat? Obviously, even if defeat occurs at another time, it will not be the defeat of the object of defeat,²⁴ for at that time that object itself no longer exists. Or if the object does exist at that time, too, then it won’t be defeated by even a hundred defeaters! (3) On the other hand, if the object of defeat is established by both, the compatibility of those two would be established (*saṃvādasiddhi*)—where is there a whiff of defeat?²⁵ Further, the objectification of something by something is not possible at all, because we undertook this inquiry given the proof that there is only cognition.²⁶

(4) Nor is there any room for defeat if the object of defeat makes itself into an object.

When what is appearing in itself
is not made into an object by another cognition,²⁷
this very powerful defeater
will strike its own head! [4.7]

And so, that conceptual cognition is one whose operation culminates in just its own content (*ākāra*), viz. “I defeat this blue by this reasoning,” so it does not touch even the talk of the object of defeat—if there is a difference [between the manifest appearance and the constructed object of a defeating cognition].²⁸ If there is alternatively no difference [between those two], then it is bold

²⁴ *tasya*] H; *tasyāḥ* JNĀ.

²⁵ That is, both the object of defeat and the defeater would be present together in a single cognition, so how would the object of defeat be defeated by that defeater?

²⁶ A not-so-subtle dig at Jñānaśrīmitra’s Yogācāra opponent, Ratnākaraśānti: we began this debate accepting that there is only cognition, and once we Yogācāras accept this, we should understand that objectification is really impossible when we abide in the fact that there is only cognition.

²⁷ *pareṇāviśayīkṛtau*] H; *pareṇa viśayīkṛtau* JNĀ.

²⁸ The conceptual cognition takes the form, “I defeat this blue by this reasoning,” and it culminates in this conceptually constructed form; it doesn’t have immediately manifest blue as its content, which is Ratnākaraśānti’s real object of defeat. The difference (“if there is difference”), then, is between the conceptual construction of a defeated object and some manifest content: in this case, the manifest content is not defeated at all. Note that this would seem to be Jñānaśrī’s own position: manifest content in one cognition is simply different from the constructed object in a subsequent defeating cognition.

to say that this defeats itself. (5) If the object is both the same and different from cognition, it is as before: there is just compatibility. If, on the other hand, you say that a cognition defeats something that is *not* made into an object, then it will mean anything can be refuted!

[ii. Further Reflection on There Being Only Cognition (*Vijñaptimātratā*)]

However, if there is the conviction that there is the apprehension of something external, there could be hope for conventional talk of proving or defeating [the external object], given the arising of cognition that does not touch [the manifest appearance]. But this confidence²⁹ [that something external is apprehended] is a distortion (*viplava*); hence, defeat, which depends on that [conviction that there is the apprehension of the external] is also simply a distortion. For when this conditional positing of the apprehension of the external object is overcome, everything sinks down into self-awareness. What activity could there be? On the part of what? By means of what? For it is not possible at that time to say that this is thus and so; when it is [possible to say such things], again you accept duality.³⁰ For it is said [by Vasubandhu in the *Triṃśikā*],

Even one who judges, “This is really just cognition”
posits something before himself
on the basis of apprehension.
He does not understand that there is only cognition. [*Triṃśikā*, 27]

Should you say, “For one for whom [the fact that there is only cognition] is not directly manifest even though he has ascertained its reality, there is room for a defeater, just as he will perform activities and so on.”³¹ Then, too, there is no fault. Due to innate ignorance

²⁹ *cādhimokṣo*] H; *cādhimokṣe* JNĀ.

³⁰ When abiding in *vijñaptimātratā*, or having sunk down into self-awareness, there is no possibility of using dualistic conceptual categories and saying anything is thus and so.

³¹ The opponent objects that, just as someone who has realized that there is only cognition may still act in the world, so to such an enlightened being may use defeaters.

(*sahajāvidyā*), activities and so on are possible only through positing the external, as in “This is to be known or attained through that;” similarly, defeat, too, falls only on the head of the external.³² When considering cognition alone, all activities stop. So, this relation between the object of defeat and the defeater is only conventional; it does not find any room when we are directly facing the nature of reality (*tattvarūpāmukhīkaraṇa*). In that case, fine, a proof does not come about either; but even the non-coming-about of a proof is not troubling,³³ for what is to be proven is already established [when directly facing the nature of reality].³⁴

[JNĀ 440] There is no introduction of another [defeater] if that [fact that there is only cognition] is not established—what purpose could that serve aside from the satisfaction of the opponent (*paraparitoṣa*)? “If that is the case, then the formulation of a defeater would depend on the operation of a source of knowledge that establishes [that there is only cognition], and so a fault may arise. But who will delay like this? Let there be the formulation of a defeater first [viz. before the fact that there is only cognition is realized].” This is nothing but a madman’s gargling (*bhautācamanamātra*). For it is proven that there is no introduction of a defeater when there is cognition of the fact that there is only cognition; so, there will be the formulation of a defeater precisely relying upon the absence of there being only cognition (*tadātmatāviraha*). Hence, when that is pointed out, it is proven that there is cognition precisely insofar as it is manifest, and so the introduction of a defeater is ruled out. Or else, if that defeater does occur, it will have the form (*ākāra*), “This is not cognition.” Thus, insofar as there is defeat, it is only with reference to something that is external (*bahirātman*), not the nature of cognition. This is established.

³² Jñānaśrīmitra repeats that all activity, whether pragmatic or logical, only deals with the external, whether that means insentient material objects or cognitions outside the present manifest moment of cognition.

³³ *vyathate*] H; *bādhate* JNĀ.

³⁴ It doesn’t matter that, when directly facing the reality of reality, we can’t prove anything, for what we seek to prove, *vijñaptimātratā*, is already established!

“But,” you may say, “what fault with the proof is there in this way?” No, because no inference at all will arise when it is established that there is nothing but cognition. Where then is there room for proof or refutation? Moreover,

When awareness is of something external, inference and so on are sources of knowledge; not, however, when cognition is aware of only itself (*svaikasamvid*). But when there is the proof of cognition that is aware of only itself, some *x* exists precisely because it is apprehended. [4.8]

If nevertheless you are satisfied only by stating faults:

Since a form other than cognition (*pararūpa*) is not established, there is [for me] no establishment of a locus (*dharmin*) or a reason (*hetu*), and there is no pervasion (*vyāpti*) either— is this not a fault? [4.9]³⁵

[iii. The Importance of Inference Conventionally and the Authority of Self-Awareness]

Moreover, this non-apprehension of the pervader (*vyāpakānupalambha*), or some other defeater like analysis (*vicāra*), for instance, cannot be conceived of as something other than inference. All talk of one who has risen for debate (*vivādarūḍha*) becomes relevant to the topic at hand only if it relies on some sort of inference insofar as there is a target, reason, example, etc. For just this reason, it is necessary to accept means of knowledge in convention, as I’ve shown in the *Advaitabindu*.³⁶

Otherwise, [if we did not rely on means of knowledge in convention,] for whom is there proof of some object just by repeating that the view is like this?³⁷ If it goes against perception,

³⁵ Jñānaśrīmitra is sarcastically admitting he is at fault in the conventional realm of logic since self-awareness transcends the duality logic is based on: “My position is devoid of a locus, a reason, a pervasion—all essential parts of a valid inference—insofar as they are based on forms other than cognition. So, fine, say I’m at fault!”

³⁶ Hejung helpfully refers us to JNĀ 346.19: *pratyakṣagocare hi vivādasambhavo nānumānam aprayojya viśrāmyati*. See Hejung’s forthcoming work on the *Advaitabinduprakaraṇa*.

³⁷ *yathāmatā*] H; *yathā tathā* JNĀ. In the conventional context, we can’t just get up and say “My view is like this!” and sit down again, as if that proves something.

inference cannot be in accordance with its object, because inference is generated by perception insofar as it invariably makes use of it (at least indirectly [*paramparayāpi*]) in apprehending relations [like pervasion and so on]. So, to say that inference is made into a means of knowledge while perception is not made into a means of knowledge³⁸ is just praising someone as part of a noble lineage when his father is not noble!³⁹ The awareness (*vedana*) of an appearance (*ākāra*), in its own nature, is immediately evident (*pratyakṣa*) insofar as it has ruled out error (*bhrānti*) and conceptual construction (*kalpanā*);⁴⁰ where is the scope for defeat?

Self-awareness is the source (*yoni*) of the other means of knowledge.
 If that is not a means of knowledge,
 what *is* a means of knowledge?
 Thus, no other means of knowledge has the power to defeat or to prove
 what is established or defeated by self-awareness. [4.10]

[JNĀ 441] You may object, “At the time of the reason that proves there is only cognition (*viññaptisāadhanakāle*), how is there this overcoming (*paribhava*) of the immediate evidence (*pratyakṣa*) that is the source of inference itself?”⁴¹ No, for when this target [viz. the fact that there is only cognition] is established [by a proof], we overcome [the proof] itself—

As a fire [lit. “the one who devours its own support” (*āśrayāśana*)] born from the rubbing together of a pair⁴² of a tree’s own branches burns down that tree,
 so too, if the cognition of difference (*paravitti*) destroys itself in this way,
 who has committed a crime here? [4.11]

³⁸ *asya tadapramāṇane pramāṇanam iti*] H; *apy atadapramāṇane pramāṇam iti* JNĀ.

³⁹ That is, in the same way, perception is the father of inference, and so inference’s authority is dependent upon that of perception.

⁴⁰ That is, it fits Dharmakīrti’s definition of *pratyakṣa* in being *abhrānta* and *kalpanāpoḍha*.

⁴¹ There is perhaps some ambiguity here. Is the immediate evidence or perceptual cognition (*pratyakṣa*) at issue here self-awareness (*svavitti*), viz. the just-mentioned source (*yoni*) of all means of knowledge (including the inference that establishes *viññaptimātratā*), and is it *this* that is overcome by the conditional positing of duality in the very formulation of this inference? Or is the immediate evidence at issue our ordinary perception of external objects, which the inference disrespects and sets aside in establishing that those external objects are only cognition? I lean toward the former, perhaps unadvisedly: it seems to me that the relation between the cognition of difference (*paravit*) and self-awareness (*svavit*) in general in the proof of *viññaptimātratā* is at stake here.

⁴² *yuga*] H; *puga* JNĀ.

The cognition of difference (*paravedana*), which is the reason that proves that there is only cognition (*vijñaptisādhana*), does not praise its own authority (*prāmānya*) when defeating difference. The analysis that arises in this way, insofar as it is a cognition of difference in general, burns absolutely all [cognition of difference], just as fire burns *everything*—it is not a crime for either one. However, it is not a rule that [an inference that takes the form of] the non-apprehension of the pervader (*vyāpakānupalambha*) desires authority only by overcoming perception.⁴³ And the authority of the reason that proves that there is only cognition (*vijñaptisādhana*) is limited to the authority of the cognition of other cognitions of difference.⁴⁴ But, for instance, one who accepts something whose existence is conventionally articulated on the basis of a cognition of the capacity for causal efficacy (*arthakriyāśaktipratīti*) does not speak that way [any more] after deliberation when that capacity for causal efficacy is not found [in a given locus]. In that case, there is no fault with the non-apprehension of the pervader, since that does not defeat itself. On the other hand, since it is different [from self-awareness] (*parataḥ*), the punishment is the same.⁴⁵ For there is no appearance of the capacity for causal efficacy in self-awareness. However, when the non-apprehension of the pervader alone leads the proof, then it cannot destroy the authority of another perception—how much less could it destroy the validity

⁴³ *pratyakṣa*] H; *prāyakṣa* JNĀ.

⁴⁴ Insofar as the proof of there being only cognition is a *proof*, it would have to be based on *paravedana*, the cognition of something other than cognition itself (as opposed to *svavitti* or *svaikasamvid*, which is cognition that is aware only of itself). A proof's authority is limited in this regard: it has validity only in relation to other cognitions of difference. This doesn't mean that the proof depends upon the cognition of difference ultimately being the case; rather, the cognition of difference can be used to refute the ultimate existence of the cognition of difference. Or so I take Jñānaśrī to be suggesting here.

⁴⁵ This passage is difficult still. I believe the thought is that non-apprehension of the pervader may work *sometimes*, when the pervader in question is, for instance, the capacity for causal efficacy. Still, it is nevertheless not going to work ultimately insofar as it is a cognition of difference. In this respect, even a valid non-apprehension of the pervader will ultimately suffer the same fate as any other argument in being sublated by self-awareness. And, as he goes on to say in a moment, when the non-apprehension of the pervader leads the proof that there is only cognition, in which proof having a unitary or manifold nature is the pervader, this will not be able to counter what is manifest in self-awareness.

of self-awareness, which by its very nature (*jātyaiva*) is a cognition that has ruled out the stain of doubt caused by error and conceptual construction. Therefore, something protected by self-awareness can never be harmed by anything.

“Surely,” it may be objected,

“When perception is not authoritative,
inference [based on that perception] is not authoritative.
So too, it is possible that, when inference is not authoritative,
the perception [on which it is based] is not authoritative. [4.12]

If there is a refutation of an inference that has arisen from a reason
whose three parts have been grasped by perception,
then that *perception* [on which the reason depended] is faulty—
if there is no fault [with that perception],
what brings about the refutation of the inference born from it? [4.13]

Therefore, if both have authority, even so,

Let a cognition manifest (*prathayatu*) its own nature,
for it cannot err with respect to itself.
But how can this cruel neither-one-nor-many argument be avoided?
There is a conflict between perception and inference,
whose powers are equal insofar as they are invariably related
to the establishment of their respective targets—
who knows which is superior?” [4.14]

[JNĀ 442] This, too, is of no use. For since non-apprehension of the pervader is entirely limited just to the cognition of difference, let it be on par with only a perceptual cognition that is the cognition of something different, e.g. that which grasps the pervasion and so on, since the authority of one cognition is invariably related with the authority of another cognition. Self-awareness, however, is the basis of both these cognitions and does not have those two as its basis. What is the point of comparing [those two cognitions] with self-awareness? Further, because of a difference in their scope—for inference has a hidden object and that is not the case

for perception—what is the point of worrying about what has power and what doesn't? For precisely this reason, it's said that the site of an inference must be something that is not falsified by perception and so on.

Now (*nanu*), even with respect to something perceived, inference has been accepted in order to conventionally speak of some other nature that is not yet conventionally spoken of. But there is never any acceptance and or denial of *what directly appears* (*pratibhāsina eva*). When [to cite an instance of acceptance] a particular combination of a horn, tail, etc., appears, then words like “cow” are used; or when [to cite an instance of denial] there is the apprehension of just the floor, there is the conventional use of the negation of the pot and so on; or when an appearance (*ākāra*) of two moons arises in cognition, there is the conventional use of a negation of a pair of external moons.⁴⁶ There is no assertion and negation of what is *appearing*.

Here, too, in the context of negation, those constructed properties (*kalpitā dharmā*) of a manifest appearance (*ākāra*) like blue are denied—*let* them be denied. For instance, whatever [constructed properties] expressed by the word “conceptual proliferation” (*prapañca*)—viz. oneself and other, grasper and grasped, something known and something that makes known, being permanent and being momentary (*nityakṣaṇika[tva]*), being unitary and being manifold (*ekānekatva*); or else substance and quality [in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika sense], that which consists of the three *guṇas* [in the Sāṃkhya sense], up to and including matter defined as tangible and so on (*sparsādīlakṣaṇarūpa*), or material atoms that act together with a gap between them (*antarasahacāraparamāṇurūpa*), or the capacity for causal efficacy (*arthakriyāśakti*)—let all

⁴⁶ *vā bahirinduyugalasya*] H; *cābahirinduyugalasya* JNĀ.

these properties be denied, for they are all merely constructed.⁴⁷ Therefore, negation or affirmation of some non-apparent property depends upon conventional activity with respect to a manifesting property bearer (*dharmi*), because, in the absence of the conventional use of language and so on, that is suitable with regard to what is not immediately evident (*parokṣa*).⁴⁸ There is never a negation of what appears (*pratibhāsin*). As the Son of Logic (*nyāyaprasūti*) [Dharmakīrti] says [in PV 1.208],

When what is to be established is [the referent of a word],
which does not appropriate existence, the non-apprehension of this in that way
is the reason. It is not the *absence* of what is to be established
[due to the use of language].

And [in PV 4.91d],

Something refuted cannot be a basis for a reason.

If this is so, what appears need not be asserted (for that is superfluous), and it cannot be negated (since it is incapable of being negated); the assertion that “For what does not appear, too, is just its negation” is ineffectual, and its negation is redundant. Where, then, is the activity of language? In reality, there is none. To say something is affirmed or denied by language is only convention, which is based on dependent origination. On the basis of the convention, “There is a tree,” there is the assertion of the existence of a tree through language, which is just the production of a concept that incites activity⁴⁹ that is favorable to that. [JNĀ 443] In the same way, “There is no tree,” the negation of that, is just the production of a concept that incites the abstention of someone who wants that tree. But if there is no application of the negative particle

⁴⁷ These last three views are varieties of Buddhist positions on reality that Jñānaśrīmitra take to be mere conceptual proliferation.

⁴⁸ *tadyogyatāyāḥ parokṣarūpatvāt*] H; *tadyogye 'pi tadyogyatāyāḥ parokṣarūpatvāt* JNĀ.

⁴⁹ *-pravṛtṭyākṣepakavikalpa-*] H; *-pravṛtṭyākṣepaparikalpa-* JNĀ.

or the verb “to be” (*nañastyor aprayoge*)—i.e., for just the word “tree”⁵⁰—there is no use at all of affirmation or denial: there is just the production of a concept that has the appearance (*ākāra*) of something that has branches and so on, which is incapable of [being the object of] activity or abstention. If there is the association of the word, “to be,” that very branch-possessor appears as if it is being augmented (*upacīyamāna*) by existence, in contrast to the earlier cognition, which only indicates a particular appearance (*ākāraviśeṣollekamātra*). When a negation is used, it is as if something is being subtracted (*apacīyamāna*); this is just the indication of the loss of that appearance (*kṣīṇākārollekha*) relative to the experience of affirmation. Thus, there is activity and abstention in accordance with that.

In this way, even in the case of an inferential reason for fire, which comes about due to conceptual construction, there is the experience of smoke, water, and so on [in establishing the pervasion between fire and smoke]; however, there is a distinction due to the restriction of compatibility and restriction of incompatibility [in establishing that pervasion] (*saṃvādanīyametara*). And thus, there is never affirmation or denial of an appearance in cognition (*buddhyākāra*) that directly appears [in the case of inference]. Nor do affirmation and denial belong to an external fire which is not directly apparent, whether it is real or unreal from an ultimate point of view. Nevertheless, due to the arising of mental constructions, there is the conventional use of affirmation or negation only of something external, which is to say something constructed, for if something directly manifests before us, it cannot be negated by even a hundred negations. Construction is not different from an externally directed reflection,⁵¹ because, with respect to the conceptualization of just a tree (*tarumātravikalpa*), one is led to pay

⁵⁰ *kevalavr̥kṣaśabdasya*] H; *kevalaṃ vr̥kṣaśabdasya* JNĀ.

⁵¹ *kalpanaṃ ca na bahirmukhaparāmarśād*] H; *kalpanaṃ ca bahirmukhaparāmarśād* JNĀ.

attention to the determination of whether or not it exists. For the same reason, an appearance (*ākāra*) that is superimposed as being something external becomes the meaning of a word, which is also called exclusion (*apoha*), for only that [exclusion] appears in verbal cognition. But it is through determination (*adhyavasāya*) that an external thing is excluded from dissimilar classes, as was explained earlier. Therefore,

Negation is ultimately applicable neither to appearances (*ākāra*) nor to the external.
Conventionally, only the external can be negated;
appearances cannot be negated even conventionally—⁵² [4.15]

because ordinary people do not seek [appearances] conventionally (*tayā*), since by their nature they are outward-facing (*bahirmukha*). And if the external does directly appear, there is no scope for its negation; how is there [negation with respect to what directly appears] in itself (*svātmani*)? Therefore,

With regard to what is refuted by a means of knowledge,
there is no possibility of protection by reasons.
Whatever is proven by self-awareness
is indeed proven in reality. [4.16]

Even if the relation of target and proof (*sādhyasādhanabhāva*) is only conventional (*sāṃvṛta*), still one indeed has to rely upon correct convention (*satsāṃvṛti*). For if different reasons were conditionally established for each person, everything would be proven for everyone. For someone who adheres to another system (*samayāntarasthāyin*), too, if something is defeated, there is no talk at all of its being protected by reasons. If some among our opponents disagree about self-awareness, about that, we say,

⁵² Hejung helpfully points us to *Apoḥaprakaraṇa* 229.3–4, where we have a nearly identical verse where the topic is affirmation rather than negation (that is, with *vidhisādhanam* instead of *pratiśedhanam*). Compare, too, SSS 2, where Jñānaśrīmitra also details his theory of *apoha*. See above, chapter 4, section iii.

It has indeed been concluded in the *Treatise (śāstra)*⁵³ that, just as the world cannot live without valid knowledge (*pramā*), without self-awareness, means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) cannot live. [4.17]

Therefore, when something is proven by the immediate evidence of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedanādhyakṣa*), there is the immediate refutation (*pratyakṣabādhā*) of the [opponent's] thesis [that appearances are unreal], which does not give any scope for an inference such as the non-apprehension of the pervader.⁵⁴

Alternatively, [when you say that a variegated appearance does not *exist*,] what sort of existence is held to be refuted by your reasons? [JNĀ 444] If in the first place it is existence that is accepted in some other school of thought—that there is a connection to existence [as a universal] (*sattāyoga*), that existence is an intrinsic nature (*svarūpasattva*), or that it has the three characteristics (*trilakṣaṇa*),⁵⁵ or one you've made up yourself—then there is no dispute.⁵⁶

Or else what is denied is existence as it is accepted by ordinary people, which is characterized by causal capacity (*śakti*) or by manifestation (*prakāśa*). For because they do not perceive something that could be perceived, people say “That does not exist.” If existence defined as causal capacity is what is defeated, then that proves what is proven [because it leaves room for manifestation as the definition of existence].⁵⁷ If there is the defeat of something whose

⁵³ This is likely a reference to the PV.

⁵⁴ That is, the thesis presented at the beginning of the chapter regarding the heap of variegated appearances—viz., that the non-apprehension of the pervader shows a variegated appearance to be unreal—is falsified by the immediate evidence of self-awareness, and there's no scope for an inference regarding a thesis already refuted by this way.

⁵⁵ This would seem to refer to the Jain theory that existence has three characteristics: arising (*utpāda*), passing away (*vyaya*), and perdurance (*dhrauvya*). See for instance Haribhadrasūri's *Śāstravārtāsamuccaya* (ed. Dixit), v.477 (as well as the discussion that continues in the following verses): *anye tv āhur anādy eva jīvājīvātmakam jagat / sad utpādavyayadhrauvyayuktam śāstrakṛtaśramāḥ* // I thank Anil Mundra for this helpful reference and Pradeep Gokhale for initially pointing out the Jain-connection, which was lost on me.

⁵⁶ That is, if the neither-one-nor-many argument shows a variegated appearance does not exist, where “exist” is understood in one of these non-Buddhist ways, Jñānaśrīmitra will not complain.

⁵⁷ If you're refuting the existence of a variegated appearance where existence is defined by causal capacity, fine, that's obvious (or at least it's obvious to Jñānaśrīmitra): Jñānaśrīmitra has already said that causal capacity is not the definition of existence, and he'll talk about this further later in this chapter. See too above, chapter 4, section iv.

causal capacity is not apprehended (*agr̥hītaśakti*) that is nevertheless characterized by appearance, then the logic is the same.⁵⁸ Or else, then appearance is not the characteristic [of existence that is rejected], but rather only causal capacity—hence, there’s no harm at all. But how is it possible to reject existence [understood as manifestation] in colors and the like (*rūpādi*), because their nature⁵⁹ as only manifestation (*prakāśamātra*) is devoid of constructed imposed features like causal capacity and so on (*kalpitaśaktyādyupādhi*)? Because that type of existence is established by the immediate evidence of self-awareness (*svaśamvedanapratyakṣa*), there is indeed the defeat of the thesis [that a variegated appearance is unreal] by this immediate evidence.⁶⁰

In the same way, [if you understand existence] in this different way (*rītibheda*), saying [with the Mādhyamika Śāntarakṣita], “These entities are without intrinsic being (*niḥsvabhāva*),”⁶¹ if the meaning of the word “intrinsic being” (*svabhāva*) is something other than manifestation, as has been said above, then it is obvious: what should be understood [by the word “without intrinsic being”] is just the lack of causal capacity in an appearance. On the other hand, [if “without intrinsic being” is supposed to mean] neither unitary nor manifold (*ekānekaviraha*), that is perfectly acceptable, for what is intended is the cessation of all conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*).⁶² It may be undesirable to another,⁶³ if one is afraid of

⁵⁸ That is, causal capacity would then be refuted, while the definition of existence as appearance is not refuted—indeed, it is presupposed if the non-apprehension of something’s appearance is proof of that thing’s non-existence.

⁵⁹ *svarūpatvāt*] H; *svarūpāt* JNĀ.

⁶⁰ *pratyakṣabādhaiva*] H; *pratyakṣabādhe ca* JNĀ.

⁶¹ See *Madhyamakālamkāra* 1: *niḥsvabhāvā amī bhāvā tattvataḥ svaparoditāḥ / ekānekasvabhāvena viyogāt pratibimbavat* //

⁶² Note this point for what follows: Jñānaśrīmitra can say a variegated appearance is neither unitary nor manifold for the purposes of eliminating conceptual proliferation, but this does not mean it is non-existent or unreal.

⁶³ *tadaniṣṭiḥ*] H; *tadaniṣṭaḥ* JNĀ.

abandoning intrinsic being. But existence is established by appearance (*sattvaṃ ca pratibhāsāt siddham*)—what is objectionable about this?

[iv. Introduction to *Citrādvaita*]

“If this is so, what about *citrādvaita*, the non-duality of variegated cognition?”

It is *advaya*, non-dual, because there is no object and subject, or else because insentience is transcended, and because it is neither unitary nor manifold.⁶⁴

It is *citra*, variegated, because it is wonderful (*āścārya*), insofar as it has appearances (*ākāra*).

This is known as *citrādvaita*, the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition.⁶⁵

It is like a king: we speak of it as singular (*ekadhvani*) on the basis of convention.⁶⁶

Further, in reality, it is not manifold.

In true convention (*satsaṃvṛti*),⁶⁷ being manifold serves no purpose. [4.18]⁶⁸

The word *citra*[, which means “variegated” in the first place,] also has the sense of

“wonderful,”⁶⁹ for the *citrādvaita* exists even though it is neither unitary nor manifold.

Alternatively, in convention we say the Blessed One is singular (*eka*), as was said before. The

conventional usage of “manifold” is of no use in that case. “I must take refuge in the Blessed

One and I must be just so [viz. enlightened, just like the Blessed One]”—the type of activity that

⁶⁴ This reason, *ekānekahateḥ*, could also be a subsidiary reason for *jaḍasyātyayāt* (so: “because insentience is transcended since it is neither unitary nor manifold”); or else, as I have it, it is a third reason for *advaya*, since being neither unitary nor manifold would mean cognition has transcended that particularly relevant duality. We may also take *ekānekahateḥ* as a reason for why the *citrādvaita* is wondrous: what is *citra* is wondrous insofar as it has *ākāras* despite being neither unitary nor manifold.

⁶⁵ While we may understand *citrādvaita* as “the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition” according to Jñānaśrīmitra’s unique interpretation, I will often leave the term untranslated in what follows, as its meaning is precisely what is at issue here.

⁶⁶ We may think of *ekadhvani* as akin to *ekavacana*: we use the singular to speak of the king, despite the fact that the king is variegated or possessed of many characteristics. So too, we speak of the *citrādvaita* in the singular or as being unitary, despite the fact it is beyond being unitary or manifold, for its being one is conventionally useful in a way its being manifold is perhaps not.

⁶⁷ *satsaṃvṛtau*] H; *satsaṃvṛtā* JNĀ.

⁶⁸ Hejung points us to SSSū 4.101: *tac citraṃ etad advaitaṃ grāhyādivirahān matam / sāṃvṛtī puṃvad ekākhyānekavyavahṛtir mudhā //*

⁶⁹ Jñānaśrīmitra is not taking liberties here: this is a standard meaning of *citra* in Sanskrit, given for instance as number 5 in Apte’s *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v.: “Surprising, wonderful, strange; *kim atra citraṃ R[aguvamśa]* 5.33; *S[akuntalā]* 2.15.”

determines [that the Blessed One] is singular is useful in such a case, and it is not the case that, in the same way, we notice a result due to [the Blessed One's] being manifold; for there is no instrumental activity (*vyāpṛti*) directed toward distinct objects of action.⁷⁰ Therefore, given that duality is also ultimately unreasonable, being singular, not being manifold (*nānyat*), is used conventionally in relation to that result, just as one talks of impermanence (*anityatva*) because it is conducive to peace [though in reality, impermanence too is a conceptual construction].

You may object, “You⁷¹ say this variegated (*citra*) circle of awareness of everything,⁷² which goes as far as the circle of the blue sky (*nīlāntarāvalaya*), is really unitary (*ekam eva*)—how is that?” We say,

This and that are separate
only as long as there is the determination of externality.
However, the cognition of that [variegated awareness] is complete, having parts (*sakalā*),
for [a person] is indeed the collection of awareness, hands, feet, and so on. [4.19]⁷³

[JNĀ 445] [The person called] Caitra⁷⁴ is obviously not just hands and so on, devoid of the workings of his mind (*manovivartān*). So, because [hands and feet, etc.] are included in what is designated by “Caitra,” just like the workings of his mind, there is only the conventional usage of “unitary” (*ekavyavahāra*) when we are reflecting on there being only cognition.⁷⁵ Like with respect to the Blessed One, in the ordinary person's case too it should be recalled that it was said that there is another conditional positing of part of the scope [of reality].⁷⁶ Alternatively, the

⁷⁰ *pṛthakkarmaṇi*] H; *pṛthagdharmaṇi* JNĀ.

⁷¹ *bhavatā*] H; *bhavatām* JNĀ.

⁷² Lit. “of similar and dissimilar things,” *sajātīyetaṛa*.

⁷³ = SSSū 4.102.

⁷⁴ The name is significant here. Caitra is not only a proper name, but also the state of being *citra*.

⁷⁵ That is, when there is no determination of externality, and so this and that aren't separate, as per 4.19.

⁷⁶ The idea would seem to be that we limit our scope when we conditionally posit the conventional usage of “unitary” with respect to embodied beings, whether Buddha or Caitra. Hejung points us to JNĀ 410.25–411.2, viz. SSS 2.125: *sūkṣmatarābhrapatrapihito 'yam arūpadrśaḥ sarvam idaṃ svarūpam adhiyanti daśāvanayaḥ / tatra ca niścalāpratimabhāgam uśanti vapur gocarabhāga eṣa iti śeṣam aśeṣam api //*

word “unitary” is principally the mere exclusion of being manifold in reality—as with the word *advaita*, non-duality[, which has as its aim the exclusion of duality].⁷⁷ Therefore, the gist is that blue, which shakes off (*vidhura*) being unitary and being manifold, is precisely *existent* insofar as it manifests.

[v. An Initial Look at Dharmakīrti’s Verses on *Citrādvaita*]

Blue and so on in variegated cognition (*citravijñāna*)
is of the nature of awareness (*jñānopādhi*): it cannot be seen
when it is not joined with the other [colors in the variegation].
For one who analytically differentiates that blue
is focused on the external object[—not awareness]. [4.20 = PV 3.220]⁷⁸

Here, “variegated (*citra*)” is a negation of being unitary (*ekatā*). “Cognition (*vijñāna*)” is for a single (*eka*) cognizer. Being manifold is negated because [the variegation] is included in a single cognition (*ekasaṃvidantarama*), since there is a direct appearance for a single cognizer.⁷⁹ “The nature of awareness (*jñānopādhi*)” means that, insofar as it is the nature of awareness (*jñānātmatā*) since it is excluded from insentient things, there is no defeater. [To explain “not joined with the other” (*ananyabhāk*):] Blue that is not partaking of (*abhajan*) other images like yellow cannot be seen (*na śakyate draṣṭum*). With this, Dharmakīrti says there is no purpose in a statement of difference. For if, although blue is separate from the other appearances, its being unitary could obtain, and therefore there is something to be proven, then the language of being manifold will be used, as with Caitra and Maitra and so on. And it is not so.⁸⁰ Therefore, being

⁷⁷ Compare Jñānaśrīmitra’s discussion of *advaita* below, toward the end of this chapter.

⁷⁸ = SSSū 4.103. Because Jñānaśrīmitra comments on Dharmakīrti’s difficult verse at length, I present the Sanskrit here: *nīlādiś citravijñāne jñānopādhir ananyabhāk / śakyadarśanas taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan //*

⁷⁹ In variegated cognition, there is thus the negation of both being unitary (by its being *variegated*) and being manifold (by its being *cognition*).

⁸⁰ The point of the juxtaposition is that I *cannot* separate blue and yellow in a variegated cognition and still cognize variegation, as I *can* separate Caitra and Maitra and still cognize Caitra here, Maitra there.

unitary is all that is legitimate [when speaking of the cognition of variegation]. The last portion of the verse (*taṃ hītyādi*) means the same as our verse stated a moment ago, viz. 4.19: “This and that are separate only as long as there is the determination of externality.” For, when we are considering the fact that appearances have the nature of cognition, then the word “unitary” may be used with respect to cognition, in the same way as with Caitra, etc., which is applied referring to the collection of [Caitra’s] cognition[, hands, feet,] and so on. Analyzing (*vivecayan*) or differentiating (*bhīdan*) [different appearances within the variegated, or the mind and limbs and so on of Caitra,] one ends up with just an object [*not* cognition].

For it is only for objects that arising and apprehending⁸¹ are distinct—not for awareness (*jñāna*). Since,

However cognition appears,
that is precisely how it is experienced.
Hence, “being unitary” is only a name of a cognition
whose appearance is variegated. [4.21 = PV 3.221]⁸²

Here, “name” (*nāma*) means a name (*saṃjñā*), which is to say a word that expresses something.⁸³

Being unitary is only that, a name. It is not real. “Appears” (*bhāsate*) means arises (*jāyate*), for the sense is origination of nothing but manifestation. So as a result, awareness (*jñāna*) that is *citrādvaita* is not defeated and is indeed of a nature that is either unitary or manifold. In convention, cognition is nothing but the object of the conventional designation

⁸¹ *janma grahaṇaṃ*] H; *janmagrahaṇaṃ* JNĀ.

⁸² = SSSū 4.104. Here, Jñānaśrīmitra presents the verse as follows: *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathaiṅubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ // i citrākārasya cetasaḥ*] H; *citrākāre 'pi cetasi* JNĀ. See above, chapter 4, fn.79: Jñānaśrīmitra presents different readings of this verse in the following discussion, showing that, however the verse is read, his view is the only viable interpretation. Because these different readings are both relevant to Jñānaśrīmitra’s interpretation of Dharmakīrti and of textual interest, I’ll present them in what follows.

⁸³ *nāma saṃjñā vācakaḥ śabda ity arthaḥ*] H; *nāma saṃjñāvācakaḥ śabda ity arthaḥ* JNĀ.

“unitary” (*ekavyavahāragocara*), just as something is described as momentary [at only a conventional level, not in reality]. This is shown.

[vi. Limiting the Scope of the Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument 1]

“But then,” you may object, “that [viz. the pervader (*vyāpaka*), i.e. being unitary or being manifold (*ekāneka*)] does not exist, but what is pervaded by that [viz. *sat*, existence] does exist. How can you be confident about this? If it were so, there could be no hope at all for any reason! Moreover, given that the negation of being unitary affirms being manifold because there is no other option, how is it possible that *neither* is present among existent things, as with the option that *both* are present?⁸⁴ Thus it is only when this definition is made that pervasion is established by the two methods.⁸⁵ But for the opponent (*parasya tu*) [i.e. for Jñānaśrīmitra], it is inconsistent to say ‘Because of the nature of things, the absence of both [being unitary and being manifold] is not a defeater.’”⁸⁶

[JNĀ 446] True, this is inconsistent—because, since existence is established even without that pair, the pervasion is not applicable! “Where is this pervasion not applicable?” Well, right here, with respect to that whose nature is consciousness (*buddhivapus*). “Is there now deviation

⁸⁴ These two options, being unitary or being manifold, are mutually exclusive, the opponent objects: one or the other must be present if something is to exist.

⁸⁵ That is, it is only when we define it as a pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold that the pervasion is validly established, or established by the two valid methods of establishing pervasion, viz. *anvaya* and *vyatireka*, the presence of the reason in similar cases and its absence in dissimilar cases.

⁸⁶ *vastusvabhāvāt*] JNĀ; *vastusvabhāvābhāvāt* H, MS. I am at present inclined to read with Thakur, though this is no doubt tenuous. But I believe the opponent here is criticizing Jñānaśrīmitra for saying that, *just because of the way things are (vastusvabhāvāt)*—viz. just because the pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold doesn’t apply in the case of cognition while it does apply in the case of external objects—the non-apprehension of the pervader is not a defeater. The opponent, that is, avers that Jñānaśrīmitra is appealing to an arbitrary distinction between cognition and the external as simply the unimpeachable nature of things. Jñānaśrīmitra returns to this objection below in what I believe is this same context. Were we to read with H and the MS, we can understand the reason as outside the opponent’s citation of his opponent: “But, because there is no real nature [understanding now decidedly Mādhyamika opponent], it is inconsistent for our opponent to say, ‘The absence of both [a single or multiple nature] is not a defeater.’”

(*vyabhicāra*) only because of what has been made into the site of the inference?"⁸⁷ What is the fault if there is the use of a means of knowledge when there is deviation? By that very thing, viz. the use of a means of knowledge, a reason is shown to be over-extended (*sādhāraṇānaikāntika*) in some locus other than the site of the inference [that is, the dissimilar case]. If the inference is protected just by making something into the site, what impediment (*pratirodha*) can there be then? Moreover, if even when there is the direct experience of [the reason in] the dissimilar case, the target is not lost, then mere doubt will not do anything; hence, in the first place, inconclusiveness (*anaikāntikatva*) is not a fault.⁸⁸ So too, unestablishment (*asiddhi*) and other fallacies will not be a problem [for you], because the target would be established due to some reason or other, since [you] do not respect defeat by perception.⁸⁹ Further, similarly, even though it may be hopeless, there is no harm on the part of [your] reason whose target is refuted by a means of knowledge.⁹⁰ Otherwise, what room will there be for doubt?

For just this reason, the pervasion is not established when you define [existence as being unitary or being manifold]. The negation of another heap of things is applicable only with respect

⁸⁷ *pakṣīkrtenaiva*] H; *pakṣībhūtenaiva* JNĀ. Deviation, *vyabhicāra*, refers to the fault where the reason (*hetu*) is present but the target (*sādhya*) is absent; in the present case, the opponent objects that the non-apprehension of being unitary or being manifold (the reason in the *vyāpakānupalambha* at issue) is present in the case of cognition, but the target, non-existence, is not present insofar as Jñānaśrīmitra holds that cognition still exists. That is, the opponent objects that if cognition is the topic at hand, you cannot simply point to it and say it is an instance where the reason is present without the target. Jñānaśrīmitra's response is that this is not a problem when some other means of knowledge steps in and establishes something to be the case despite this deviation. Indeed, it is Jñānaśrīmitra's *opponent* who has abandoned the rules of logic by claiming an inference shows cognition to be non-existent, as he goes on to detail in this difficult paragraph.

⁸⁸ Jñānaśrīmitra suggests that if the opponent makes cognition (which we know exists due to self-awareness) the site of his inference, we directly experience the reason, viz. the non-apprehension of being unitary or being manifold, in the dissimilar case, viz. the case of existence (rather than non-existence). If the opponent is willing to allow this, he has left behind the rules of logic insofar as there's not even the possibility of accusing him of inconclusiveness, viz. the presence of the reason in a dissimilar case—which fault, of course, the opponent is here guilty of committing.

⁸⁹ *adhyakṣabādhādarāt*] H; *adhyakṣabādhādarāt*. Again, Jñānaśrīmitra respects the defeat of the non-existence of cognition that arises due to the direct experience of appearances; if his opponent still manages to establish this due to some reason or other, fine, but the opponent will have left behind the rules of logic insofar as he doesn't allow his position to be unestablished given the direct evidence of perception.

⁹⁰ Jñānaśrīmitra's opponent, then, has to face facts: he accepts a reason, viz. the non-apprehension of being unitary or being manifold, whose target, viz. non-existence, is refuted by self-awareness in the locus under consideration, viz. cognition.

to the external, where there is the affirmation of one through the negation of the other [as you said in your objection a moment ago]. For, even with reference to the external, there cannot be the indication (*upadarśana*) of defeat by perception, for you cannot say, with respect to this and that,⁹¹ that “This is different from that,” or “This is not different from that.” Self-awareness is difficult to reach by nature (*nisargadurga*) because, if an external thing is said to be neither different nor non-different, then there will be the unwanted consequence that conventional reality will be lost. As Dharmakīrti says,

For one who sees fire does not [see just fire alone,
since someone wanting water will not act toward that].⁹²

And so on. Therefore, this rule is only for the external, and it is limited to that. If, however, in accordance with that rule, you conditionally posit that the mind is also in accordance with that, then let it be just a provisional explanation. Thus it was said [by me]:

When the object of apprehension is external,
[it has temporal sequence; when there is something else that grasps it,
the cognition causes memory.
When there is this position on the part of people
who do not want to investigate the root of things,
this conceptual elaboration is variegated—
then how indeed could that be denied?] [SSŚ 3.18]⁹³

And so on. But even then [if you conditionally posit things that way], it isn’t right!

⁹¹ *tad etadapekṣayā*] H; *tad etadapekṣayā* JNĀ.

⁹² Hejung points us to *Hetubindu* 30.10–12: *ya eṣa kasyacid darśanāt kvacit prāptiparihārārtho vyavahārah, sa eva na syāt. na hy ayam analam paśyann apy analam eva paśyati, yena salilārthī tatra na pravarteta*. When dealing with the world of the external, that is, we see objects, like fire, and the conceptually constructed exclusion of other things, like water, all of which is of concern for us in our ordinary activities.

⁹³ See JNĀ 416.1–4: *yathā bāhyam grāhyam sahītaparapūrvasthiti tathā yathānyat tadgrāhi smṛtimⁱ api tathā samprathayati / yadā mūlānveṣaprayatividhurāṇāmⁱⁱ sthītir iyaṃ prapañco ’yaṃ citrah katham iva tadāpahnavaśahaḥ // ⁱ tadgrāhi smṛtim] H; *tadgrahismṛtim* JNĀ. ⁱⁱ *mūlānveṣaprayatividhurāṇām*] H; *mūlānveṣe prayati vidhurāṇām* JNĀ.*

On the other hand, [if you believe Dharmakīrti himself targeted cognition with the neither-one-nor-many argument,] what Dharmakīrti says with regard to awareness in PV 2.358—

Otherwise, a unitary entity [will appear with a manifold nature (*nānārūpa*):
how could that be right?
For [multiple] appearances (*ākāra*) are refuted
for something that is unitary]⁹⁴

—is in accordance with the intention of a particular Mādhyamika.⁹⁵ This in order to clarify what he stated in PV 3.209:

[What the wise say
has come about due to the way things are:]
As one reflects on objects,
[they fall apart more and more.]⁹⁶

“In that case, just as cognition is neither unitary nor manifold, so too it can be said that it is neither manifest nor non-manifest!”⁹⁷ No, for the negation of manifestation is defeated by manifestation itself! That is not the case with respect to being unitary and being manifold. What you said before—“But for the opponent (*parasya tu*), [it is inconsistent to say ‘Because of the

⁹⁴ PV 2.358: *anyathaikasya bhāvasya nānārūpāvabhāsinaḥ / satyaṃ kathaṃ syur ākārās tadekatvasya hānitaḥ //* Compare Manoranandin’s comment in his PVV ad PV 2.358, which seems to encapsulate the interpretation of this verse as evidence that the neither-one-nor-many argument should indeed apply to cognition. He writes, *anyathā yadi vastuto grāhakādivibhāgo iṣyate tadaikasya bhāvasya jñānātmano nānārūpāvabhāsino ’nekākārapratibhāsavanta ākārā grāhyādikāḥ kathaṃ satyaṃ syuḥ. tasyaikañjñānātmana ekatvasya hānitaḥ. na hy ekaṃ pratibhāsamānānekākārātmakaṃ bhavitum arhati. pratibhāsenā sarveṣāṃ bhedenā vyavasthāpanāt.*

⁹⁵ Jñānaśrīmitra admits, that is, that Dharmakīrti occasionally inhabits the voice of a certain Mādhyamika, where he does seem to target cognition itself with the neither-one-nor-many argument. But this was not really Dharmakīrti’s intention. Jñānaśrīmitra argues here, given what Dharmakīrti writes in PV 3.220–221: this pair of verses should be given priority.

⁹⁶ PV 3.209: *idaṃ vastubalāyātaṃ yad vadanti vipāścitaḥ / yathā yathārthās cintyante viśīryante tathā tathā //* Compare Jñānaśrīmitra’s statement in SSS 5, viz. JNĀ 474.10–11 (= SSSū 4.22), for how Jñānaśrīmitra would have us ultimately understand PV 3.209’s *not* applying to cognition, but only to objects: *yathā yathārthās cintyante vivicyante tathā tathā / svayaṃ tu vittiś chāyeva dhāvato ’py anatikramā //* “As one reflects on objects, they are destroyed (*vivicyante*) more and more. But self-awareness is like a shadow: it cannot be escaped, even if you run.”

⁹⁷ If cognition is beyond all dualities, even being unitary or being manifold, it should be beyond the duality of being manifest and not being manifest. Cf. Śāntideva BCA 9.23: *prakāśā vāprakāśā vā yadā dr̥ṣṭā na kenacit / vandhyāduhitṛlīeva kathyamānāpi sā mudhā //* Jñānaśrīmitra will explicitly address this verse’s possible opposition to his view of self-awareness later in SSS 5; he cites it at JNĀ 471.18–19.

nature of things, the absence of both [being unitary and being manifold] is not a defeater,']” — serves no purpose.⁹⁸

[JNĀ 447] The negation of being unitary and being manifold may be protected insofar as things are not real. But who may protect unreality if it is swallowed up (*bhakṣyamāṇaka*) by self-awareness? [4.22]

Therefore, the application of a distinction between being unitary and being manifold does not have authority to prove non-existence in the realm of consciousness, because the pervasion is established with relation to a specific object; hence, inconclusiveness follows. If for you, my respectable opponent, determination proves that this pervasion is *universal* [and so applies to cognition as well as the external], let that be the case; because existence, i.e. what is pervaded, is established, there should be just one⁹⁹ among the two, being unitary and being manifold, and so, it not being possible [that cognition is] manifold, let it be only unitary.¹⁰⁰ For if you say it is manifold, then, because things would be divisible up to the atomic level, there would have to be the manifestation of atoms. And it is not like that.

Therefore, [returning to Dharmakīrti’s verse:]

When awareness appears in a certain way,

which means the exclusion of being manifold insofar as awareness always appears as an un-atomic form,

that is precisely how it is experienced,

⁹⁸ See the end of the paragraph that begins this section.

⁹⁹ *evaikenaiva*] H; *evaikeneva* JNĀ.

¹⁰⁰ If the opponent insists on the pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold applying to *cognition*, then better to say cognition is *unitary*, because it undoubtedly exists. This is better than saying it is *manifold* for the reasons Jñānaśrīmitra will now go on to explain, reading Dharmakīrti’s verse now in this light.

because it is an object of acquisition, [“experienced”] has the sense of “approached” or “attained.”¹⁰¹

Thus, it should indeed (*nāma*) be unitary,
even though the mind has a variegated *ākāra*. [4.23 = PV 3.221]¹⁰²

The word *nāma* is an indeclinable word, in the sense of attained. And this is not about insentience, but only about cognition because insentient things are non-existent. This is shown by the word “awareness” (*jñāna*).

Or else,¹⁰³ when atoms of awareness, too, are completely unacceptable because they are broken into parts according their spatial divisions; and further, partless entities do not produce aggregates (*rāśi*) having parts; then, on the position that the appearance is manifold, there would be no appearance at all; thus, appearance depends precisely on being unitary. Whatever appears in a particular way, namely as indivisible (*abheda*), exists in that same way, that is as indivisible, for the rule is that experience (*anubhava*) means existence (*sattā*). The latter half of the verse, then, is easy to understand. The word *nāma* is used in the sense of *conceivable* (*saṃbhāvanā*). The fault of having an unestablished reason is only implied by our opponent’s hypothesis.

[vii. Are Different Colors Mutually Opposed? Difference and Causal Capacity]

“Surely,” you may object, “to say ‘A variegated thing is unitary (*citram ekam*)’ is against our experience, for blue and yellow and so on appear only as *different* (*bheda*). Further, variegated

¹⁰¹ When we speak of our experience of what appears to us, that is, we are concerned with objects we can acquire to satisfy particular practical needs. Atoms don’t do the trick—they don’t appear and are not what we experience. What is experienced is what we approach or acquire practically. Or so Jñānaśrīmitra suggests in the context of this interpretation of Dharmakīrti’s verse.

¹⁰² Jñānaśrīmitra here presents the verse thus, with his commentary on the first two *padas* interspersed between them: *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syac citrākāre ’pi cetasi //*

¹⁰³ Jñānaśrīmitra’s *yadā tu* gives yet another interpretation of PV 3.221, following quickly on the last.

(*citra*), multiple (*nānā*), and manifold (*aneka*)¹⁰⁴ don't have different meanings, and that is established through the implicative negation of being unitary (*ekaparyudāsenā*) [which thus implies being manifold]—so how can a variegated thing be unitary (*citram ekam*)? Otherwise, manifestation would be insentient.”

This is not right, for there is the operation of awareness with respect to things like blue and so on, not with respect to things that are different. Conditionally positing difference and non-difference,¹⁰⁵ however, is subject to causality (*nibandhanānusāram arhati*). “But the cognition, ‘This is blue, this is yellow,’ is a cognition of difference precisely insofar as [blue’s and yellow’s respective] natures are mutually related.” That may be so for external realism (*bāhyārthavāda*). However, due to the force of repeated habituation, [the cognition of difference] is superimposed on awareness. But whether these forms are different or non-different in awareness itself warrants further consideration.

“In awareness, too, conditional positing (*vyavasthā*) is possible precisely subject to that.”

We respond that conditional positing is obviously not everywhere. For,

[JNĀ 448] Limited by difference with regard to momentariness (*sthiretaratva*), external existence (*bahiḥ sat*) is brought to light through causal efficacy. That [external existence] is heterogenous (*viḥatī*), by all means, because there are different appearances (*ākārabheda*). Internal existence (*antaḥ [sat]*) is not dependent upon repeated experience—it is of an opposite nature. [4.24]

“Internal existence” means mind (*citta*), which is different from external existence. How again is it that the nature of cognition (*buddhi*) is not limited by momentariness? Because in reality, there is no awareness of earlier or later moments [of cognition].

¹⁰⁴ *nānānekam*] H; *nānekam* JNĀ.

¹⁰⁵ *bhedābhedaḥvyavasthā*] em.; *bhedābhedaḥvyavasthā* JNĀ.

If there were the cognition of the earlier and later natures [of the same thing],¹⁰⁶ then it will be permanent; otherwise, it will be impermanent, out of a commitment to [those natures being] unitary or manifold (*ekānekādhimokṣa*). Because that does not exist, duality is unreal. [4.25]

In that case, if there were a difference between distinct cognitions (*vyativitti*), then there are two undesirable consequences that would be difficult to ward off: there would be absence of gross appearances, and there would be no appearances.

One may object, “If you accept that they are unitary, then blue would just be yellow! As it’s said, ‘If there is non-difference, too, [between blue and yellow,] then their being unitary would contradict their being variegated.’¹⁰⁷ But things do not appear that way.” Nevertheless,

It is indeed the case that however cognition appears, it is approached (*upagamyate*) in that way. Cognition that has variegated forms (*citrākārasya cetasaḥ*) should be accepted to be unitary. [4.26 = PV 3.221]¹⁰⁸

The word *nāma* is in the sense of “accept” (*aṅgīkāre*). This is the point: true, it should not be unitary, as it is not manifold. The existence of what is manifesting, however, should not be denied. Nothing is undesirable about this. This is the intention:

If the existence of self-awareness¹⁰⁹ is proven, [cognition’s] being manifold is defeated, and if it is unitary, there is harm for only *your* position—either way, there is no harm for us. [4.27]

Moreover, if existence is established [by manifestation], for us no crime is committed even by its being manifold. Only as followers of logic (*nyāyānusārin*) do we enjoin its being unitary. That is,

Because they have the same fate,

¹⁰⁶ *pūrvāparātmavittau*] H; *pūrvāparatvavittau* JNĀ.

¹⁰⁷ This line is so far untraced: *abhede 'py ekatā citratvavirodhinī syāt*.

¹⁰⁸ = SSSū 4.174. Note the different reading of Dharmakīrti’s verse that Jñānaśrīmitra gives here: *yad yathā bhāsate jñānam tat tathavopagamyate / iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ //*

¹⁰⁹ *sattvaṃ cet svaividāḥ*] H; *satyam cet samvidāḥ* JNĀ.

when there is existence, there is no harm in being unitary.
Being manifold, however, is inconsistent with being unitary;
hence, when there is existence, being manifold passes away. [4.28]

[JNĀ 449] As for what you said—“If you accept that they are unitary, then blue would just be yellow!”—this fault only applies to external objects, because there would be the unwanted consequence that actions would be undertaken with respect to blue, e.g., on the part of those who want an effect entailed by yellow.¹¹⁰ You may object, “Independently of the desire for an effect, can you say that what is blue is also yellow?” Should blue be separated [from yellow] by its intrinsic nature (*svarūpasattā*)? “That is indeed better.”¹¹¹ If blue and yellow were not directly experienced (*parokṣatā*), then that would be so. Therefore, in the case of externality, blue and yellow are certainly multiple (*nānātva*), so let there be no confusion of activities.

However, if blue and yellow are cognition, they are indeed unitary. But, because of [your] immense repeated practice of behaving as if things are external, this position is indeed intolerable [to you] like the midday sun right in your face¹¹²—what are we to do here? So, with regard to this, the claim that [what is manifest] is contradicted by perception indeed disappears, because the thought that “blue is different from yellow” is a conceptual construction (*vikalpa*) that takes place by disregarding the activity of self-awareness, since [conceptual construction] is naturally borne along only following upon the activity of [ordinary] sensory awareness.

For just the same reason, there is no contradiction in saying that variegated [cognition] is unitary (*citram ekam*). [Cognition] is variegated insofar as it is blue, yellow, and so on; *not*

¹¹⁰ One who desires blue out in the world, e.g., would say, “Fine, I’ll take yellow! There’s no difference anyway!”

¹¹¹ The opponent counters, that is, by saying that causal efficacy isn’t the only reason to think blue and yellow are different; blue and yellow are *different by nature*, not only due to their respective effects.

¹¹² This simile about the intolerability of the midday sun right in your face is perhaps a subtle dig at Ratnākaraśānti, who commonly evokes the simile that bare manifestation is like the sky at midday.

insofar as it is multiple (*nānātva*).¹¹³ [You say that to be variegated is to be multiple] only because you have a false-attachment to a pervasion [between being variegated] and being multiple (*nānātva*). But this pervasion only applies with respect to the external. Alternatively, “variegated” (*citra*) is simply a repetition (*anuvādamātra*): that which you have accepted as multiple (*nānā*) is unitary precisely when it is of the nature of cognition. Hence, there’s no fault of forgetting the horse you’ve ridden in on.

[viii. Is Jñānaśrīmitra Guilty of Imposing Opposed Properties to a Single Cognition?]

You may object, “Surely difference is said to mean the imposition of opposed properties (*viruddhadharmādhyāsa*); there is no rule about whether this applies to external things or to cognition.”¹¹⁴ There *is* a rule. Were there no difference in the external, there would indeed be no individual restrictions¹¹⁵ regarding causal efficacy,¹¹⁶ and if those [restrictions] are not honored, [the external] would not be different from mere appearance; hence, there would not be externality at all. However, in the case of cognition (*buddhi*), difference is really the abandonment of the nature [of cognition itself], for the existence of cognition, which is independent of causal efficacy, is just due to manifestation. And if you accept that there is difference [in cognition], it would undesirably follow that cognition that is in that state would not have manifestation. And even if, when you insist upon difference, there is the destruction of the nature of both [cognition and the external], even so, having not taken this position too far, the

¹¹³ Note then that *citra* and *nānā* are not in fact synonyms, as the opponent claimed a moment ago; that something variegated, *citra*, must be multiple, *nānā*, only makes sense when we are thinking about external things.

¹¹⁴ That is, this definition is not restricted just to the external: it should apply to cognition as well. Or so the opponent suggests here.

¹¹⁵ *pratiniyamaḥ*] H; *pratiniyama eva* JNĀ.

¹¹⁶ Difference, that is, is required to make sense of how practical success in the conventional world is possible: different aims are accomplished by different things.

external object—reckoned to be a conglomerate of atoms—can tolerate existence even when there is difference; and, even though there is no impression of an appearance (*ākāra*) of an atom, there is a slight confirmation [of the external realist view] by an awareness that has a single, solid, gross appearance, and so that is apprehended, though it is not so with awareness. This can be said.¹¹⁷

Or else, even the loss of external objects does not cause any trouble, because the existence of external objects is conditionally posited by mere misconception (*abhimānamātra*). Or you may say that external reality can be maintained only due to misconception [and so there is no need even provisionally to maintain external objects, as suggested in the foregoing]. How exactly are these two things [viz. the loss of its nature and its existence only due to misconception] possible for cognition that is established by direct awareness?

And because thinking [cognition] has an external nature would follow, there would be the undesirable consequence that [cognition], restricted to difference, would lose its nature (*svabhāva*). As Dharmakīrti says in PV 3.220,

When someone makes distinctions [between blue and yellow],
he falls in the realm of objects.¹¹⁸

Just as, [on an externalist view,] when there is no causal efficacy,
there is a mere appearance (*bhāsa*) that resembles hairs,¹¹⁹
in the same way, “This is different from that”
is a distinction (*vivecana*) that applies only to the external. [4.29]

¹¹⁷ Awareness, that is, cannot tolerate existence qualified by difference, whereas we may provisionally accept difference in external reality—just so long as we don’t think too hard about that external reality and analyze away this atomic conception.

¹¹⁸ PV 3.220cd: *taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan*.

¹¹⁹ Jñānaśrīmitra refers to the paradigmatic illusory floating hairs that are taken to be experienced by people suffering from an eye disease. He himself accepts that illusory appearances, insofar as they *appear*, are in fact real: the appearance of a double-moon, for instance, is really real; only the determination related to it is mistaken. He is here, then, relying on his *opponent’s* understanding of the appearance of floating hairs as unreal in comparing that to distinction.

Distinction is not something that follows from self-awareness; rather, it is just the play of the past impressions of the repeated experience of externality. Therefore, the nature of cognition is not common to that of external objects because of its properties, such as the fact that the awareness of cognition is not dependent on something else and so on; in the same way, [JNĀ 450] we can say on the basis of logical reasoning [that the nature of consciousness is not common to that of external objects], because of the refutation of the conditional positing of difference which is caused by the imposition of opposed properties. This makes good sense.

You may object, “If, then, difference, which is caused by opposed properties, and non-difference, which is caused by compatible properties, are only *external*, what way forward is there with respect to an appearance in experience (*anubhavākāra*)? Further, you want [difference] even in the case of cognition, saying ‘The Blessed One is singular.’¹²⁰ For if there is no cause for a restriction of conditional positing,¹²¹ then there is the unwanted consequence that there is non-difference even with regard to another mental continuum.”¹²²

To this, Dharmakīrti says,

Blue and so on in the cognition of variegation [PV 3.220a]

—and so on.¹²³ Cognition should have only a unitary existence (*ekabhāvo nāma*): it is indivisible (*aśakyavivecana*), not manifold. Or else, cognition alone (*nāma*) has [a unitary existence] while insentience does not. The word *nāma* expresses a sort of determination [like the particle *eva*] when the opposite is not acceptable. And when something variegated appears as belonging to a

¹²⁰ The opponent refers to Jñānaśrīmitra’s statement above, at JNĀ 444.17–19.

¹²¹ *vyavasthāniyamanibandhanābhāve*] H; *vyavasthā, niyamanibandhanābhāve* JNĀ.

¹²² The opponent objects here that Jñānaśrīmitra will still have to distinguish between the continuum of the Buddha and the continuum of Caitra, for instance, or any other ordinary person. You *have* to make distinctions! Though of course, compare Ratnakīrti’s *Santānāntaraduṣaṇa*, where other continua are indeed refuted from an ultimate perspective.

¹²³ Note that the *ityādi* implies all of PV 3.220–221, as he goes on to discuss the interpretation of 3.221.

single awareness (*ekasaṃvidantargata*), then it is experienced in that way only;¹²⁴ in this way, only a mental event that has as its scope what is conventionally designated (*prajñāpti*) as a single continuum should be unitary. However, being indivisible (*aśakyavivecanatva*), which applies to cognition as accepted by us, does not apply to cognition as accepted by our opponents. Hence, there is no fault. So, if it is taken to be only an independent argument (*svatantra*),¹²⁵ the non-apprehension of the pervader is not proven, because only being unitary is acceptable for the appearances of cognition.¹²⁶

[ix. Continuing the Investigation of Existence and Being Unitary or Being Manifold]

Moreover, what is this being unitary or being manifold, and where do these two [properties] have a pervasion with being real (*vastutva*)? It may be responded that *unitary* means *partless*, and *manifold* means *that very thing* [viz. partless things] *collected together*: in the world, the nature of things is always determined in terms of being unitary or being manifold.

[The Mādhyamika] may object, “In inference for others (*parārthānumāna*), what one has experienced oneself is said to be useful; similarly, in convention (*saṃvṛti*), which is the basis for analysis (*vicāra*), it is apprehended to be that way for oneself.¹²⁷ There is thus no fault.” Here we say: even in convention, only that which is proven by perception or by inference is said to be observed, and on the basis of those two, a partless thing is never in the scope of apprehension.

¹²⁴ Glossing PV 3.221, he writes, *yac ca yathā bhāsate citram apy ekasaṃvidantargatam, tat tathāivānubhūyate iti.*

¹²⁵ *svatantraiva*] H; *svatantra ca* JNĀ.

¹²⁶ That is, if the opponent supposes that the neither-one-nor-many argument is a *svatantra* (as opposed to a *prasaṅga*, more on which in a moment), then there will not be the non-apprehension of being unitary or being manifold because there *is* the apprehension of cognition’s being unitary—at least provisionally.

¹²⁷ That is, I believe, the pervasion between being a real thing and being unitary or being manifold is apprehended for the Mādhyamika himself in the course of the conventional analysis that leads to the refutation of things having an intrinsic nature.

Thus, a manifold thing, too, which has as its nature a collection of partless things, is not apprehended. How then can there be a proof of the pervasion [between being unitary or being manifold and] reality (*vastu*)? Nothing at all is real [in that way].¹²⁸ But what our opponent accepts is not tolerable in the case of an independent reason (*svatantrahetu*).

Moreover, if the [non-apprehension of the pervader] is a *reductio ad absurdum* proof (*prasaṅgasādhana*), then, because it ends up stating something contrary [to the intended target] (*viparyayaparyavasāna*), there will be contradiction with the target (*sādhyavirodha*).¹²⁹ May this fact punish one who accepts a pervasion between reality and being unitary or being manifold! But for one who accepts that reality (*vastutā*) is only due to mere manifestation (*prakāśamātra*), what regard is there for that [pervasion]? Therefore, you yourself need to explain the pervasion [if it is a *reductio ad absurdum*]. If there is knowledge anywhere of the relation between a real thing and being unitary or being manifold, then that real thing will not be empty [because you'd have to know both the pervaded and the pervader to know the pervasion]: there would then be the abandonment of the proof of all-pervading emptiness!¹³⁰

If [the Mādhyamika] should respond, “The existence of things (*vastusthiti*), the conventional descriptions of being unitary or manifold (*ekānekavyavahāra*), and the determination of a proof by means of knowledge (*pramāṇasiddhyavasāya*)—all this is there in

¹²⁸ Jñānaśrīmitra's point is that nothing exists that is either partless or a conglomerate of partless things, so there can be no pervasion between existence and being unitary, understood as being partless, or being manifold, understood as being a conglomerate of partless things.

¹²⁹ That is, as Jñānaśrīmitra will go on to explain, the Mādhyamika is in the following bind: he must establish the pervasion between being a real thing and being either unitary or manifold in order to use this pervasion in his analysis; but to establish this pervasion, he must apprehend something real; this then goes against the target of his proof, viz. that nothing has an intrinsic nature.

¹³⁰ *vyāpīśūnyatāsāadhanoddhūtiḥ*] H; *vyāptīśūnyatā sādhanoddhūtiḥ* JNĀ. Against the Mādhyamika, Jñānaśrīmitra argues that the establishment of the pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold requires the apprehension of a real thing, some ontological ground, a *vastu*, which apprehension refutes emptiness. We may also understand *vyāpī* to mean *vyāpaka*, but then things get very complicated: emptiness is the *vyāpaka* in the *vyatirekavyāpti* (viz. emptiness pervades being neither unitary nor manifold), so Jñānaśrīmitra would be suggesting here that in establishing the basic *amvayavyāpti*, the *vyatirekavyāpaka* is already disproven.

the ordinary world. But it cannot exist upon analysis (*vicāra*). Just this is the target [of our proof]. How can there be anything that defeats it?" No, for you want to prove that things have no nature (*svabhāva*), *not* the absence of being unitary or being manifold, for that is being given as the *reason* (*sādhana*) [in your proof, not as the *target* of your proof]¹³¹ Here [at the end of the last paragraph] we are not saying that your reason (*sādhana*) is unestablished (*asiddha*); rather, we are asserting that your pervasion (*vyāpti*) is unestablished.

Further, the opposite kind of pervasion (*viparyayavyāpti*)¹³² is relied upon in cases of the non-apprehension of the pervader and so on. But that opposite kind of pervasion is not established anywhere, because being-neither-unitary-nor-manifold (*vyāpya*) and non-existence (*vyāpaka*) are unestablished since they are not found even by a conventional means of knowledge. [JNĀ 451] And only mere linguistic usage (*vyavahāramātra*) is not a means of knowledge, nor is there another definition of a means of knowledge. There is no restriction of conditional positing if a means of knowledge is made into what is not a means of knowledge.¹³³

Here is an intermediary verse:

If means of knowledge are accepted at the conventional level,
analysis (*vicāra*) itself is also conventional.

If means of knowledge are not accepted even at the conventional level, then,

¹³¹ Recall here the first verse of Śāntarākṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, cited above: *niḥsvabhāvā amī bhāvā tattvataḥ svaparoditāḥ // ekānekāsvabhāvena vīyogāt pratibimbavat //* The target of the proof is *niḥsvabhāva*; the reason, *ekānekāsvabhāvena vīyogāt*. The Mādhyamika opponent here states that something unitary or manifold does not exist upon analysis, and this is the target of his proof; Jñānaśrīmitra responds that this way of putting things is dishonest: the Mādhyamika really wants to prove that things have no nature because they have neither a unitary nor a manifold nature.

¹³² Jñānaśrīmitra here switches the kind of pervasion under discussion. The *anvaya* type of pervasion would be this: whatever exists is either unitary or manifold. The *viparyayavyāpti*, aka the *vyatireka* type of pervasion, is then: whatever is neither unitary nor manifold does not exist. In this case, being neither unitary nor manifold is what is pervaded, the *vyāpya*; non-existence is the pervader, the *vyāpaka*.

¹³³ *apramāṇane 'pi pramāṇasya] H; apramāṇe 'pi pramāṇasya JNĀ.*

whatever: the *speaker* is the winner. [4.30]¹³⁴

So, if, having imagined a pervasion with a form (*rūpa*) that has in fact been refuted by a means of knowledge, you then accept that things do not exist because that pervasion does not exist anywhere, then it would not be in vain (*avandhya*) to establish that entities do not exist with the reason, “devoid [of being] the son of a barren woman” (*vandhyāsutaviyoga*)—such hope for the target is honorable indeed!¹³⁵ Therefore, if there is the apprehension of the pervaded and the pervader somewhere—which [apprehension] depends on grasping the pervasion in a way that is perceptual in nature, or else which takes the form of an inference indicated (*samākhyāta*) by a defeater of the contrary¹³⁶—and [then, because of that apprehension in one of those two ways,] we ascertain the absence of the pervaded because we don’t find the pervader, then this is fine. The establishment of the pervasion between existence and momentariness, too, is strictly invariably related to the ascertainment of the existence of something momentary—there, one has the apprehension of the pervasion. In the present case, however, if being unitary or being manifold implies existence in general, the reason is invariably related to being unitary or being manifold, and so it would be a contradictory reason that disproves the target that is really intended (*iṣṭavighātakṛd viruddha*).¹³⁷ If you say, “Given that we do not presuppose existence,

¹³⁴ Jñānaśrīmitra here refers to Dharmakīrti’s famous statement in PV 3.4d, to which he had referred earlier in the SSŚ: *saṃvṛtyāstu yathā tathā*. See SSŚ 419.1–15, for instance, as well as *Kṣaṇabhaṅgādhyāhaḥ Pakṣadharmādihikārah*, JNĀ 4–7. He alludes to this verse again in 4.31 below. The point is clear enough: if the opponent wants to simply (and absurdly) abandon even conventional means of knowledge, then whoever speaks may win in debate just by speaking.

¹³⁵ That is, the Mādhyamika says something he thinks is unreal pervades existence, and then says that entities that lack this unreal thing therefore lack existence; this, Jñānaśrīmitra says, would be as absurd as saying that things do not exist because they are devoid of being the son of a barren woman.

¹³⁶ A *viparyayabādhakapramāṇa*, in other words, or a perceptual or inferential cognition that defeats the possibility of the reason existing without the target.

¹³⁷ Here, *vyāpya* and *vyāpaka* are supposed to be *real* when you establish the *vyāpti*; but then you’re trying to use this *vyāpti* to establish that all things are *unreal*. This is an instance of *iṣṭavighātakṛd viruddha*, or the sort of problematic reason that establishes the contrary of the target intended by the argument’s proponent (here the Mādhyamika).

there is no pervasion,” then there is inconclusiveness. Therefore, how is there the negation of the awareness that has variegated appearances (*citrākāra*)?

[x. Limiting the Scope of the Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument 2]

You may respond, “How then is there the negation of the external?”¹³⁸ That is negated because in reality there is no manifestation of it at all (*tattvato 'prakāśād eva*). It is generally accepted that there is no absence other than non-apprehension.¹³⁹

Alternatively, the definition of unitary is not partlessness, so what hinderance is there to the power of the non-apprehension of the pervader with respect to the external object? What, then, is the definition of unitary due to which the above criticism will not be possible? To be invisible upon division (*vivecyāśakyadarśanatva*).¹⁴⁰ External things are not unitary so defined. Since their being unitary is not possible, nor are they not manifold, i.e. a collection of unitary entities. [Hence, they are neither unitary nor manifold, so they do not exist.]

You may object, “Manifold means divisible (*śakyavivecana*)[, and not a collection of unitary entities].” If something final were indivisible, then there might be the possibility of being divided in relation to that [final indivisible thing].¹⁴¹ And it is not so, for the atom is also infinitely divisible. But with respect to cognition (*buddhi*), which arises in one’s own continuum and is variegated, there is indivisibility (*aśakyavivecanatva*), though not with reference to another continuum. By this, it is clearly stated that the pervaded-pervader relation is established

¹³⁸ The opponent worries, that is, that Jñānaśrīmitra cannot avail himself of the neither-one-nor-many argument either. Jñānaśrīmitra, as we might expect by now and as we see in what follows, is not so worried about this.

¹³⁹ That is, non-apprehension, viz. non-manifestation, is simply the same as non-existence; since the external does not manifest, it is not existent.

¹⁴⁰ Note that “division” here and in what follows also has the sense of “analysis.”

¹⁴¹ *tadapekṣayāśakyavivecanatā*] H; *tadapekṣā śakyavivecanatā* JNĀ.

with regard to cognition, while the operation of non-apprehension of the pervader can be seen with respect to the external (*anyatra*).¹⁴²

For this very reason, Ācārya Vasubandhu too has proclaimed the non-apprehension of the pervader argument only in the realm of the external, not in the realm of awareness. You may object, “Since the same logic should apply to both, even in the realm of cognition, the non-apprehension of the pervader will have scope and cannot be avoided.” No, for the fact that the same logic¹⁴³ should apply in both cases is denied by statements like, “This whole world is only cognition (*viññānamātra*).”¹⁴⁴ For this very reason, there is the accomplishment of the negation of reification and nihilism (*samāropāpavāda*), insofar as the duality of object and subject does not exist, and insofar as the construction of what is not real (*abhūtaparikalpa*), which is the characteristic of mind and mental factors of the three worlds, does exist.¹⁴⁵ He does not teach the existence or non-existence of anything else. “He does not teach [the existence or non-existence of something else—or the non-existence of cognition in particular—]for it is possible to surmise that it is like that.”¹⁴⁶ [JNĀ 452] Well then, Vasubandhu has spoken *explicitly* (*sākṣād eva*) of a defeater for the object of cognition (*grāhya*); hence, he did not address *the non-existence of*

¹⁴² The pervasion between existence and being unitary or being manifold may be accepted with respect to cognition—but only insofar as we can construe cognition as unitary, since it is indivisible, and hence existent.

¹⁴³ *samānanyāyatāyā*] H; *samānanyāyatayā* JNĀ.

¹⁴⁴ See Vasubandhu’s *Triṃśikā* 27, which Jñānaśrīmitra had cited above: *viññaptimātram evedam ity api hy upalambhataḥ / sthāpayann agrataḥ kiṃcit tanmātre nāvatiṣṭhate //*

¹⁴⁵ Note that Jñānaśrīmitra speaks here in canonical Yogācāra terms, which he returns to in force in SSŚ 6. Vasubandhu, he says, avoids the extreme of reification or superimposition (*samāropa*) by saying the duality of object and subject (the *parikalpitasvabhāva*) does not exist, while he avoids the extreme of nihilism or denial (*apavāda*) the construction of that unreal duality, the *abhūtaparikalpa*, does exist. To put it in other Yogācāra terms, Jñānaśrīmitra suggests here that Vasubandhu teaches the negation of the *parikalpitasvabhāva* but the existence of the *paratantrasvabhāva*.

¹⁴⁶ The opponent supposes, that is, that Vasubandhu did not explicitly say the neither-one-nor-many argument applies to cognition for it is easy to assume that it does.

[*cognition*].¹⁴⁷ Therefore, he has spoken of a defeater only for the object of cognition; that is what he intended, so enough with this elaboration.

Likewise, being unitary or being manifold—which is nothing but being invisible upon division or being visible upon division (*vivecyāśakyadarśanetaratva*), respectively—is the pervader insofar as that definition is mutually exclusive, because cognition is seen as having that nature. [Being unitary or being manifold] does not mean being partless and being a heap [of partless things, respectively]. The consideration of parts, however, is only to oblige our opponent. Or else, by using the language of parts, [you may understand that] what is suggested is only the absence of indivisibility (*aśakyavivecanatvābhāva*); this ought to be understood along the lines of [our understanding of] other continua.

“Surely,” you may object, “for one who believes self-awareness is the only reality (*svavidekatattvavādin*), what is based on the conditional positing of a manifold—

that is, the existence of another continuum—is not established, like proof and its constituent parts [is not established ultimately for Jñānaśrīmitra].”
Is there the proof of another continuum? Whatever—
let it be only a conventional entity.¹⁴⁸ [4.31]

What is the use of obstinance here? For even so, let cognition not be manifold alone, for, insofar as cognition is nevertheless unitary, the non-apprehension of the pervader will be proven to be unestablished since there is [the property] unitary. And the word “unitary” will be understood by excluding it from a constructed manifold (*kalpitāneka*) insofar as conventional usage is

¹⁴⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra responds to his opponent by saying, I believe, that Vasubandhu was explicit about his denial of the object of cognition (*grāhya*)—and, we may just as well suppose, he was explicit too about *not* teaching the non-existence of cognition (*tadabhāva*). He meant not to teach that cognition doesn’t exist, in other words, precisely because the neither-one-nor-many argument applies only to the object, not to the nature of cognition itself.

¹⁴⁸ We may note again Jñānaśrīmitra’s borrowing from PV 3.4 in *pada* d: he writes, echoing Dharmakīrti, *saṃvṛtyāstu yathā tathā* (though note that JNĀ prints *saṃvṛtyā tu yathā tathā*, which Hejung corrects). Compare Ratnakīrti’s *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa* for a more detailed extension of this refutation of difference to the problem of other mental continua, as well as above, chapter 4, section v.

concerned. Therefore, there is no differentiation (*bheda*) of cognition caused by the imposition of contrary properties, as is possible in the case of external objects.

Or let it be thus: What is the proof (*pramāṇa*) regarding that [differentiation of cognition]? “What is the proof of cognition’s being unitary?” Precisely perception (*pratyakṣa*). “It is not proven by a perceptual means of knowledge (*pratyakṣapramāṇa*), because it is not followed by conceptual construction.” It is only conceptual construction’s fault it doesn’t follow.¹⁴⁹ “Why is it not the fault of perception itself?” No, precisely because the appearance that is intrinsic to each cognition (*anyonyasamvidantargatapratiḥāsa*) [is not and cannot be faulty]. Moreover, [when I have the conceptually constructed cognition,] “I have seen blue, yellow, etc.,” there is the appearance (*ullekha*) of only a singular agent (*ekakartṛ*); or in the cognition, “This variegated appearance belongs to me,” there is the appearance of only a singular relatum (*ekasambandin*).¹⁵⁰ This conceptual construction about a single direct perception establishes (*ghaṭayati*) the appearances of experience (*anubhavākāra*) as not different.¹⁵¹ A single cognition of a tree, the conceptual construction of a tree, or the conceptual construction of all the three worlds is the same way.¹⁵² When we say, too, “In one cognition there is a variegated appearance (*pratiḥāsa*),” this is just for the sake of the determination of a single thing (*ekāvasāya*), as in the

¹⁴⁹ The opponent here supposes that for an instance of non-conceptual perception to count as a means of knowledge, it must be followed by a conceptually constructed cognition that, so to speak, *certifies* it as such. With this assumption in mind, he then objects that the conceptual cognition, “This is a unity!” does *not* in fact follow on our supposed non-conceptual cognition of unity. Jñānaśrīmitra details why this is only conceptual construction’s fault, not the fault of the perceptual cognition itself.

¹⁵⁰ There are two ways of thinking about a conceptual cognition that follows upon a perceptual cognition, each of which, despite the opponent’s objection, *is* in fact indexed to being singular conventionally: *I* have seen variegation; variegation manifests to *me*, to a *moment of awareness in the singular*. The second of these conceptually constructed cognition is perhaps better, but both are nevertheless conceptual.

¹⁵¹ *ghaṭayaty anubhavākārān*] H; *paṭavaty anubhavākāravān* JNĀ.

¹⁵² *evam ekā taru buddhir ekas taruvikalpas tribhuvanavikalpo vā*] H; *evam ekataiva buddhir ekasta[sya] vikalpas tribhuvanavikalpo vā* JNĀ.

case of the elements of a millstone (*śīlāputraśarīra*), or hands and feet and so on in the body.¹⁵³ But due to our misconception regarding the external world (*bahirabhimāna*), it is spoken of as a collection. In the absence of such a misconception, however, just a single thing is made apparent (*ullikhyate*) [in a more-correct conceptual cognition that follows the initial perceptual cognition]. Similarly, even for trees and mountains and so on, given that they are only cognition (*dhīmātra*), the conventional usage of the singular is easy to find.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, perception is not at fault.

Further, conceptual construction need not necessarily arise. In this way, perception is proven to apprehend non-difference (*abhedaagrāhi*). The opponent might object, “For difference, too, we rely on perception alone. A cognition like, ‘This cognition of a mountain is singular,’ is not followed by a conceptual construction because the contrary arises, since we have seen that many more times.”¹⁵⁵ Should we now accept both [non-difference and difference]? If the non-apprehension of the pervader is based on that, there will be a mistake. This person was engaged in the first place in proving emptiness by the negation of both [being unitary or being manifold], but now the establishment of both will inspire the May-Saying of the Jains (*syādvāda*)—this is a finishing blow (*prahārapāta*)!

[xi. Further Refutation of the Neither-One-Nor-Many Argument]

Or you may say, “When one is established, the other is defeated [and vice-versa]; it is not that we intend to teach only the establishment of one or the other, because that, too, will be defeated by

¹⁵³ Conceptual cognition determines a millstone to be one, despite having two parts, as it determines the body to be one, despite having hands, feet, and so on. So too, conceptual cognition determines the appearance of variegation to be one insofar as it occurs to a single cognizer or in a single cognition.

¹⁵⁴ *sulabha*] H; *tūbhayatra* JNĀ.

¹⁵⁵ Just as the opponent had objected that our conceptual construction doesn’t always tell us our perceptions are one, so too Jñānaśrīmitra might object that our conceptual construction doesn’t always tell us our perceptions are differentiated. But conceptual construction *generally* shows differentiation, the opponent says here.

the other.” If that is so, when [cognition’s] being unitary (*aikya*) is established on the basis of perception, then the other alternative [viz. its being manifold] has been defeated; how can you say that on the basis of that, its being unitary again will be defeated? For what is already defeated cannot be brought back to life by something else. For if that were so [and cognition’s being manifold could come back to life and refute its being unitary], there might be the hope that the defeated [fact of cognition’s being unitary] will again be given life—how will your desires be accomplished? Again, [JNĀ 453] this cycle of defeat and coming back to life by one and then the other will never stop; thus, in as much as the site of the inference will be accompanied by each alternative one after the other, non-apprehension of the pervader will never be possible.¹⁵⁶

This is the meaning: what has been said—“First of all the nature of awareness is not unitary, because blue and yellow and so on appear without being mixed (*avyatikara*); nor is the nature of cognition manifold, because there would be the undesirable consequence that there would be mutual awareness [among the different cognitions] (*parasparasamvedana*)”¹⁵⁷—with respect to this, when the differentiation of appearance (*pratibhāsabheda*) is regarded as a fault (*dūṣanīyate*) in order to negate [cognition’s] being unitary, then, if this differentiation of appearance is established by self-awareness, by what will that then be excluded? If that differentiation of appearance is not stable, how will [cognition’s] being unitary be defeated [in

¹⁵⁶ If there is just this cycle of cognition’s being unitary defeating its being manifold, and then its being manifold defeating its being unitary, and so on ad infinitum, one or the other will always be present, and the neither-one-nor-many argument won’t get off the ground: *one* of the options will always be apprehended!

¹⁵⁷ An untraced citation of an opponent.

the first place]?¹⁵⁸ This can be said in the same way about the other alternative, “Nor is it manifold.”

If, however, one of the alternatives is defeated by some other proof independent of the possibility of its contrary (*pratiyogisaṃbhavānapekṣa*),¹⁵⁹ then there would be no fault. But it is inconsistent to refute in its turn something you yourself considered to be proven by a means of knowledge. And there is no other means of knowledge which overturns (*viparyāsana*) being unitary or being manifold. Even if there is the supposition that that is possible, one alternative that is established by self-awareness will not be discarded. To say that because one is not real, the other is not there at all: this is mutual dependance. The two alternatives that are opposed to each other cannot be there in a single instance, so there cannot be the negation of both. So, out of them, let just that about which we cannot say there is awareness be regarded as unreal. That there is no experience of both is possible only when there is no awareness at all. And that is not established.

[xii. A Rejection of Vedānta and an Accusation of Jain May-Saying]

You might suggest the following: “This is simply the occurrence of what one who accepts self-awareness (*svasaṃvedanavādin*) does not accept;¹⁶⁰ therefore, it is just a fault for him, not for us, because we do not accept that.”¹⁶¹

This so-called *non-acceptance* (*aniṣṭi*) sure is a great method of refutation

¹⁵⁸ The opponent would have to admit that cognition is manifold, that is, if it is accepted as valid evidence for refuting cognition’s being unitary. But if cognition’s being manifold is *not* accepted as manifest in self-awareness, then it won’t work to refute cognition’s being unitary. The neither-one-nor-many argument presupposes the real presence of one or the other alternative.

¹⁵⁹ That is, if you refute cognition’s being unitary without reference to its being manifold, or vice-versa.

¹⁶⁰ ‘*niṣṭāpādamātram etat*] H; ‘*niṣṭāpādanamātram etat* JNĀ.

¹⁶¹ *tadaniṣṭer iti cet*] H; *tadaniṣṭe ceti cet* JNĀ.

used by great people!

If it could be this way in all cases where undesirable things follow,
then all aims would be accomplished. [4.32]

For it has already been said that one who accepts the pervader (*vyāpakābhyupagamavādin*) must by force accept self-awareness.¹⁶² Thus, as in the case of non-difference, if difference is also established by perception, how can the May-Saying of the Jains (*syādvāda*) be avoided? And if you do not accept means of knowledge at all, given that anything can be proven at will, how can *that* be avoided?

Then in this way [you may object],

“If both difference and non-difference (*bhedābheda*) are proven,
the May-Saying of the Jains (*syādvāda*) comes as a consequence[—fine].
But if being unitary alone is proven, the position of Vedānta is a consequence.
This distortion of reality (*tattvaviplava*) cannot be abandoned.” [4.33]

To this it is replied,

Even if the circle [of appearances] in my mind is one,
nevertheless it is not a self (*ātmā*)
that is all-pervasive (*vibhu*) like space.¹⁶³
If it appears to the Tathāgata as all-pervasive like space,
this is a special excellence of the goal, not reality.¹⁶⁴ [4.34]

Obviously, cognition being *pervasive* in such a manner [that is, cognition being all-pervasive like space,] is not at all *reality*, for cognition is not that way at other times or for other [people]. It is just a special achievement of the Blessed One.¹⁶⁵ Contact with something prior and posterior is not there in awareness,¹⁶⁶ so how could it be eternal [as the Vedāntin might assert of the self]?

¹⁶² See SŚŚ 4.10, for instance, where self-awareness is defended as the source or origin of all means of knowledge.

¹⁶³ *nabhovan*] H; *nabhasvan* JNĀ.

¹⁶⁴ *manaḥ sa sādhyātiśayo na tattvam*] H; *manaḥsamādhyātiśayo na tattvam* JNĀ.

¹⁶⁵ An all-pervasive gnosis is a special power of Buddha, achieved due to the excellence of the goal he has attained: it is not shared by other people or even, perhaps, by Buddha outside certain special states. In any case, it is not all-pervasive, as the notion of the self in Vedānta is here taken to be.

¹⁶⁶ *saṃvedane nāsti*] H; *saṃvedanenāsti* JNĀ.

[JNĀ 454] Through this there is avoidance of the extreme of eternalism.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, self-awareness does not experience itself as ceasing at any point; therefore, there is the avoidance of the extreme of nihilism (*ucchedānta*). On the other hand, the avoidance of both eternalism and nihilism by means of a continuity is indeed accepted dependent upon a provisional establishment (*avāntaravyavasthā*). That Prajñākaragupta (*bhāṣyakāra*) accepts the non-difference between past and future [cognitions] is a stubborn illusion ordinary people hold,¹⁶⁸ because it is denied that that which is manifesting (*prakāśamāna*) can be past or future. Therefore, [cognition's] being unitary put forward to that extent does not attract the fault of [regarding cognition as] all-pervasive (*vaibhava*) like space. Nor is there a cognition of permanence. How then can there be the suspicion that this is the Vedānta? “Well,” you may ask, “how do we have the experience that ‘This pervades this much space, and this is otherwise?’” In that case, just as there is no cognition of a length of time, similarly there will not be cognition of a length of space; all the more is there no permanence or all-pervasiveness.

However, the idea that both [difference and non-difference] are established belongs only to a shameless person [that is, a Digambara Jain].¹⁶⁹ “But,” you may object, “for the Digambaras, there is also the external world. In the external world, too, there may somehow be difference and non-difference. And for one who has swept away such dust¹⁷⁰ as the [Digambara view that] the

¹⁶⁷ *śāśvatāntaparihārah*] H; [*hra*]svatāntaparihārah JNĀ.

¹⁶⁸ Jñānaśrīmitra writes, *sthavīyāsī bhrāntir lokasya*, which makes it sound like ordinary people on the street would have had mistaken ideas about how best to understand Prajñākaragupta; given that that's unlikely, this would seem to be a dig at those who would misinterpret Prajñākaragupta in this way.

¹⁶⁹ The Digambara Jains are naked ascetics “clad only by the sky,” as their name suggests; hence, Jñānaśrīmitra calls them “shameless” (*ahrīka*). Whether or not this particular slur was common, we may note that the Master himself, Dharmakīrti, uses it when criticizing Jains; see Piotr Balcerowicz, “Dharmakīrti's criticism of the Jaina doctrine of multiplexity of reality (*anekāntavāda*),” in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference. Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, and Birgit Kellner (Vienna: VÖAW, 2011), 177–196.

¹⁷⁰ *vetyādyavakaraparihāriṇo*] H; *vetyādyavakaraparihāre* JNĀ.

externality or the internality of entities is not absolute—how can such a person be forced to accept their view, merely by accepting the fact that cognition is unitary and manifold, which has been established by perception? Obviously, it is not possible to exclude similarity [between my view and some other schools’] in all these cases; however, the contradiction [between cognition’s being unitary and being manifold] is ruled out just due to appearance in the realm of cognition.

Therefore,

However awareness appears,
just that is how it is experienced.¹⁷¹
It appears as having a two-fold nature;
it is always like that. [4.35]

[Dharmakīrti] says this by the use of the word ‘awareness’: externally there is never an appearance as having two natures, because illusion is a possibility in the case of the external since we experience the introduction of another means of knowledge [which shows the cognition to be illusory], as with two moons. How then can [cognition that has] a variegated appearance be unitary?¹⁷²

We say,

You cannot be freed from the shameless [Digambara] view (*ahrīkavāda*)
when considering the present topic.
What we must do,
you have already done. [4.36]¹⁷³

When what is held [by me, Jñānaśrīmitra,] is the case, given the proof
of even one of the alternatives—that cognition is unitary or manifold—
what to say of the proof of both the alternatives,

¹⁷¹ The *opponent* now cites PV 3.221ab: *yad yathā bhāsate jñānaṃ tat tathāivānubhūyate /*

¹⁷² The *opponent* thus uses Dharmakīrti’s verse against Jñānaśrīmitra: cognition *appears* as being both unitary and manifold, so how can you say this is a fault akin to the Digambaras? The *opponent* cites just the first half of Dharmakīrti’s verse, completing it with his own line; Jñānaśrīmitra will, in verses 4.38–39, respond by writing two different first lines completed by the two different readings of PV 3.221cd.

¹⁷³ Jñānaśrīmitra responds to his *opponent*: You yourself have shown that cognition *exists* insofar as it is both unitary and manifold: the neither-one-nor-many argument, then, does not show that cognition does *not* exist. So, fine!

even should one of them be weak? [4.37]¹⁷⁴

Regarding the objection to variegation's being unitary (*citraikatā*), the response is:

If there is the proof [that variegation] is unitary and manifold,
its being unitary is already established; therefore,
only with respect to cognition that has a variegated appearance,
should that be unitary as well [as manifold]. [4.38]¹⁷⁵

“A variegated appearance” (*citrākāra*) means an appearance that is both unitary and manifold (*ekānekākāra*), a form (*rūpa*). This is the meaning of *api*, [“even though,” or here] “as well” (*apyartha*): only (*nāma*) with respect to cognition (*cetas*), not an insentient material thing (*jaḍa*),¹⁷⁶ may it be unitary as well (*api*), but not only unitary.¹⁷⁷ It is not proper to say that a blue square is not blue.¹⁷⁸

Or else, [JNĀ 455]

“Something cannot be unitary and variegated, for that is a contradiction!”
But there is no contradiction, for it is experienced!
In this way, indeed, cognition that has a variegated appearance
should be unitary. [4.39]¹⁷⁹

“Then there will be a conventional description in terms of [cognition's] being manifold!” What prohibits that if it serves some purpose? For as we see that the Blessed One is described as singular, so too his capacities are said to be four, his marks thirty-two—what harm is there for us? You summon a sorcerous for your own demise!

¹⁷⁴ Jñānaśrīmitra's point, that is, is that variegated cognition is real; if the opponent wants to say it has a unitary nature, a manifold nature, or both—whatever he says, Jñānaśrīmitra is happy so long as his point stands!

¹⁷⁵ Note that Jñānaśrīmitra completes the verse his opponent had begun in 4.35, now citing PV 3.221cd, with the locative reading of *pada* d: *iti namaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākāre 'pi cetasi /*

¹⁷⁶ *na jaḍa ekabhāvo 'pi] H; najāte jaḍa ekabhāvo 'pi.*

¹⁷⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra is here telling us we may understand the particles in PV 3.221cd in a counterintuitive way, viz. taking *nāma* with *cetas* and *api* with *ekabhāva*. My translation of 4.38 reflects this.

¹⁷⁸ An appearance of a blue square is manifold in being a square (“four-cornered,” *caturasra*) and unitary in being simply blue.

¹⁷⁹ Jñānaśrīmitra now completes the verse his opponent had begun in yet a new way, again citing PV 3.221cd, now with the genitive reading of *pada* d: *iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ.*

[xiii. The Positive Proof of the *Citrādvaita*: The Opponent's Objection]

“Fine,” an opponent may object. “In this way, you may refute the reasons others give, but how are you able to establish *citrādvaita*, which you have accepted? For [variegated cognition's] being unitary is rejected by perception since there is no mixture of the appearances (*pratibhāsāsāṅkara*) of blue and yellow. That property you have dubbed indivisibility (*aśakyavivecanatva*) is an occasion for the non-deviation (*avyabhicāranimitta*) [of blue and yellow] insofar as [blue and yellow] are produced by the same collection of causes (*samānasāmagrījanyatva*); hence, it is a reason for difference (*bheda*).¹⁸⁰ But because [blue and yellow] are of the nature of cognition, whether a collection or a single thing (*ekadeśa*), it is not the object of some other [cognition]. How then could they be unitary?

If their being unitary is figurative (*aupacārika*) based on the fact that they cannot be divided, how can it be true that the non-apprehension of the pervader is unestablished? [4.40]¹⁸¹

And what you said, that appearance is invariably related to being unitary, is not right,

For an appearance has spatial extent (*deśavyāpti*), and this cannot be the case for something unitary. So¹⁸² isn't it the case for you too that the appearance is invariably related to difference [viz. the spatially divisible parts]? [4.41]

Furthermore, just as it is observed that an appearance

¹⁸⁰ The fact that blue and yellow are indivisible when they appear in a single cognition, the opponent objects, only means that blue and yellow happen to have arisen together in cognition due to having the same collection of causes and conditions. It does not mean they are in fact unitary; rather, it is grounds for maintaining that they are different in relation to their different causes and conditions that just happen to arise together in a given moment. Note that this sounds very much like Ratnākaraśānti's position developed at the end of his VMS; see above, chapter 4, section iv: “Ratnākaraśānti's Last Stand: One More Argument for Difference,” and compare, too, JNĀ 420.7–11.

¹⁸¹ This first worry is that a merely *figurative* unity is not a *true* unity such that the neither-one-nor-many argument is unestablished.

¹⁸² *tad bheda-*] H; *tadbheda-* JNĀ.

is invariably related to non-difference,
similarly it is seen that an appearance is interwoven with (*tantra*)
blue and yellow and so on—and this is precisely difference! [4.42]

Therefore,

The teaching that fresh milk¹⁸³ and yogurt are one
brings shame to Vyāḍi.
Similarly, is that teaching of yours
not making milk into molasses?¹⁸⁴ [4.43]

**[xiv. The Positive Proof of *Citrādvaita* and the Solely Conventional Nature of Difference:
Jñānaśrīmitra’s Response]**

To this, we say:

If by just this much, difference is taught,
what harm is there to say it exists,
given that it is not the case that there is *no* connection [to difference],
and it was just said that it is not unitary. [4.44]¹⁸⁵

For just this reason, it has been shown
that *citrādvaita* is in a literal sense (*mukhya*) [as opposed to a figurative sense].
For otherwise, it would just be unitary
and variegation would be impossible. [4.45]

[JNĀ 456] Their being unitary must be spoken of
for the sake of someone who is afraid of a mixture of forms [like blue and yellow],
due to their mutual contradiction.
Difference must be abandoned due to manifestation. [4.46]

When there is an appearance (*nirbhāsa*),
its forms (*tadākṛti*) are either different or not different.

¹⁸³ *kṣīra*] H; *kṣāra* JNĀ.

¹⁸⁴ Vyāḍi was an ancient grammarian. Given the context, it would seem that the opponent takes issue with uniting very diverse things—things as obviously different as milk and molasses—when even uniting two similar things brings shame to this esteemed figure.

¹⁸⁵ *vyavacchede naikyam*] H; *vyavacchedenaitad* JNĀ. There is *some* kind of difference between blue and yellow, for the *citra* in *citrādvaita* is literal, as Jñānaśrīmitra clarifies in the next verse. This kind of difference, he will go on to say, should *not* be understood as the kind of difference that implies mutual contradiction: variegation is difference *in a sense*, but not in *that* sense. Or so he says here on his first pass through his response. Later, he will clarify that difference is only conventional.

If it is manifold, there is no appearance.
Therefore, what is unitary alone is real. [4.47]

Spatial extension is possible only for insentient things.
But how could there be spatial extension
on the part of what is experienced through self-awareness (*svasaṃvedya*),
given that there is the appearance of each as unitary? [4.48]

Likewise, let it be that an appearance is interwoven with (*tantra*)
blue and yellow and so on—that is not in fact difference,
because only what is taken to be unitary¹⁸⁶
arises in that way from its own causes. [4.49]

In whatever way [cognition] is taken to be unitary,
it is not taken to be different;
because there is no appearance of a second thing (*dvitīya*),
it is controlled by non-difference alone. [4.50]

If you accept the mutual opposition [between difference and non-difference],
there is no cognitive support for a second thing (*dvitīyāvalambana*).
If there is no acceptance (*anabhyupāya*) of this contradiction either,
citrādvaita is established! [4.51]

Therefore, it is not the case that indivisibility (*aśakyavivekatva*)
establishes the non-duality of multiple cognitions.
Precisely that [viz. indivisibility] is said to be [the meaning of] being unitary
when it is established in a single awareness (*ekasaṃvitti*). [4.52]¹⁸⁷

In that case, what is the meaning of [Dharmakīrti's statement in PV 3.221c:] “In this way, indeed,
it should be unitary” (*iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāt*)? This means that [cognition whose appearance is
variegated] is unitary (*ekatva*), it is indivisible (*aśakyavivecanatva*).

In this way, the external's being unitary¹⁸⁸
is indeed of one type, the mind's being unitary is of another type.
This follows by the order of things (*vastubala*).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ *ekatvasvīkṛtasyaiva*] H; *ekasya svīkṛtasyaiva* JNĀ.

¹⁸⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra is saying, in other words, that being indivisible works as a definition of being unitary when we are considering what is manifest in a single cognition. This may perhaps be seen as an even more basic definition of something's being unitary; compare his discussion of Prajñākaragupta toward the end of this chapter.

¹⁸⁸ *ekatā bāhyasya*] H; *ekabhāvo hy asya* JNĀ.

¹⁸⁹ *vastubalāyātam*] H; *vastubalāyatam* JNĀ. Compare PV 3.209.

Where could your distaste (*aruciḥ*) for this fact be useful? [4.53]

If externality is accepted, then, just as the object is different from cognition, so too white is different from blue; in that case, an external realist (*bāhyaiṣī*) who teaches that they are unitary should be punished, because of his distortion of the external (*bāhyaviplava*). [4.54]¹⁹⁰

By this argument, the refutation of perception by non-difference is denied.¹⁹¹

Moreover,

If you say, “Surely perception itself differentiates white from blue,” should that perception differentiate while being differentiated (*bhidyamānam*), or as not differentiated?

If [perception] is differentiated, then it does not approach (*naiti*)¹⁹² even the slightest bit of something else—from what or how should it differentiate?¹⁹³ The idea that mind that is not differentiated can give us difference—who could say this? [4.55]

[JNĀ 457] For, externally, cognition that is itself being differentiated (*bhidyamānā*) differentiates objects. But for the nature of cognition, no means of knowledge other than self-awareness has any scope. And it is contradictory to say that what is unitary differentiates. However, though cognition will be undivided on the Nirākāravāda [since, *ex hypothesi*, there are no appearances to divide cognition], externally cognition might differentiate objects due to the false supposition (*abhimāna*) that there is the apprehension of different natures, which supposition is strengthened by difference in terms of causal efficacy [insofar as it is also falsely supposed at the level of the

¹⁹⁰ External reality depends upon difference. Blue and white have to be different for causal efficacy to work in the world. From an external realist perspective, then, thinking they are unitary is but a distortion of the external. Blue and white are unitary only when it is accepted that there is only cognition.

¹⁹¹ *pratyuktaḥ*] H; *prayuktaḥ* JNĀ.

¹⁹² *naiti*] H, RNĀ 147.19; *neti* JNĀ.

¹⁹³ If variegated cognition itself is differentiated, meaning that there in fact a plurality of separate cognitions of blue and of white when we cognize a variegated appearance, then those separate cognitions in fact have no information about each other; how then could the cognition of blue differentiate itself from the cognition of white, when it doesn't even know about that other cognition's existence? Or if the cognition of white does not manifest to the cognition of blue, what does the cognition of blue differentiate itself from? Because this difficult idea (and this difficult line!) will be unpacked in what follows in a variety of ways, it is worth reproducing it: *bhede 'nyaleśam api naiti kuto bhinattu*. See too Ratnakīrti's citation of this line in his *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa*, RNĀ 147.19, and note that the RNĀ preserves the reading *naiti* for *neti*.

external that different natures should have different causal capacities]. But awareness is only a property of itself (*svadharmā eva*), it is its own nature (*svabhāvātma*); it is quite adventurous to say it is not in itself differentiated into blue and yellow, and yet it differentiates those two! Perhaps cognition that is differentiated one from the next (*pratyātma*) could differentiate [between blue and yellow moments of cognition]. However, since different cognitions have no information about each other, the appearance of variegation itself would then be impossible. How could this prove difference?¹⁹⁴

Or else, due to the presence of what should cognition differentiate, for a limiting term (*avadhi*) is not cognized?¹⁹⁵ “Surely,” you may object,¹⁹⁶ “what is the point of the cognition of a limiting term here? Precisely because there is no cognition of that [limiting term], there is the establishment of the difference of one thing from another. A thing is not differentiated as having another nature only when there is the apprehension of something else; rather, when you cognize a thing as having its own identity, that itself is the cognition of its difference from something else, and that cognition of difference is not defective even when the other thing is not cognized. Hence, there is no harm to the cognition of difference [even when the limit is not cognized].”¹⁹⁷

To this, the answer is as follows. To start with, if you are saying this with reference to the position that a thing exists even though it is not cognized, then that is appropriate just for the

¹⁹⁴ Note that Jñānaśrīmitra gives a number of readings of his own 4.55’s third line, especially the question, *kuto bhinattu*, in the following prose. I’ve tried to reproduce that fruitful ambiguity.

¹⁹⁵ Jñānaśrīmitra now takes his *kutaḥ* in another sense: rather than introducing a general question with “how,” he asks rhetorically *due to the presence of what* should cognition differentiate—for, he suggests, no limiting term is present to cognition that would allow for cognition to establish differences. The word *avadhi*, lit. “limit” or “boundary,” means a *term* in a relation that thus *limits* that relation; it is the terminating relatum in a relation.

¹⁹⁶ *nanu*] H; *na ca* JNĀ.

¹⁹⁷ The opponent objects that the cognition of blue *as* blue just is the cognition of its difference from yellow; you don’t need to cognize both to cognize their difference.

doctrine of external realism (*bāhyavāda*), not for the doctrine that there is only cognition (*vijñaptimātratānaya*). For,

What my opponents say is really lovely (*rucya*): that on the one hand, there is the existence of things beyond the senses, and on the other, there is the existence of things within mere self-awareness. This is quite surprising to me! [4.56]

Therefore, precisely because what is not manifest does not exist, there is no proof of difference depending upon what is not manifest.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, [the proof of difference] cannot be dependent upon something that does not exist, for nothing can be proven to be different¹⁹⁹ in relation to [a paradigmatically non-existent thing like] the horn of a hare. However, were it the mere negation [of something existent and something non-existent] being one and the same (*aikyaniṣedhamātra*), that is indeed acceptable.

You may object, “If [what is cognized] is not excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) from that [viz. non-existent things like the horn of a hare], will a pot be just that [viz. just the same as a hare’s horn]?”²⁰⁰ For just that reason, we propose the mere negation of their being one.²⁰¹ “Surely,” you may respond, “something is said to be existent when it is excluded from the non-existent, and whatever is excluded from non-existence will also be excluded from the son of a barren woman [and other non-existent things]; if something is excluded from a tree, it is not a fig-tree. How, then, is a pot not excluded from a donkey’s horn?” If that is so, it is quite impossible to avoid saying that a sky-flower is different from a pot and so on.²⁰² What is not excluded from

¹⁹⁸ *tadapekṣā bhedasamsthitih*] H; *tadapekṣābhedasamsthitih* JNĀ.

¹⁹⁹ *bhedasthitih*] H; *abhedasthitih* JNĀ.

²⁰⁰ The opponent’s idea is that an entity constructed through exclusion should exclude unreal things, or else it would be identical to them.

²⁰¹ The pot, that is, is simply said not to be the same as a hare’s horn; difference is not proven, for that would presume the existence of both differentia.

²⁰² Note that difference is symmetrical: if you claim that a pot is cognized as excluded from something unreal like a sky-flower, the sky-flower should be cognized as excluded from the pot. But then we’re *cognizing* the sky-flower, and so it should be existent! This, Jñānaśrīmitra presumes, is absurd.

something does not possess the exclusion from that thing. And so, you cannot say that a son of a barren woman (*vandhyāsuta*) is neither different nor non-different from the Vindhya Mountains (*vindhya*). For there is not the use of the negation of both [difference and non-difference] *as being restricted to non-existence* when [that negation] is used to prove the non-existence of universals, the person, and so on.²⁰³ For when you say, “This is excluded from that,” the meaning of the nominative, “this,” and the ablative, “from that,” is really reciprocal (*sādhāraṇa*); this goes for characteristics of real things or of imagined things. This is the way things really are here: if the speaker intends it to mean only the negation of a single nature (*ekasvabhāvatā*) when he says, “This is differentiated from this,” then let there be mutual exclusion between a pot and a horn of a horse—what is the harm?

Now, if you accept [that difference] is the state of having the nature of a real property-possessor and property (*ātmātmīyavasturūpasthiti*), then let it be so for pots and cloths and so on, but not for a person’s and a donkey’s horn, nor for a person and a donkey’s horn, for only one is an entity. [JNĀ 458] And that being so, when it is said that “The person (*pudgala*) is not different from the aggregates (*skandha*),” what is meant here is that they do not exist with the nature of a property possessor (*ātma*) and a property (*ātmīya*). When it’s said, “Nor are they one,” that means that [the person] is the same as a son of a barren woman. So there is no fault.²⁰⁴ Relying upon the constructed nature of the non-existent, however, we say that existence and non-

²⁰³ The idea is that, while we may say the universal or the person or some other unreal thing does not exist insofar as it is neither different nor non-different from something that is provisionally accepted to exist, this does not mean that the negation of difference and non-difference is restricted to non-existence.

²⁰⁴ Note that we are here exploring how to understand canonical statements to the effect that the person (*pudgala*) is not different from nor non-different from the aggregates (*skandha*). If the person is totally non-existent, it may be objected, how then did the Buddha speak of that non-existent entity’s relation to the *skandhas*? Jñānaśrīmitra explains that the statement, “The person is not different from the aggregates” means that they do not exist in a *ātmātmīya*-relationship, viz. the relationship between a substantially existent property-possessor and property.

existence are differentially defined through their mutual exclusion—not that the two are real things. For just this reason, we speak of the state of having the nature of a real property-possessor and property. Therefore, so long as what is not appearing does not surpass what is real, then, if two things are not mixed-up with each other, we can apprehend difference from what is not being apprehended; that may be when the existence of awareness is proven. Otherwise, however, there will even then be doubt.

But when existence has as its nature only manifestation, what is not being cognized²⁰⁵ is neither unitary nor multiple (*nānā*). On the other hand, the meaning of difference is acceptable to us only in this way: something appearing is existent; it is not something non-existent. This is said through a conventional proclamation of truth (*udbhāvanāsamvrti*).²⁰⁶ However, there is no appearance (*ullekha*) there of the negation of some non-existent part. If there were the appearance [of that negation], then an identity [between existence and non-existence] cannot be avoided, and so how will there be non-existence (*abhāvatā*)?²⁰⁷ For just this reason, it does not obtain that there is duality (*dvaita*) [on our position] even in terms of existence and non-existence. Therefore, there is no cognition of even a bit (*leśa*) of what is accepted to be other (*anyābhimata*); what was said—viz. “From what can it differentiate?” (*kuto bhinattu*)—is thus correct, because of the *non-existence* [of anything at all that is other].²⁰⁸ For the same reason [viz. because nothing different is cognized], to say that there is an obvious proof of difference

²⁰⁵ *prakāśaikasvabhāve tu sattve 'pratīyamānaṃ] H; prakāśaikasvabhāve tu sattvena pratīyamānaṃ JNĀ.*

²⁰⁶ This is the form of conventional truth or conventional linguistic usage that leads to the ultimate truth or is most in accordance with it. Note that this term of art comes up again in explaining Prajñākaragupta’s interpretation of Dharmakīrti: see below, JNĀ 462.1.

²⁰⁷ That is, in making something non-existent through negating it, if that negation manifests to cognition, it *exists*, and so existence and non-existence would be identical. This cannot be, Jñānaśrīmitra here tells us; rather, the very duality between existence and non-existence is overcome in his view, as he goes on to say.

²⁰⁸ Jñānaśrīmitra returns once again to his verse 4.55, giving us another interpretation of his *kuto bhinattu*.

between earlier and later (*pūrvāpara*), though they are not apprehended together—this is mere self-deception on your part. This is because there is no manifestation of being earlier or being later, and what is manifest cannot be earlier or later. Precisely due to this non-existence [of earlier and later], there is no sensation of the past or the future, for there is the existence only of what is manifest (*prakāśasyaiva sattvāt*). And so, a summary verse:

Error or non-error, construction or non-construction;²⁰⁹
 pleasure, blue, and so on, and all the cognitions that arise from the senses²¹⁰—
 these awarenesses cannot be differentiated,
 because they are apprehended together.
 What is earlier and what is later
 are not sensed at all. [4.57]

Or else, we asked [in our verse 4.55] “From what should it differentiate?” due to the mere non-appearance of the limit of differentiation (*bhedāvadhi*). So what is the use of worrying about existence and non-existence?²¹¹ This is the meaning.

If the nature of an apprehended object is of the form,
 “This is different from that,”
 then there should be the appearance of the object as having a limiting term (*sāvadhi*).
 Otherwise, the object does not exist in that way [viz. as different]. [4.58]²¹²

“Surely,” you may say, “a father, and so on, who is a relatum (*sambandhin*), is cognized without the appearance of the other relatum [viz. his child].” Even in that kind of cognition, we know that the fact of something’s being a relatum (*sambandhitva*) is only constructed, because if it were real, then it would imply the awareness of everything [as related]. For a limiting term (*avadhi*) is also just a kind of relatum (*sambandhiviśeṣa*). For just that reason, the cognition of

²⁰⁹ *bhramābhramākālpānakālpānāni*] H; *bhramātra saṃkalpānakālpānāni* JNĀ.

²¹⁰ *śatāsītādīny akhilākṣajāni*] H; *śatāsītādīnyakhilākṣajāni* JNĀ.

²¹¹ *bhāvābhāvacintayety*] H; *bhāvābhāvacintayā ity* JNĀ.

²¹² Note that this verse appears in Ratnakīrti’s *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa* as well, coupled with his citation of the third line of 4.55: see RNĀ 147.17–18.

one out of the pair, cause and effect, which exists without the cognition of the other, has as its scope just a pure nature—this demonstrates that this is the distorted relation defined by mutual dependence that is only created by the artist called conceptualization. [JNĀ 459] Therefore, to say that there is the cognition of a limit when the limit is not cognized is just foolishness. So, perception in no way²¹³ grasps the difference of a thing from something that does not appear.

“But,” you may respond, “you have to accept the difference between blue and non-blue. Further, [you seem to think that] the perception that grasps blue does not grasp it in that way [viz. as distinct from non-blue]; so blue cannot be grasped at all!” We say the same thing too. Since non-blue is not cognized, that which is differentiated from non-blue is not cognized; how can you say blue alone is cognized? “Precisely due to the non-apprehension of non-blue, there is grasping of blue as different from non-blue; for otherwise, apprehension and non-apprehension would not be established.” If, then, there is no apprehension of non-blue, how will difference—which has that as its limiting term—be apprehended? For that reason, just as grasping something [e.g. blue] opposes its unity [with e.g. non-blue], so too it is opposed to grasping difference which is delimited by that [e.g. non-blue].

You may say, “The cognition of its having this nature [e.g. blue’s being blue] is itself the cognition of difference.” This works the same way even in the case of the negation of the cognition of difference.

Difference that is cognized without its limiting term—
how on earth will this be difference at all?
“Let us not use that word then!”
Then let it [viz. the limiting term] manifest! [4.59]

²¹³ *na kutaścīt*] H; *kutaścīt* JNĀ.

For if both [some x and its limiting term, e.g. blue and non-blue,] do not appear,²¹⁴ then we say that the nature itself of [difference] does not appear, since that is dependent upon two things. It is not denied that there is a mere conceptual construction. Therefore, just as it is asserted that the appearance of difference is just the appearance of a nature that is not mixed with something else,²¹⁵ similarly the seeing of what is independent of the limiting term can be asserted to be the destruction of the appearance of difference, because there is the appearance of only the nature of the thing [and not its limiting term].

“If that is so,

The limit’s difference is not known because it does not appear;
the limit’s non-difference is not known, because it is not mixed.
Moreover, an entity is nothing but different or non-different—
how can an entity be apprehended?” [4.60]

If you understand it in the proper way, that is so.

For if an object is not differentiated,
how is it differentiated from cognition?
And if there is the cognition of difference and the limit is also cognized,
everything is the scope of every cognition. [4.61]

This worry exists only for those who are enthralled by their commitment to externality.

Moreover, in that case this refutation is the same: For, given that it is not accepted that difference is apprehended, one [will be refuted], and in the same way, given that there is no apprehension of a limit, on which the apprehension of difference depends, the other [will be refuted]. If one whose eyes are closed [to the true nature of things] posits the apprehension of difference, even though he does not cognize a limiting term just as he does not apprehend the external, then won’t the other, whose eyes are closed [to the real experience of things], posit the apprehension of

²¹⁴ *ubhayābhāsane*] H; *ubhayāvabhāsane* JNĀ.

²¹⁵ *ānyāsaṅkīrṇa*] H; *ānyasaṅkīrṇa* JNĀ.

reality even in the absence of the apprehension of difference, as [it is possible in the case of atoms] when the nature of atoms is not apparent (*anullekha*)? Therefore, in that case too, it is only for someone whose eyes are shut that there can be the conditional positing that we apprehend things even though there is no appearance of what is real. In the same way, there is no fault if we cognize difference.²¹⁶

How is there the apprehension of difference (*bhedagraha*)? It doesn't exist at all. But the mere conditional positing of the apprehension of difference (*bhedagrahavyavasthā*) may exist relative to a determination (*niścaya*) that takes place later. That [later determination]—[JNĀ 460] dividing as mutually opposed to each other blue and non-blue things that had been made objects due to their own appropriate appearances—attributes the operation proper to that division to the category of perception in this way: “Blue has been seen, not non-blue.” Then, in dependence upon that, an explanation is given, viz. “Perception itself apprehends the exclusion of the other.” Or else this [later determination] is a recollection, as there is the apprehension of what was apprehended on the part of another [moment in the] continuous flow of cognition in reliance upon the determination of unity with respect to what is not apprehended.²¹⁷ This also explains why expressions like “That [one and the same cognition] determines... (*tat paricchinati*)”²¹⁸ are not contradictory.

²¹⁶ As the external realist says there are atoms despite not cognizing them, so too Jñānaśrīmitra can say there is the cognition of difference—at least so long as we keep our eyes closed to the true nature of things and do not say we *apprehend* difference.

²¹⁷ “The determination of unity with respect to what is not apprehended” means the determination of the unity of two moments of cognition as part of a single continuum: the *past* moment of cognition is not *presently* apprehended but is nevertheless determined as part of cognition's continuous, unified flow.

²¹⁸ Hejung refers us to a line from Dharmakīrti's *Hetubindu* (ed. Steinkellner) 32.5–7: *tasmāt kvacit pramāṇaṃ pravṛtaṃ tat paricchinati, tato 'nyad vyavacchinatti, tṛtīyaparakārābhāvaṃ ca sūcayātīty eka pramāṇavyāpāra eṣaḥ*.

Because this is a mere secondary conditional positing (*avāntaravyavasthāmātra*), it is not proper to give up the nature of perception, namely the apprehension of non-difference (*na pratyakṣasyābhedagrahanisargavisargayogaḥ*). “Is it then the case that there should now be a unity of what is apprehended and what is not apprehended (*upalabdhānupalabdha*)?” No, because what we intend is only the negation of the apprehension of difference (*bhedagrahaniṣedhamātra*).²¹⁹ Conceptualization will conventionally talk about (*vyavahārayet*) difference or non-difference when there is cognition or conceptualization of the counterpart (*pratiyogin*) together with it or in sequence; in relation to perception, however, what does not appear is neither unitary nor multiple (*naikaṃ na nānā*). “What way forward is there when something is presently appearing?” Even there, if the agents of apprehension (*grāhaka*) are different [that is, if there are two separate cognitions, one of blue and another of non-blue], then, because there is no appearance of the object of the other cognition (*anyaviśayānullekha*), what apprehends difference is only conceptual construction, as before.²²⁰ If there is non-difference [between the supposed two cognitions], *citrādvaitavāda* is proven. Direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) is precisely the nature of cognition and it precisely does not apprehend difference, or it precisely apprehends non-difference (*abhedagrāhakam eva*).²²¹ In summary,

Whether the external exists or does not exist,
 direct perception is not an awareness of difference (*na bhedavedana*).
 The awareness of non-difference (*abhedavedana*), however,

²¹⁹ Jñānaśrīmitra, in other words, is specifying that the apprehension of *non*-difference (*abhedagraha*) also means the *non*-apprehension of difference (*a-bhedagraha*).

²²⁰ That is, if it is supposed that one cognition apprehends blue and another apprehends yellow in the cognition of variegation, we really have two separate cognitions—one of blue, one of yellow, each perfect in itself—that have no information about each other whatsoever, and so it is only conceptual construction that links them together. Properly speaking, then, there would not be the *appearance* of variegation, only the *conceptual construction* of variegation.

²²¹ Here, I translate *abhedagrāhaka* twice, bringing out both senses of the negation that I believe Jñānaśrīmitra intends: direct perception is *a-bhedagrāhaka*, it does not immediately apprehend difference, and it is *abhedagrāhaka*, it immediately apprehends non-difference. The following verse unpacks these two senses of *abhedagrāhaka*.

exists in awareness (*buddhi*) only in as much as it is appearing. [4.62]

Therefore, difference indeed belongs only to convention (*vyavahāra*).

[xv. The Refutation of the Imposition of Opposed Properties]

“But how,” you may object, “is it possible to deny blue and yellow and so on, whose vivid appearance (*spaṣṭākāra*) is right before the eyes, which is appearing (*bhāsamāna*) and is the imposition of opposed properties (*viruddhadharmādhyāsa*)?”²²² We do not deny it—that is what we call variegation (*citra*)! Self-awareness does not tolerate in reality (*tattvataḥ*) the individual differences (*pratisvaṃ bhedaṃ*) among blue and yellow and so on that are expressed by the word variegation. In your comment, does “the imposition of opposed properties” mean “two properties that are opposed,” (*viruddhau dharmau*) or “two properties of two opposed things” (*viruddhayor [dharmau]*)? In the first case, are the two properties opposed because they belong to two different substrata (*āśraya*)? Or due to their respective natures (*svarūpa*)? [If it is thought that blue and yellow are opposed to each other] given their two different substrata, then because their having a common basis is proven precisely on the basis of awareness, the imposition of opposed properties is unestablished, because no other means of knowledge can be introduced when self-awareness is accepted.²²³ If they are opposed to each other by their respective natures though their substrata are in fact one and the same, this does not cause any trouble: when two things appear in a common substratum (*abhedīny āśraye*), they are precisely *friends*; their opposition is

²²² *nīlapīṭādi viruddhadharmādhyāsi*] H; *nīlapīṭādiviruddhadharmādhyāsi* JNĀ.

²²³ That is, if it is supposed that blue and yellow are opposed to each other because their substrata are opposed, this cannot be right because blue and yellow in the cognition of variegation are based on the common substratum of cognition.

destroyed, just like being a product and being impermanent [which occur in the same substratum and are obviously friends of each other].²²⁴

You may object, “The difference between those two [viz. being a product and being impermanent] is only conceptual construction; but here [regarding blue and yellow], the difference is apparent.” The example we have given is only limited to having a non-different substratum. “There is non-difference in the substratum, then, only because of the non-difference in appearance there.” Even here, [there is non-difference] because there is non-difference due to self-awareness. “Will there only be difference due to a difference in appearance, or not?” No, for with reference to the external, appearance (*pratibhāsa*) is a means of knowledge, another name of which is *ākāra*.²²⁵ But in the absence of [the external], appearance itself (*ābhāsa eva*) is the object, and there the means of knowledge is self-awareness. That object, which is just appearance, is made unitary (*ekīkriyamāṇa*) by self-awareness—by what can it be divided?

[The position that there is the imposition of opposed properties, where this means] two properties of two opposed things (*viruddhayor dharmau*), however, is driven far away: Because difference itself is not there, where will there be opposition? Therefore, there is no means to establish difference at all. Self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) itself is the means of establishing non-difference (*abhedaśādhana*) [JNĀ 461] and defeating difference (*bhedabādhana*); the conventional behavior toward the external (*bahirvyavahāra*) that flows along naturally [due to our habitual tendencies] posits [difference]. This is established.

²²⁴ *kṛtakānityatvavat*] H; *kṛtakanityatvavat* JNĀ. The idea is that if two things do in fact occupy the same locus, they must not be in an oppositional relationship, but rather a friendly one. Blue and yellow, then, insofar as they occupy the same locus, must not be opposed by nature.

²²⁵ For the external object, that is, we say that the means of knowledge is the appearance (*ākāra*) of the pot, for instance. But things are different when we are dealing with cognition.

[xvi. Prajñākaragupta on Dharmakīrti's *Citrādvaita* Verses, PV 3.220–221]

[Dharmakīrti] says this too:

Blue and so on [in variegated cognition (*citravijñāna*)
is of the nature of awareness (*jñānopādhi*): it cannot be seen
when it is not joined with the other [colors in the variegation].
For one who analytically differentiates that blue
is focused on the external object[—not awareness].] [PV 3.220]²²⁶

“Not joined with the other [colors in the variegation] (*ananyabhāk*)” means that which does not partake of another nature (*ananyasvabhāvabhāk*). Blue that does not partake of the nature of yellow cannot manifest when it is located in variegated awareness (*citravijñāna*) (though it may be that blue can be seen alone [in conceivable but rare cases of homogenous, monochrome cognition]); [this is so] because appearance, which has come to be a property of [awareness] (*taddharmatāpanna*),²²⁷ is restricted to each and every [other appearance] like yellow and so on. The point is that for any appearance to be possible [in the cognition of variegation], it must participate in the nature of every other [appearance].²²⁸ For, one who analyzes (*vivecayan*) or differentiates (*bhīdan*) that [blue] inevitably ought to accept that the appearance does not come to be a property of [awareness];²²⁹ hence, he falls on precisely an external realist view (*bahirarthavāda*). But this blue and so on is a characteristic of awareness (*jñānopādhi*).

Therefore, “However awareness appears [PV 3.221a]”—insofar as it appears as blue and yellow

²²⁶ Jñānaśrīmitra repeats only the first word of this by now well-known verse, but I repeat it here to help see how he now understands it: *nīlādīś citravijñāne jñānopādhir ananyabhāk / aśakyadarśanas taṃ hi pataty arthe vivecayan //*
²²⁷ We may perhaps understand *taddharmatāpanna* as a gloss of sorts of *jñānopādhi*; I provisionally supply *jñāna* for *tat*.

²²⁸ *parasparasvabhāvam bhajann eva] H; parasparasvabhāvas tyajanneva JNĀ*. To say that blue and yellow are “joined” in the cognition of variegation, then, means that they mutually participate in each other’s nature: they are united in their very nature insofar as they manifest in a single moment of cognition.

²²⁹ Or as Jñānaśrīmitra writes, *niyataṃ taddharmatām anāpannatām pratibhāsasya svīkuryāt*. Again, I here take *tat* to be referring to *jñāna*.

—“it is experienced in precisely that way [PV 3.221b]”—as being blue and yellow,²³⁰ that is as having mutually the nature of each other due to self-awareness. This is the point. The rest is easy.

Therefore, what Prajñākaragupta (*bhāṣyakāra*) said is right: “Or else [cognition] is not variegated (*na ... citra*) because it cannot be posited as different from something non-variegated (*acitra*).”²³¹ For here, [cognition] cannot be posited (*vyavasthāpana*) as different from self-awareness, which is non-variegated (*acitra*) or of a nature that is not multiple (*anānārūpa*); hence, [cognition] can be posited as non-different and what is expressed [by the negation in Prajñākaragupta’s line] is an implicative negation (*paryudāsa*). And this [Prajñākaragupta] himself has shown. The word “or else (*vā*)” is used [by Prajñākaragupta] because earlier, being unitary meant being indivisible (*aśakyavivecanatva*), defined as non-deviation (*avyabhicāralakṣaṇa*); now, however, being unitary is understood only as being included in a single unitary awareness (*ekasamvidantargatatvam eva*). Therefore, even [awareness] having a variegated form (*citrākāratā*) is stated [merely] conventionally. But having understood the meaning of the statement that ultimately there is only non-duality in accordance with the intention just of denying the awareness of difference, what is said [by some opponent]—viz. “If that is so, it is not non-duality, for there is no appearance of it as different from duality; similarly awareness is not awareness at all [because it doesn’t appear as different from what is not awareness], nor is there self-awareness [because it doesn’t appear as different from what is not

²³⁰ *tat tathaivānubhūyate nīlapītāditvena*] H; *tat tatraivanu[bhūte] pītāditvena* JNĀ.

²³¹ Jñānaśrīmitra here refers to and comments on Prajñākaragupta’s discussion of PV 3.221cd. See PVA 290.11–15: *iti nāmaikabhāvaḥ syāc citrākārasya cetasaḥ // na hi jñānatvam pratyākhyāya vivecanam asti. tasmād grāhyagrāhakanīlādyaḥ citrā buddhir ekaiveti citrādvaitam eva. na vā tac citram acitrād bhedena vyavasthāpanāsambhavāt. tasmāt samvedanam eva kevalam advaitam aparasyābhāvād iti sthitam*. See Masahiro Inami’s very helpful discussion of this passage in “Nondual cognition,” in *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference. Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*, edited by Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, and Birgit Kellner (Vienna: VÖAW, 2011), 177–196.

self-awareness]”—is ruled out. For duality is difference, and where is there the appearance of that? “Then, even given the absence of an appearance of difference from that, due to what will it be unitary?” This is because being unitary has been taught in accordance with what belongs to a single awareness. It is also the same way with the rest [awareness, self-awareness, and so on]: for when there is appearance, there is the unwanted consequence that all contrary things will lose their nature.²³²

[JNĀ 462] It is not proper to say that difference can be posited, like variegation, through a convention that proclaims the truth (*udbhāvanāsamvrti*), because we have already stated that experience arises in opposition to (*virodha*) difference. Because it refers to just blue, yellow, and so on, to state that what is variegated is non-dual is itself a convention that proclaims the truth, not talk of difference. One who has not reflected upon reality (*anabhyūhitatattva*) may talk of difference due to repeated habituation (*abhyāsabhāvita*); talk of difference is not in accordance with reality. But in reality (*vastutaḥ*), this letter that expresses meaning [in *a-dvaita*, viz. the negative particle,] is strictly a non-implicative negation (*prasajyapratishedha*); that that negation is for the sake of establishing that [cognition] is unitary is the error of ordinary people (*bhrāntir lokasya*).²³³ This, then, is the meaning [of Prajñākaragupta’s statement]: Or else (*athavā*) what is accepted as object and subject, or blue, yellow, and so on, which is referred to by the word “variegated” (*citra*), is in fact not variegated, not multiple (*nānā*), because cognition cannot be

²³² The idea would seem to be that cognition is not variegated ultimately, because the very distinction between what is variegated and what is not variegated is not possible: that distinction, like all distinction, is only conventional, so we say that cognition is variegated only conventionally. The opponent objects that, if things are all defined through distinctions, then non-duality, awareness, or self-awareness too should be defined through their opposition to what is dual, insentient, not self-aware, and so on. Jñānaśrīmitra responds that this is not so, for difference does not manifest in self-awareness; when dealing with unitary appearance, the nature of anything contrary vanishes. The citation of an opponent here (if what lies between *yad uktam* and *iti* is in fact a citation) remains untraced.

²³³ Compare above, section xii of this translation, where Jñānaśrīmitra had also referred to wrong interpretations of Prajñākaragupta as “an error of ordinary people.”

posited as different since self-awareness is non-variegated (*acitra*); hence, only the negation of being multiple (*nānātva*) is intended, and the opponent has already performed²³⁴ the negation of being unitary (*ekatva*) on the basis of perception; hence, manifestation is released from both [being unitary and being multiple], existing as if free from both momentariness and non-momentariness.²³⁵ This is what is said [by Prajñākaragupta], as we've already explained.

For the same reason, since there is nothing other than [manifestation], viz. something insentient (*jaḍa*) or object and subject (*grāhyagrāhaka*), the word non-duality (*advaita*) has the sense of *absolute* (*kevala*); it does not mean *one* in the sense of an implicative negation of duality (*dvaitaparyudāsa*). To show this, [Prajñākaragupta] says, “Therefore, there is only self-awareness, which is absolute non-duality, for what is other does not exist.”²³⁶

Therefore, [this is] exactly what [Prajñākaragupta] says facing an objection: “Or you might say, ‘How is what is presently appearing non-existent? Simply because it is conceptualized in terms of being unitary and being manifold, it does not exist.’ Though it is conceptualized, it does *appear*; if it does not exist at all, how can it appear? If it does appear, how can it be non-existent?”²³⁷ And the *Ṭīkā* [of Jayanta] on this passage says, “Even if it has neither a unitary nor a manifold nature, [appearance] exists insofar as it consists of apprehension, due to the dictum that existence is apprehension.”²³⁸ This same thing is expressed in the form of another position (*siddhanta*). The position of the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition (*citrādvaitavāda*) qualified by being unitary (*ekatvopādhi*) is the main thing for Dharmakīrti

²³⁴ *kṛta*] H; *kuta* JNĀ.

²³⁵ *kṣaṇikākṣaṇitvamukta iva sann ity*] H; *kṣaṇikam kṣaṇitvamukta iva sann ity* JNĀ.

²³⁶ For the full citation of the PVA discussed here, see above, fn. 231.

²³⁷ See PVA 286.27–29 (Inami, “Nondual Cognition,” 191): *atha pratibhāsamānam katham ekatvānekatva-vikalpanād eva na bhavati. vikalpamānam api tat pratibhāsata eva. māyāmarīciprabhṛtipratibhāsavad asattve 'pi na doṣaḥ. teṣām apy avidyamānatve katham pratibhāsaḥ. pratibhāsaś cet katham avidyamānatā.*

²³⁸ See Inami, “Nondual Cognition,” 191, fn. 48, for the reference to Jayanta’s *Ṭīkā*.

(*vārttikakāra*). For Prajñākaragupta (*bhāṣyakāra*), however, it is qualified by the exclusion of both [being unitary and being manifold].²³⁹ But in reality both of them have one and the same intention. The conditional distinction (*vyavasthā*) between what is primary and what is not is made due to the difference in their respective styles of expression (*abhivyaṅgītibheda*).

Therefore, criticizing the Master Dharmakīrti (*ācārya*) on the basis of the *Bhāṣya* without having looked into the variegated (*citra*) explanation of the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition (*citrādvaita*)—for whom is this praiseworthy? [4.63]

And if it is not impossible for you to say, “The intention of the Master Dharmakīrti (*ācārya*) is one thing, and the literal explanation of Prajñākaragupta (*bhāṣyakāra*) is the same, though he has a different intention”—damn your tripping over manifestation itself!²⁴⁰ In this way, given that the nature of cognition is indeed *unitary*, though it is variegated, therefore, the non-apprehension of the pervader will not be established.²⁴¹ The objection that, “the non-duality of wondrously variegated cognition has no use for those in the conventional world (*vyavahārin*),” is not a defeater for our view, because it is the object of Buddha (*buddhagocara*), just like emptiness.

[xvii. Distinguishing between the Realization of Reality and Ignorance]

You may say, “There is indeed a fault,
because there is no difference between the realization of reality and ignorance.”
An owl lives happily

²³⁹ For Dharmakīrti, that is, the *citrādvaita* teaches that variegated cognition is unitary; for Prajñākaragupta, it principally teaches that variegated cognition is non-dual, neither unitary nor manifold. This is a difference in their respective styles, Jñānaśrīmitra goes on to say, not a difference in their true intentions.

²⁴⁰ Jñānaśrīmitra writes, *dhik prakāśa eva skhalanam*. Cleverly, this also accuses the opponent of tripping over something that is so obvious it is right in front of him.

²⁴¹ The easy way to respond to the neither-one-nor-many argument, then, is with Dharmakīrti. That is, we can simply say that variegated cognition is indeed unitary, and so the non-apprehension of being unitary or being manifold, the reason in the neither-one-nor-many argument, is unestablished.

though he does not see his own face. [4.64]²⁴²

[JNĀ 463] That is to say,

There is no dispute regarding cognition with appearances,²⁴³
for it is proven that what is manifesting
is mind.²⁴⁴

However, what is manifest does not exist
with a nature that is *constructed* (*prakalpita*):²⁴⁵
this is the difference [between the realization of reality and ignorance]. [4.65]

And is the circle of cognitions ever released
from this nature of reality?

It is not that, earlier, there was no experience of the nature of cognition,
because there would be the undesirable consequence
that the nature of cognition itself will be destroyed. [4.66]²⁴⁶

Therefore, it is only that there was no ascertainment of that [nature of cognition],
though even that so-called ascertainment
is qualified by differentiated appearances (*ākārabhedotkalita*).²⁴⁷
The ascertainment, whether it accords with reality or convention,
is not in fact different given the absence of dependence upon difference. [4.67]²⁴⁸

Moreover, there is never cognition of something distinct (*para*),
and both are equally devoid of essence (*svabhāvaśūnyatva*).
What is the basis for the distinction you've made,
namely that at one time there is convention,
and at another time there is not? [4.68]

Or else:

²⁴² I believe the opponent's worry here is not just that the *citrādvaita* is of no use to ordinary beings, but rather now he shifts to a larger issue with the non-dualism Jñānaśrīmitra has so far defended: if there is really no difference, there is no difference between enlightenment, or the realization of reality (*tattvāvabhoda*), and ignorance. While the implication of Jñānaśrīmitra's initial response about the owl is not entirely clear to me, I believe the idea is that, just as an owl goes about its life happily ignorant of its own face, so too the opponent goes about saṃsāra happily, ignorant of the true implications of non-dualism.

²⁴³ *sākṛtau*] H; *sā kṛtau* JNĀ.

²⁴⁴ Reading *prakāśamānasya manastvasiddheḥ* with JNĀ, rather than *prakāśamānasya manas tv asiddheḥ* with H.

²⁴⁵ Reading *nātmanā sat* instead of *nātmanāsat*. I take it that the difference between the realization of reality and ignorance, then, is the absence of only the constructed nature in what is manifest.

²⁴⁶ Cognition has the same nature before and after realization, in other words.

²⁴⁷ Jñānaśrīmitra tells us here that the ascertainment of the nature of cognition, which makes the difference between the realization of reality and ignorance, itself has some differentiated appearances.

²⁴⁸ There is no real difference between the ascertainment of reality or that of convention, since both are perfect in themselves as manifest, self-aware cognitions.

There is never the absence of emptiness;
there is no direct realization that is other (*sākṣātkriyā parā*) at all.
There is no destruction of faults,
nor the arising of virtues;
there is no convention at all when it is investigated.²⁴⁹ [4.69]

So here, as long as there is no analysis (*vicāra*),
there is the view that
this is existence [*bhava*, or *saṃsāra*], this is peace [*śama*, or *nirvāṇa*].
But the mind is shaken by the play of thought—
tell me, what is existence, what is peace? [4.70]

[JNĀ 464] As the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* says [6.5],

There is no difference between these two,
peace and birth (*śamajanma*),
from the point of view of reality.
Nevertheless, it is asserted that those who perform good actions
obtain peace through the destruction of birth.

“From the point of view of reality” (*sadarthavṛtṭyā*) means from the point of view of the ultimate
(*paramārvṛtṭyā*), and the second half of the verse [“Nevertheless, ...”] means conventionally.

As the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* says [4.60ab],

There is no conceptualization of existence and peace (*bhavaśānti*),
for all phenomena are like a dream.

And therefore, it is unquestionably proven (*jātisiddha*) [as Nāgārjuna says in *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 6]:

This duality between *nirvāṇa* and existence
does not exist.
True knowledge (*parijñāna*) of existence alone
is called *nirvāṇa*.²⁵⁰

Refuting this statement is nothing but murdering one’s own sinless mother.

Therefore, this is the meaning of this chapter (*prakaraṇārtha*):

²⁴⁹ *na saṃvṛtiḥ kāpi vicāryamāṇā*] H; *na saṃvṛtiḥ kāryavicāryamāṇā* JNĀ.

²⁵⁰ Cf. the second chapter of the *Sākārasiddhi*, JNĀ 389.17, where Jñānaśrīmitra already cites this verse.

In the nature of awareness (*dhīrūpa*), whatever—
let there be difference or non-difference, both, or neither.²⁵¹
Manifestation, which opposes even a whiff of defeat,
is not unreal (*nālīkatva*). [4.71]

However, the emptiness of conceptual elaborations—like [the etymological derivation of the word “cognition” where] cognition is said to be what cognizes (*viñānātīti viñānam*)—is everywhere the case. And we could go on at length [with scriptural passages] like this: “Indeed, O Subhūti,²⁵² these dharmas do not exist in the way that ignorant ordinary people who are not studied and have false conceptions of reality think they exist.” For even the properties of Buddha²⁵³ do not really exist with the nature constructed by other cognitions, since they exist only as being knowable through self-awareness (*svasaṃvedyatayaiva sattvāt*). By this, the dream-like and illusion-like character of the Blessed One is explained. For even in those examples [of dreams or illusory cognitions], what is negated is only what is determined, not what appears. Therefore, the proof of only the Blessed One who has appearances (*sākārasyaiva bhagavataḥ*) is without defeat. This is established.

And thus the meaning of [Dharmakīrti’s] verse of homage (*namaskāraśloka*) can be established:²⁵⁴

That which has realized its elegance (*audārya*)
through its own major and minor marks²⁵⁵
which are innate to it;
which is profound (*gambhīra*) insofar as it is not in others’ scope,²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Or we may take this to be: difference or non-difference, duality, or non-duality (*bhedo ’bhedo dvidhā ’dvedhā*). And note that Jñānaśrīmitra alludes again to PV 3.4 with his *astu yathā tathā*.

²⁵² *subhūte*] H; *svabhūte* JNĀ.

²⁵³ *buddhadharmā*] H; *buddhidharmā* JNĀ.

²⁵⁴ To help the reader see how Jñānaśrīmitra glosses Dharmakīrti’s verse of homage, which Jñānaśrīmitra had borrowed as his own homage at the beginning of SSS (JNĀ 367), I give it here again: *vidhūtakaḥpanājāla-gambhīrodāramūrtaye / namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantasphuraṇatviṣe //*

²⁵⁵ *sānvyāñjanalakṣaṇair*] H; *sānvyāñjanalakṣaṇair* JNĀ.

²⁵⁶ On Jñānaśrīmitra’s *ananyagocaratayā* as a reason for Dharmakīrti’s *gambhīra*, compare Kaṇvakagomin, who writes at PVST 2.8: *gambhīrāḥ śrāvakaḥpratyekabuddhādyaviṣayatvāt*.

empty of the waves of elaborations (*śūnyam prapañcormibhiḥ*);
from which the rays of gnosis (*jñānatviṣ*) emanate (*sphuranti*) throughout the world
through the *nirmāṇakāyas*—
that body (*vapus*) is not stained by unreality (*alīkatva*).
Thus, this body of the Sage is excellent
from every angle (*bhadraṃ samantāt*). [4.72]

[JNĀ 465] What more?

As gold is endowed with great excellence,
is furnished with beautiful qualities,
is indestructible,
and is devoid of any doubt regarding a stain of falsehood (*ālīkya*),
may all beings attain the body of Buddha—
which is just like that. [4.73]²⁵⁷

So ends the Fourth Chapter on the Wondrous Non-Duality of Cognition
in the *Proof that Consciousness Has Appearances*
composed by the Mahāpaṇḍita Jñānaśrīmitra.

²⁵⁷ Harunaga Isaacson proposes, though very much as a hypothesis, that the form of this verse suggests that it is not impossible that this was originally the end of the work. Its form calls to mind not just a summary of the chapter's intent, but rather a more conclusive, final benediction—like what we might expect at the end of a Sanskrit drama (or a *nāṭaka* like Jñānaśrīmitra's own *Sākārasiddhi*, as noted in Jñānaśrīmitra's SSS 1.2, discussed in chapter 1, section iii). There is indeed a certain elegance to this: Jñānaśrīmitra began with reference to Dharmakīrti's verse of homage from the PV, followed by his praise of Prajñākaragupta as the director of the drama that is the way of the *Sākārasiddhi* (*sākārasiddhinayanātakasūtradhāra*)—the proof of the view that both cognition and, as we saw a moment ago, buddhahood are by nature *sākāra*. The thought would be, then, that Jñānaśrīmitra here in fact concludes his treatise, having established that both cognition and buddhahood are *sākāra*, with reference again to Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, and the proper interpretation of their views. The return to Dharmakīrti's verse of homage in 4.72 then bookends the work very nicely, and this benedictory verse finally concludes it. We would then have a work in four chapters, with the chapter on the *citrādvaita* at the end. This would more precisely parallel the *Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra*, which also concludes with a fourth and final chapter on the investigation of the *citrādvaita* (*citrādvaitanirṇaya*); also, we might note that the *Sākārasaṃgraha* concludes with this same verse: SSS 4.73 = SSSū 4.238. We could, continuing our speculation, call this four-chapter work the first edition of the *Sākārasiddhi*. Then, after receiving various criticisms—mostly from Mādhyamika opponents, given the content of what follows—Jñānaśrīmitra published a second edition of the work, which included what are now chapters 5 and 6 of the *Sākārasiddhiśāstra*: chapter 5 (*svasaṃvedanapariccheda*), which refutes the Mādhyamika refutation of self-awareness (and gives interesting *sākāravāda* interpretations of Mādhyamika authors like Śāntideva in the process), and then chapter 6 (*ubhayādvaitaparicchedaḥ*] MS; *ubhayādvaitaparicchedaḥ* JNĀ 513.7), which shows the non-duality of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra through copious citations and fascinating interpretations of canonical works of both traditions. This is all very tenuous speculation, of course, but I think it is in any case an interesting proposal to bear in mind.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

AA	<i>Abhisamayālamkāra</i> (see Makransky, <i>Buddhahood Embodied</i>)
ac	<i>ante correctionem</i>
AP	<i>Apoḥaprakaraṇa</i> (in JNĀ; compare McCrea and Patil, <i>Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India</i>)
ATBS	Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien
BASK	<i>Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā</i> (see Saccone, <i>On the Nature of Things</i> ; compare N. A. Shastri edition)
BCA/BCAP	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra/-Pañjikā</i> (La Vallée Poussin edition)
BITS	Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series
CAPV	<i>Citrādvaitaprakāśavāda</i> (in RNĀ)
CIHTS	Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies (Sarnath)
conj.	conjecture
D	sDe dge edition of the bsTan 'gyur
DhDhV	<i>Dharmadharmatāpravibhāga</i>
em.	emendation
GṬ	<i>Mahāmāyātantra Guṇavatī Ṭīkā</i> (Rinpoche and Dwivedi edition)
H	<i>Sākārasiddhiśāstra</i> (forthcoming edition by Bhikṣu Hejung)
HT	<i>Hevajratantra</i> (see MuĀv; compare Snellgrove edition)
HTPT	<i>Hevajratantra Piṇḍārthaṭīkā</i> (see Sferra, “The <i>Laud of the Chosen Deity</i> ”)
IsIAO	Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente
IsMEO	Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente
JIABS	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
JIP	<i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i>
JNĀ	<i>Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvali</i> (Thakur edition)
KṬ	<i>Khasamatantra Khasamā Ṭīkā</i> (Upādhyāya edition)
LAS	<i>Laṅkāvatārasūtra</i> (Nanjio edition)
MA(Ś)	<i>Madhyamakālamkāra</i> of Śāntarakṣita (Ichigō edition)
MAU	<i>Madhyamālamkāropadeśa</i> (bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma)
MAV	<i>Madhyamakālamkāravṛttimadhyamapratipatsiddhi</i> (bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma)
MAv/Bh	<i>Madhyamakāvatāra/-Bhāṣya</i> (La Vallée Poussin edition)
MMK	<i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i> (see Siderits and Katsura, <i>Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>)
MS/MSS	manuscript/manuscripts
MSA/-Bh	<i>Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra</i> (Bagchi edition)
MuĀv	<i>Hevajrapañjikā Muktāvalī</i>
MuĀv _{Isaacson}	MuĀv (forthcoming edition by Harunaga Isaacson)
MuĀv _{ed}	MuĀv (Tripathi and Negi edition)
N	sNar thang edition of the bsTan 'gyur

om.	omitted in
P	Peking edition of the bsTan 'gyur
pc	<i>post correctionem</i>
PPU	<i>Prajñāpāramitopadeśa</i> (bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma)
PV	<i>Pramānavārttika</i> (Miyasaka edition) ¹
PVA	<i>Pramānavārttikālaṃkārabhāṣya</i> (Sāṅkṛtyāyana edition)
PVV	<i>Pramānavārttikavṛtti</i> (Sāṅkṛtyāyana edition)
PVST	<i>Pramānavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā</i> (Sāṅkṛtyāyana edition)
PVin	<i>Pramānaviniścaya</i> (Steinkellner edition)
RBTS	Rare Buddhist Texts Series
RGV/RGVV	<i>Ratnagoṭravibhāga/-Vyākhyā</i> (Johnson edition)
RNĀ	<i>Ratnakīrtinibandhāvali</i> (Thakur edition)
SAD	<i>Santānāntaradūṣaṇa</i> (in RNĀ)
SITB	Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism
SOR	Serie Orientale Roma
SSŚ	<i>Sākārasiddhiśāstra</i> (in JNĀ)
SSSū	<i>Sākārasaṃgrahasūtra</i> (in JNĀ)
TBh	<i>Tarkabhāṣā</i> (Shastri edition)
TRA/TRAV	<i>Tattvaratnāvaloka/-Vivarāṇa</i> (Pandey edition)
TS/TSP	<i>Tattvasaṃgraha/-Pañjikā</i> (Shastri edition)
TSWS	Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series
VMS	<i>Vijñaptimatratāsiddhi</i> of Ratnākaraśānti (bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma)
VÖAW	Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
WSTB	Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde
YRN	<i>Yogaratanmālā</i> (see Snellgrove, <i>The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study</i>)
YṢ	<i>Yuktiṣaṣṭikā</i> (see Lindtner, <i>Nagarjuniana</i>)

Manuscript images utilized

MS of JNĀ	Prints of Sāṅkṛtyāyana's photographs, Göttingen University Library, Xc 14/25 Giuseppe Tucci's Collection, ISIAO, Rome, Photograph No. 3.1.40
MS of KṬ	Kaiser Library MS 227 = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project C25/8
MS of MuĀv	Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project A994/6 Tokyo University Library MS 513
MS of RNĀ	Prints of Sāṅkṛtyāyana's photographs, Göttingen University Library, Xc 14/26

¹ While I refer to Miyasaka's edition of PV, note that I do not follow his ordering of the chapters. PV 1 is herein the *svarthānumāna*-chapter; PV 2, *pramāṇasiddhi*; PV 3, *pratyaḥṣa*; PV 4, *parārthānumāna*. For a discussion of this issue, see in particular Birgit Kellner, "First logic, then the Buddha?"

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