

Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 23 • Number 2 • 2000

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Knowing All through Knowing One:
Mystical Communion or Logical Trick in the
Tattvasamgraha and *Tattvasamgrahapañjikā**

It is well known that Buddhists of various stripes have had a difficult relationship with the concept of omniscience. In the earliest surviving corpus of texts, we find passages both for and against the idea that the Buddha knew all things, or *dharmas*, without exception. Nonetheless, over time it became commonplace for both philosophers and *sūtra* compilers to refer to their founder not only by the well-worn epithets of Buddha, Tathāgata, and Bhagavān, but also as Sarvajña, the All-knowing or Omniscient One. This was so despite the fact that according to many Buddhist philosophers – especially the Mādhyamikas of later centuries and others who followed the *Prajñāpāramitā* collection of Mahāyāna sūtras – there ultimately was nothing to know. Starting with Nāgārjuna and his peers, one observes an increasing dedication to the idea of an omniscient Buddha; yet simultaneously, one also encounters a relentless attempt to dismantle the very “individual nature” (*svabhāva*) that would seem (at least according to many of the realist ontologies then current in India) to allow for any knowledge at all. Why this occurs is a question that I cannot address in this short essay. What I can do, however, is present one Mahāyāna approach to the problem of omniscience – what I call *the knowing all through knowing one* approach – and show how it was elaborated in an ingenious fashion by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, two Indian Buddhist philosophers of the eighth century.

The idea that one should be able to know everything simply by knowing one single thing appears counterintuitive. For such a maxim to make sense, it would seem to be necessary that all things are in fact one single thing, as in certain Vedāntin positions. A passage from the

* This paper was first presented at the 1999 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion at a panel on yogic perception. For this revised version, I would like especially to thank Dan Arnold of the University of Chicago and John Dunne of the University of Wisconsin-Madison for numerous insightful comments and criticisms.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad suggests such a position when it states “Through the seeing, hearing, contemplation, and knowing of the Self, everything is known.”¹ Here, direct knowledge of the *ātman* or Self somehow *is* or *entails* knowledge of everything, which in turn suggests that everything is just the *ātman*. Advaita Vedāntin philosophers, with their extreme forms of monism, might be able to make sense of this dictum,² but, as is commonly known, Buddhists generally reject monistic metaphysical formulations, such as that of the world-spirit *brahman* or the universal *ātman*. So, when Buddhist philosophers invoke the *knowing all through knowing one* approach to omniscience, it seems likely that they have something else in mind.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between monists and Buddhists in the formulation of the *knowing all through knowing one* thesis is the nature of the one thing that is known. For Buddhists, rather than a single, underlying and absolute reality, such as *brahman* or *ātman*, it is precisely the *lack* of such a reality (i.e., ‘emptiness’ or *śūnyatā*) that constitutes the single thing, knowledge of which is equated with knowledge of all. Āryadeva, the presumed student of Nāgārjuna, presents an early Mahāyāna formulation of this principle in his *Catuḥśataka*:

bhāvasyaikasya yo draṣṭā draṣṭā sarvasya sa smṛtaḥ / ekasya śūnyatā yaiva saiva sarvasya śūnyatā // “Who sees just one thing is said to see all; the emptiness of one is just the emptiness of all.” [CS 8.16]

Āryadeva’s purpose in this verse is to show that a particular (and crucial) requisite of liberation is possible. That is, in the Buddhist formula of liberation that Āryadeva advances here, it is necessary that one become definitively aware that one has stopped, prevented, or turned back – the Sanskrit is *vāraṇam* – first everything that is non-meritorious, then the *ātman* or Self, and finally all *dharma*s, or things. This formula, which Āryadeva lays out in the verse immediately prior to CS 8.16, stresses three necessary reversals.³ While the first two reversals evince a general Buddhist emphasis on moral rectitude and the principle

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5.: *ātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṃ sarvaṃ viditam.*
2. See especially the early chapters of PHILLIPS (1995) for details on the varieties of Advaitin monism.
3. CS 8.15: *vāraṇam prāg apuṇyasya madhye vāraṇam ātmanaḥ / sarvasya vāraṇam paścād yo jānūte sa buddhimān //.*

of no-self (*anātman*), the third reversal reflects the specifically Madhyamaka position that one should destroy all notions of independent, inherent, or ultimately real existence in relation to all things. In response to the question of how, even before liberation, an ordinary practitioner can come to know all things, such that she might then be able to verify that she has indeed ‘stopped’ or ‘turned them back’ without exception, Āryadeva says “Who sees just one thing is said to see all; the emptiness of one is just the emptiness of all.”

In his commentary on this verse, Candrakīrti explains that the emptiness of one *dharma* is not different from the emptiness of all *dharmas*.⁴ Thus, to know the emptiness of all *dharmas*, one must know only the emptiness of a single *dharma*. In this way, emptiness is similar to space. As space remains unchanged regardless of the changing forms – such as ewers and bowls – that surround it, emptiness too remains unchanged regardless of the multitude of *dharmas* that possess or ‘hold’ it.⁵ But

4. Candrakīrti starts with the standard Buddhist categories of the five *skandhas*, and then proceeds to the twelve *āyatanas* and the eighteen *dhātus* to show that all infinite and various entities have a single nature: emptiness. See CŚV *ad* CŚ 8.16 (D ya 139a6-139b1): *gzugs kyi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid gañ yin pa de ñid tshor ba la sogs pa phuñ po rnams kyi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid do / de bžin du mig gi skye mched gyi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid gañ yin pa de ñid skye mched bcu gñis char gyi yañ yin no / de bžin du mig gi khams kyi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid gañ yin pa de ñid khams bco bryad char gyi yañ yin no / de bžin du dños po dañ yul dañ dus dañ rten gyi dbye bas tha dad ciñ rab tu dbye ba tha’ yas pa rnams las dños po gcig gi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid gañ yin pa de ñid dños po thams cad kyi rañ bžin stoñ pa ñid do /*
5. Candrakīrti makes this point both in his commentary on CŚ 8.16 and in a related passage in his independent treatise, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (MAV). In the CŚV he states (D ya 139b1-2): *bum pa dañ ’khar gžon la sogs pa tha dad kyañ rnam mkha’ tha dad med pa bžin no / gzugs la sogs pa’i rañ bžin po tha dad kyañ gzugs la sogs pa rnams kyi rañ bžin gyis ma skyes pa las tha dad pa med pa’i phyir chos gcig kho na’i rañ bžin gyis ma skyes pa yoñs su šes na chos thams cad kyi rañ bžin gyis ma skyes pa yañ yoñs su šes par ’gyur te /*. The MAV 12.2 states (D ’a 216a5-6): *ji ltar snod kyi dbye bas mkha’ la dbye ba med de ltar / dños byas dbye ba ’ga’ yañ de ñid la med de yi phyir / ro mñam ñid du yañ dag thugs su chud par mžad gyur na / mkhyen bzañ khyod kyis skad cig gis ni šes bya thugs su chud //*. In his own commentary on this verse, Candrakīrti explicitly names the knowledge of the single flavor of emptiness as “omniscient wisdom.” He says (D ’a 330a3-5): *dper na bum pa dañ ’khar gžon la sogs pa tha dad kyañ sgrib pa med pa ñid du mtshuñs pa’i phyir der rtogs pa’i nam mkha’ la tha dad pa med pa de bžin du / gzugs dañ tshor ba la sogs pa’i dños po tha dad kyañ der gtogs pa’i de kho na ñid skye ba med pa’i mtshan ñid can la tha dad pa med pas de kho na ñid ni ro gcig (D adds pa) kho nar šes par bya’o / de yañ*

emptiness is more significant than space, because, unlike space, emptiness can be shown to be the ultimate nature of all things. Thus, by knowing emptiness in relation to one thing, one also knows the ultimate nature of all things. Since one knows the ultimate nature of all things, one also eliminates ignorance entirely.

Two points are important here. First, we should recognize that the single thing, knowledge of which equals knowledge of all, is both a universal and an abstraction: it is empti-*ness*. This might again lead one to think of Vedāntin monists like Maṇḍanamiśra, who hold that only *brahman*, understood as universal Being, or *sattā*, is ultimately real.⁶ But emptiness differs from the ultimate reality of Vedāntins like Maṇḍanamiśra, in that it is generally seen as a negation possessing no greater reality than all other abstractions and universals. And this brings us to the second point we should note: on the Buddhist view, when it is said that all *dharmas* are qualified by the universal emptiness, this does not mean that there is some single entity or thing, 'emptiness,' which truly exists, underlying or otherwise applying to all appearances. Emptiness cannot be a real entity, for, like everything, it is subject to the same arguments that show that all *dharmas* without exception are ultimately devoid of real and independent existence.⁷ Even on the level of conven-

mkhyen pa'i skad cig gcig kho nas thugs su chud pas bcom ldan 'das kyis mkhyen pa'i skad cig gcig kho nar thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye šes brñes so ll.

6. For a discussion of how Maṇḍanamiśra construes the universal (*sāmānya*) as that which is non-different (*abheda*) and the particular (*viśeṣa*) as that which is different (*bheda*), see THRASHER (1978). According to THRASHER, for Maṇḍanamiśra, only the non-different universal, Being or *sattā*, is true, and only that is known in perception. This non-different universal is the nature (*svabhāva*) of all things, and it is the same in all things (136). All things are thus ultimately one, and differences are all a result of ignorance. The similarity to the Buddhist view is striking, as is the crucial difference between them: namely, that for the Vedāntin the single nature of all things is real, and for the Buddhists (generally) it is a negation and hence unreal.
7. In his *Bodhipathapradīpapañjikā* (D *khi* 279a), the eleventh-century Bengali Buddhist scholar Atīṣa delineates four great logical reasons (*gtan tshigs chen po bži*) used by Mādhyamikas to establish lack of independent existence: the reason which refutes production of an existent, a nonexistent, a both existent-and-nonexistent, and a neither-existent-nor-nonexistent entity (*mu bži skye ba 'gog pa'i gtan tshigs*); the so-called *vajrakāṇa*-reason, or reason that refutes production from self, other, both, or neither (*rdo rje gzegs ma'i gtan tshigs*); the neither-one-nor-many reason (*gcig dañ du ma bral ba'i gtan tshigs*); and the reason of dependent arising (*rten cin 'brel ba 'byuñ ba'i gtan tshigs*). In addition to their primary function of refuting independent natures in general, Mādhyamikas also

tional reality, emptiness is not real, both because it is a negation and because it is a conception. Furthermore, as a negation, emptiness can also be understood to escape the problem of whether it is the same as or different from the *dharmas* that instantiate it.⁸ Such is the general thrust of the Madhyamaka argument, as I understand it.

Now, the fundamental question that presents itself here is: What is the nature of the ‘all’ that one knows in knowing emptiness? In his commentary on the *Catuhśataka* and in a related passage in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, Candrakīrti refers to the ‘one flavor’ or *ekarasa* metaphor, in which knowledge of the emptiness of all *dharmas* is compared with knowledge of the saltiness of seawater.⁹ Just as one does not need to

use these reasons to show the lack of independent existence of the universal emptiness itself. For an emphatic statement of the “emptiness of emptiness,” see, e.g., Candrakīrti’s MAV 6.185-6.

8. This way of phrasing things is an application of the Buddhist epistemological tradition’s understanding of universals as exclusions (*vyāvṛtti*) or negations (*nivṛtti*) that have no real relation to the entities they qualify. For a succinct statement of how universals as exclusions are ultimately unreal, see TS 1188: *na bhāvo nāpi cābhāvo ’pṛthagekatvalakṣaṇaḥ / nāśrūtānāśrīto ’poho naikānekaś ca vastutaḥ //*. The same principle can be seen as work in the context of a Madhyamaka discussion of emptiness; see, for example, MAV and MAP *ad* MA 70. For more on universals as exclusions (i.e., *apoha*), see below.
9. The elucidation of the ‘one flavor’ doctrine through the metaphor of the saltiness of seawater comes in CŚV *ad* CŚ 8.16 just after the citation of two verses from the *Samādhirājasūtra*, which Candrakīrti also quotes in PrasP *ad* MMK 4.9 in what seems to be a related context. In MMK, Nāgārjuna appears to argue that since all things are equally devoid of independent existence (*svabhāva*) – in other words, all things are equally empty – no fault can ever be urged against Nāgārjuna’s position. Whatever entity the opponent tries to put forth as an example of something that does possess independent existence is equally questionable (*sādhyasama*) and hence not suitable to be used in a proof statement. In his commentary, Candrakīrti further explains that, just as the independent existence of form cannot be found, neither can that of the other four *skandhas*. In each case, the *skandha* can be shown to be neither the same as, nor different from, its cause. Seeking apparently to back up this reasoning with scripture, Candrakīrti then cites the following two *Samādhirājasūtra* verses: *yathā jñāta tayātmasaṃjñā tathaiḥ sarvatra preṣitā buddhiḥ / sarve ca tatsvabhāvā dharmaviśuddhā gaganakalpāḥ // 12.7 // ekena sarvaṃ jānāti sarvaṃ ekena paśyati / kiyaḍ bahu pi bhāṣitvā na tasyotpadyate madah // 11.16 //*. In the CŚV, Candrakīrti again cites the verses (in reverse order) and then presents the helpful example of the saltiness of seawater as an illustration for knowing all through knowing one. The Tibetan translation of the passage states (D ya 139b 5-6): *rgya mtsho’i chu’i thigs pa ’thuis pa bzin no / ji ltar ro mtshuis pa’i phyir*

drink all the waters of the sea to know that all of it is salty – it suffices merely to drink a drop – likewise, one knows the emptiness of all *dharmas* simply by knowing the emptiness of one. Candrakīrti states in the *Madhyamakāvataṛabhāṣya* that it is in this manner that through a single instant of awareness a Buddha can attain omniscient wisdom (*thams cad mkhyen pa' i ye śes*).¹⁰ All of this seems to indicate that, for these Buddhists at least, the Buddha's omniscience consists in the knowledge of emptiness alone, but does not imply any further knowledge of the infinite and various individual (and ultimately unreal) *dharmas* of conventional reality. In other words, knowing all here means simply knowing the ultimate reality of all – it is a metaphorical omniscience rather than a literal one.¹¹

gcig tu rgya mtsho'i ro myaṅ na thams cad du ro myaṅ bar 'gyur pa de bžin du dños po rnam kyī 'dus byas ston pa ṅid kyaṅ yin te / mtshan ṅid mtshuṅ pa' i phyir ro ll.

N.B. The precise interpretation of MMK 4.8-9 and PrasP *ad cit.* has been the subject of some dispute. In particular, B.K. MATILAL (1974) and K. BHATTACHARYA (1974) have argued against the interpretation of the notion of *sādhyasama* as *petitio principii*, an interpretation often taken by modern scholars, both in the present context and more generally. MATILAL (221-222) states that rather than being an instance of question begging, Nāgārjuna's reasoning in MMK 4.8 can be summed up as follows: "If a reason is adduced to refute the Mādhyamika thesis of emptiness in a philosophic dispute, it will not constitute a refutation, for it will enjoy the same predicament along with the proposition to be proved." Nāgārjuna's fundamental point here seems only to be that nothing can be assumed to have *svabhāva* and that all things can and must be subject to the type of tests for *svabhāva* that he provides in the MMK before they can be used as reasons or justifications to prove *svabhāva* in something else. Insofar as he has shown the emptiness of each of the five *skandhas*, he believes that he has shown the emptiness of all things – this is in keeping with the Buddhist notion that the five *skandhas* comprise all that dependently arises. Nāgārjuna does not seem to make any explicit claims for knowing the emptiness of all things through knowing the emptiness of one; it is Candrakīrti who introduces this idea in the commentary. In the case of Nāgārjuna's student Āryadeva, however, the theme of knowing all through knowing one is clearly present even in the root text.

10. See n. 5 above.

11. That is, it is a metaphorical omniscience as long as one maintains that conventional objects are in fact objects that can be known (i.e., *jñeyas*). If, instead, one were to hold that emptiness is the only truly knowable thing (because it alone is ultimately true), then knowing the emptiness of a single thing would be a literal, not a metaphorical, omniscience. Such a perspective appears unlikely, however, since emptiness qua object of knowledge is usually considered to be conventional. Candrakīrti's position on the question of whether and how conventional

But the drive to attribute ‘maximal greatness’ to the Buddha appears to have been strong, and it seems that some Mahāyānists (or perhaps most) envisioned a Buddha whose omniscience was much more than metaphorical.¹² While maintaining the general structure of the *knowing all through knowing one* approach to omniscience, certain Buddhists appear to have understood the ‘all’ that is known in this fashion to be far more expansive than just knowing emptiness – encompassing literally everything, whether real or unreal, ultimate or conventional. To illustrate this tendency, consider the following passage from the *lTa ba’i khyad par*, an eighth-century work by the Tibetan author Ye śes sde. John MAKRANSKY has translated the passage as follows (additions are those of the translator):

A Tathāgata knows all things free from conceptualization: both their individual characteristics and their general characteristic [emptiness]. Prior [to attaining Buddhahood,] bodhisattvas’ actions are not yet spontaneous, their obstructions are not yet fully purified, their power is not yet inconceivable. [They alternate between sessions of meditative equipoise and activity.] When they abide in meditative equipoise, they see emptiness, the general characteristic of all things, with nonconceptual awareness (*rnam par mi rtog pa’i ye śes*). When they arise from that equipoise [for postmeditation session activity], they know the individual characteristics [of things] to be merely an illusion, through their purified awareness of the world (*dag pa ’jig rten pa’i ye śes*) which is obtained subsequent to that [nonconceptual awareness].

By proceeding to higher and higher levels through that training, [they attain] its fruit, the stage of Buddhahood where [all] conceptuality is cleared away and obstructions are [fully] purified. At that point meditative equipoise occurs of

objects and emptiness are knowable objects (*jñeya*) is a contentious issue. There is some evidence that he considers at least statements concerning knowledge of the ultimate to be metaphorical; see, e.g., MAvBh ad MAv 12.4 (D ’a 330b5), where he remarks that when knowledge occurs in relation to an image (*rnam pa = ākāra*) of reality (*de kho na ñid = tattva*), then the statement that “there is knowledge of reality” is a metaphorical application (*ñe bar btags pa = upacāra*): *śes pa de kho na ñid kyi rnam pa’i rjes su byed pa skye ba na de kho na ñid śes so źes ñe bar gdags so l*. The real import of this passage, however, may be to show that knowledge of the ultimate (and not just statements about that knowledge) is itself metaphorical, since shortly after the above remark, we find Candrakīrti insisting that in reality there is no knowledge of anything, as neither knowledge nor any knowable object is actually ever produced (D ’a 330b6-7): *de’i phyir btags pa las de kho na ñid rtogs so zhes rnam par bzhag gi / dños su na ’ga’ zhig ’ga’ zhig gis śes pa ni ma yin te l / śes pa dañ śes bya gñi ga yañ ma skyes pa ñid kyi phyir ro l*.

12. The term ‘maximal greatness’ is that of Paul GRIFFITHS. See especially GRIFFITHS (1994: *passim*).

itself. Then, without ever arising from that equipoise, all the cognitive objects that exist are manifest at once.

... As it says in the *Buddha-avatamsaka-sūtra*: “The mind of the Bhagavan Buddhas, having been purified through an inexpressible period of hundreds of billions of trillions of aeons, is free of obstruction. [It perceives] all realms of the cosmos without exception within its cognitive sphere. [It perceives] all of the *dharmadhātu* (universal emptiness) without exception within its cognitive sphere. It knows all with respect to past, present, and future, with one cognition (*dgoñs pa gcig*), free of obstruction. It possesses all in its comprehension.”¹³

Clearly, for the author of this text, the Buddha’s omniscience is much more than a metaphor. Although neither Ye śes sde nor the *sūtra* passage that he quotes states that the Buddha knows all things through knowing one single thing (one *jñeya*), both similarly stress that the Buddha knows all things through one single cognition (one *jñāna*), in one single moment. Since a single cognition is generally understood to have a single object, the structure of omniscient knowledge can still be characterized as *knowing all through knowing one*; the claims, however, appear much greater. Buddhas not only know the ultimate nature of all things, they somehow actually know all myriad things without exception. Yet the passage does not clarify how this can be. Indeed, the shift from meditative equipoise centering on emptiness to full-blown omniscient

13. MAKRANSKY (1997): 351-52. In addition to being the author of this text, Ye śes sde was also a leading translator under the Tibetan king Khri sroñ lde btsan. Most notably for us, he was also the co-translator of Śāntarakṣita’s main Madhyamaka texts (the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* and its *Vṛtti*) along with Kamalaśīla’s commentary, the MAP (*Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*). For more on the author and his work, see SEYFORTH RUEGG (1981). The Tibetan for the above passage is as follows (D jo 219b6-220a4): *rnam par mi rtog bžin du rañ dañ spyi’i mtshan ñid thams cad mkhyen te / sñon byañ chub sems dpa’ mdzad ciñ sgrib pa ma byañ lhun gyis ma grub / dbañ bsam gyis mi khyab pa ma brñes pa’i tshe / mñam par gžag pa’i dus na ni rnam par mi rtog pa’i ye śes kyis dños po thams cad kyi spyi’i mtshan ñid stoñ pa ñid du zgigs la / de las bžeñs [D: bžinš] nas rjes las thob pa dag pa ’jig rten pa’i ye śes kyis sgyu ma tsam du rañ gi mshan ñid mkhyen pa de goñ nas goñ du sbyañs pas rtog pa bsal te sgrib pa byañ ba’i ’bras bu sañs rgyas kyi sa la lhun gyis te mñam par ’jog pa dañ / bžeñs pa mi mña’ bar śes bya ji sñed pa de thams cad dus gcig tu mñon du gyur te / ... sañs rgyas phal po che’i mdo las kyañ / sañs rgyas bcom ldan ’das rñams kyi dgoñs pa ni chags pa mi mña’ te / bskal pa bye ba khrag khrig brgya stoñ brjod du med pa’i yañ brjod du med par yoñs su sbyañs pa’o / ’jig rten gyi khams thams cad ma lus par yul du gyur pa’o / chos kyi dbyiñs ma lus pa thams cad yul du gyur pa’o / dus gsum thams cad la dgoñs pa gcig gis chags pa med par mkhyen žiñ thugs su chud pa’i yul dañ ldan pa’o žes bya ba la sogs pa rgya cher gsuñs so /*

knowledge of all things whatsoever takes on an air of mystery, like an experience of mystical communion that cannot be explained through rational means.

Quite possibly some Buddhists would be content to let the matter rest there. After all, the Buddha's omniscient awareness is frequently said to be inconceivable. How could a person who has not experienced full-blown omniscience be expected to explain or prove it? Nonetheless, for Buddhists of a rational bent, this 'non-explanation' is less likely to be satisfying. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are two examples of this latter type of Buddhist. Using the logical and epistemological tools of instrumental awareness or valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) that they inherited from their predecessors Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, these philosophers appear set on providing a rationally coherent explanation of how a Buddha can literally know all things at once. Not only do they proffer a proof of the Buddha's omniscience, it also seems likely (given the space devoted to it and its prominent position at the end of the work) that the demonstration is one of their most cherished and original contributions in the two texts that I will consider here: the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (TS) by Śāntarakṣita and its commentary, the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (TSP) by his student Kamalaśīla. Indeed, in the opening pages of the monumental TSP, Kamalaśīla states his opinion that for a person who is inclined toward faith, it may be sufficient simply to hear about the Buddha's great qualities in order to set out on the path. But for a person inclined toward wisdom, it is necessary to use valid cognitions to demonstrate that such great qualities can actually occur. Only when one is sure that one's goal is possible does it make sense to engage in practices designed to lead to that goal. As Kamalaśīla clarifies, the person inclined toward wisdom – in other words, the rational and judicious human being – can definitively determine that the Buddha's omniscience is possible, and hence worth striving for.¹⁴ The TS and TSP are apparently intended, at least in part,

14. TSP ad TS 1-6: *ye 'pi prajñānusāriṇaḥ te 'pi tathāvidheṣu bādham apaśyantaḥ prajñādīnām ca guṇānām abhyāsāt prakarṣam avagacchanta vakṣyamāṇād apy atīndriyārthadrksādhakāt pramāṇāt nūnam jagati sambhāvya eva tathāvidhāḥ sūrayaḥ iti //* "But those who are inclined toward wisdom, not seeing any refutation (*bādha*) of these kinds of [qualities], and understanding that good qualities such as wisdom and so on [can reach] perfection (*prakarṣa*) through habituation (*abhyāsa*), [will determine] – through the valid cognition that will be stated [in the final chapter] which proves the seeing of supersensible objects – that 'certainly these kinds of sages are possible in the world.'"

to lead their readers to the conclusion that the Buddha can and does have such extraordinary powers and knowledge.

The long final chapter of the TS/P is justly famous for its detailed discussion and attempted demonstration of the Buddha's omniscience. Somewhere around the middle of the chapter, two obscure objectors, Sāmaṭa and Yajñāṭa, are made to give voice to the same doubt concerning the *knowing all through knowing one* approach to omniscience that we have hinted at here.¹⁵ One of the strongest statements is the following:

svabhāvenāvibhaktena yaḥ sarvaṃ avabudhyate / svalakṣaṇāni bhāvānām sarveṣāṃ na sa budhyate // One who understands everything in terms of a non-different nature does not know the individual natures (*svalakṣaṇa*) of all things. [TS 3250]

When Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla get around to addressing this objection nearly two hundred verses later, they make it quite clear that the Buddha's knowledge of a non-different, (i.e., a single and universal) nature *does* imply knowledge of all individual natures. In a deliberate mirroring of the objectors' statement, Śāntarakṣita quips:

svabhāvenāvibhaktena yaḥ sarvaṃ avabudhyate / svarūpāny eva bhāvānām sarveṣāṃ so 'vabudhyate // One who understands everything in terms of a non-different nature understands precisely the individual natures (*svarūpa*) of all things. [TS 3631]

How do Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla defend this claim? To understand their answer, it is necessary to understand something of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's theory of exclusion, or *apoha*. According to this theory, only particulars are truly real, while universals are unreal mental constructs.¹⁶ These mental constructs are fabricated by the mind through a process of exclusion, which these philosophers feel allows them to

15. The objections of Sāmaṭa and Yajñāṭa are presented in TS 3246-3260, just after a much longer section in which, Kamalaśīla tells us, the views of the Mīmāṃsaka Kumāriḷa are given as the *pūrvapakṣa*. These two otherwise unknown authors may be Mīmāṃsakas as well, since they are shown to argue against the possibility that knowledge of Dharma can arise through the speech of a human being. It is unfortunate that nothing more is known about them, since, philosophically speaking, their objections are in many ways more compelling than those of the more extensively quoted Kumāriḷa.
16. Sources that explore the *apoha* theory in the works of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and their Indian and Tibetan successors include DREYFUS (1997), DUNNE (1999), HATTORI (1980), and HAYES (1988).

account for the validity of the conventional usage of universals while simultaneously denying their ultimate reality. The mechanism for this process depends upon the fact that one can class certain particulars together, even though in reality each one is utterly unique, because one can validly ascertain that they are all equally “excluded from everything that does not perform the expected function of *x*.”¹⁷ In this way, one is able to use a kind of shorthand for the sake of communication and say that certain groups of particulars possess a certain universal property, or *x*-ness. Although he uses the positive language of universals and properties, the Buddhist *apohavādin* understands that the universal *x* actually just indicates that the particular in question shares with certain other particulars a common negation – namely, the exclusion from all other particulars that do not behave in the manner necessary for the construction of that universal *x*. Universals are simply a way of construing particulars, apart from which they have no independent or real existence.

In the context of the proof of omniscience, this last fact is critical. That is, Śāntarākṣita and Kamalaśīla want to point out that knowledge of emptiness cannot take place without knowledge of a particular that can conventionally be said to be “qualified” by the exclusion which is emptiness. In the parlance that they take over from Dharmakīrti, the exclusion (the universal) is not separate from the excluded thing (the particular). Hence, in the verse that we just read by Śāntarākṣita, the idea is that a person who knows a “non-different” or universal quality of things must also have knowledge of the particular things themselves. But Śāntarākṣita’s clever retort still does not explain knowledge of all through knowledge of one. To clinch the argument (in their own eyes, at any rate), Śāntarākṣita and Kamalaśīla need one further element, which they find in the theory of yogic perception or *yogipratyakṣa*, drawn once again from Dharmakīrti.

Dharmakīrti’s theory of yogic perception, unlike some other Indian theories, does not concern itself primarily with how yogis can see distant objects, other times, and so on.¹⁸ Instead, this theory is designed to show

17. On the role of expectations in the formation of universals in Dharmakīrti, see DUNNE (1997): 136, n. 109.

18. The bibliographic sources for South Asian theories of yogic perception are diverse. For the Buddhist tradition, see especially BÜHNEMANN (1980), PEMWIESER (1991), PRÉVÈREAU (1994), and STEINKELLNER (1978). DREYFUS (1997) also makes some helpful observations. Useful materials on early Nyāya

how anything that one meditates upon long enough and single-pointedly enough eventually achieves the clarity (*sphuṭatva*) and nonconceptuality (*nirvikalpatva*) that Dharmakīrti and his followers associate with direct perception.¹⁹ Whether the object of such a meditation is real or unreal (*bhūta* or *abhūta*) is irrelevant to the meditative process; focusing long enough and hard enough on anything leads one to experience it as if it were right in front of one. Dharmakīrti cites a lover overcome by desire or a father grieving for a lost son as examples of meditations on unreal objects that can lead to visions that are the equivalent of perceptions in terms of their clarity, though not in terms of their trustworthiness.²⁰ Emptiness, however, has already been established to be (conventionally) true of all *dharmas*.²¹ Hence, at the end of one's meditation on the

sources are found in OBERHAMMER (1984). For Kumāriḷa's rejection of yogic perception, see JHA (1998).

19. The *locus classicus* for Dharmakīrti's theory of *yogipratyakṣa* is PV3.281-287. Other important locations include NB1.11 and PVin1. Dignāga discusses the topic at PS1.6 and PSV *ad cit*. Dharmakīrti defines perception as an awareness that is both free from conception and nonerroneous. See NB1.4: *tatra pratyakṣam kalpanāpoḍham abhrāntam l*. The sign that an awareness is free from conception is its obvious vividness or clarity (*sphuṭatva*). That it is nonerroneous is ascertained in various manners. In the case of meditation on the emptiness, or selflessness (*nairātmya*), of all *dharmas*, the nonerroneous element of the awareness is *already* definitively determined through inference. Thus, when the requisite clarity arises, the resulting awareness can be classed as perception.
20. In a paper delivered at the 1995 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, entitled "Obsessions and Holy Truths: the Ultimate as Conventional in Dharmakīrti," John DUNNE explained how Dharmakīrti envisions the process of *yogipratyakṣa*. Taking Dharmakīrti's own example of the meditation on ugliness (*aśubhā*), DUNNE described how "at one stage one will directly see one's own body as a skeleton stripped of all flesh; indeed, at a certain point, one will see every person's body as a skeleton." On DUNNE's interpretation, this is an example where the object of the meditation is unreal, for, as he joked, "our bodies are not skeletons (yet)." Nonetheless, after sufficient meditative effort, the vision of ourselves as skeletons can have the qualities of clarity and nonconceptuality that are hall-marks of perception in Dharmakīrti's system. The point really is that anything one meditates on, or cultivates, in the requisite manner can eventually attain the same vividness as ordinary perception, even if the content of the awareness lacks the trustworthiness of a valid cognition (*pramāṇa*).
21. Although Dharmakīrti generally speaks of the selflessness (*nairātmya*) of *dharmas*, he does on occasion speak as well of their emptiness (cf., e.g., PV 2.253 and PV3.213-215), and it is clear that, if not precisely equivalent, the two notions have a significant conceptual overlap in some contexts. In this paper, I use the term emptiness throughout, since on Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīḷa's

mentally constructed exclusion which is emptiness, one comes to have a direct and trustworthy perception of just that emptiness. The direct perception of emptiness is understood to be a powerful antidote to beginningless ignorance, which functions through imposing individual natures (*svabhāva*) where none exist. This and other such meditational practices resulting in the elimination of negative mental states constitute what Dharmakīrti calls *yogipratyakṣa*.

We can now see how Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla put it all together. The key move is to extend the argument based on yogic perception such that the object of meditation is not the emptiness of a single *dharma*, but rather the emptiness of all *dharmas*. In following the proof, it is important to remember the specification described above: that is, since emptiness is an exclusion, it cannot occur in isolation from a particular. Kamalaśīla expresses the proof statement (*prayoga*) as follows:

ye ye vibhāvyaṅte te sambhavatsakṛdekavijñānasphuṭapratibhāsanāḥ / yathāṅga-nādayaḥ / sarvadharmāś ca bhāvyaṅte iti svabhāvahetuḥ // Whatever things are meditated upon, it is possible that they will have a clear appearance all at once in a single cognition, like a woman [who is meditated upon by a lovesick man]. Now, all *dharmas* are meditated upon. The evidence is an essential property (*svabhāvahetu*). [TSP ad TS 3443-3445]

Underlying this proof statement is the assumption that one has already established through inference (*anumāna*) that the exclusion ‘emptiness’ does indeed validly apply to all *dharmas*. Having established that fact beyond any doubt, one may be equally assured that when meditating on the emptiness of all *dharmas*, one will also be meditating on the real particulars that are not different from the exclusion, emptiness. To become omniscient, then, it seems that the key is to meditate long enough and with enough concentration on the emptiness not of one single thing, but rather on the emptiness of everything! In so doing, one will, *ipso facto*, be meditating on all *dharmas*. Even though emptiness is a negation and hence unreal, it nonetheless can be said to possess a connection to all particulars such that by fully knowing emptiness, one comes to fully know particulars as well.²²

understanding, selflessness and emptiness can be used interchangeably, at least in relation to *yogipratyakṣa*. See TS 3441-3442 and TSP *ad cit*.

22. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are not explicit on this point, a fact which may reinforce my reading of them as ultimately resisting such an interpretation. A Buddhist *pūrvapakṣa* contained in the *Nyāyakanikā*, Vācaspatimiśra’s commentary on Maṇḍanamiśra’s *Vidhiviveka*, however, does present the

It is difficult to determine just how seriously Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla take their own proof. On the one hand, the demonstration looks like a logical trick that relies upon an equivocation in the denotation of the term ‘all *dharmas*.’ That is, at the start of the yogi’s meditation, the term ‘all *dharmas*’ denotes a mental image; but at the end of his meditation, ‘all *dharmas*’ denotes all entities (*vastu* or *bhāva*) without exception. Do Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla endorse this double signification? I think they do not, although I also suspect that the authors may not be averse to allowing an *apparent* sleight-of-hand to stand in order to bedazzle some of their readers. My reason for saying this is that at the end of the TS/P, when summarizing the argument for omniscience based on *yogipratyakṣa*, the authors do nothing either to refute such an equivocation or to more fully explicate the nature of the particular that is known when one knows emptiness of all *dharmas*. To the contrary, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla almost seem to encourage a reading in which the meaning of ‘all *dharmas*’ undergoes a mysterious change. They accomplish this not only through their insistence on the fundamental point that meditation on the exclusion ‘emptiness’ entails meditation on the particular from which the exclusion does not differ,²³ but

argument succinctly and clearly: *samastavastuviṣayaṃ ca tannairātmya-sākṣātkārarūpatvāt / na ca nairātmyaṃ nāma bhāvebhyo bhinnam kiñcid asti yad apratyakṣagocareṣv api teṣu pratyakṣagocaraḥ syāt* / “And the object [of the meditation that leads to omniscience] is all things, since its nature is the direct apprehension (*sākṣātkāra*) of the selflessness of that [i.e., of everything]. For selflessness cannot exist apart from real things, such that it could become the object of perception even when those [real things] were not the objects of perception.” See PEMWIESER (1991): 115 and 141.

23. In TS 3632-3633, Śāntarakṣita clarifies that although the object of the yogi’s meditation is referred to as the universal ‘emptiness,’ the actual object is not the unreal universal per se, but rather a particular which can be construed as a universal, that is, the particular as conceptually excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) from such properties as “possessing a self” and “being non-momentary.” Although the authors are not explicit on this point, it seems clear that the particular in this instance is not, for example, the external cause of a perceptual image, but rather that image itself. We can safely make this claim because it is that image which is the direct cause of the cognition of sameness (*samotprekṣa* or *abhinnākārapratyaya*) to which the authors refer in this passage. Thus, as Kamalaśīla explains, although that mental image is a particular, it can be called a universal insofar as it serves as a cause for that cognition of sameness. See TSP *ad cit.*: *tad eva hi svalakṣaṇaṃ vijātyavyāvṛttam abhinnākārapratyayahetutayā śāstre sāmānyalakṣaṇam ity ucyate* /. The cognition of sameness here is what Dharmakīrti calls *ekapratyavamarśajñāna*; see DUNNE (1999: 137-143).

also through an explicit reference to the notion that omniscience entails knowledge of such normally hidden entities as karmic causes and effects.²⁴

Despite this seeming ambiguity in the closing passages of the TS/P, I think nonetheless that we can be confident that no real equivocation in the meaning of ‘all *dharmas*’ has occurred. For earlier in the chapter, as the attentive reader can be expected to recall, Kamalaśīla explains that what appears clearly in this kind of yogic perception is nothing other than the mind (*manas*) or mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) that takes as its object (*ālambana*) the ‘emptiness of all *dharmas*’ and so on; omniscience is then equated with this clear appearance.²⁵ The obvious

24. Immediately after arguing that the object of yogic perception cannot be a universal, Śāntarākṣita goes on to equate omniscience with knowledge of karmic causes and effects. See TS 3637: *sahetu saphalaṃ karma jñānenālaukikena yaḥ / samādhijena jānāti sa sarvajñopadiśyate //*. This would seem to imply that a literal and full-blown omniscience arises through the practices associated with yogic perception; but see n. 30 below for an alternative vision of omniscience that would account for the Buddha’s display of knowledge of the details of karma without requiring that he actually know them in any ordinary sense of that term.
25. Here, again, I have substituted the term emptiness where the authors use selflessness. See TSP ad TS 3338: *prayogaḥ / yā sādaranaīrantaryadīrghakālaviśeṣaṇā bhāvanā sā karatalāyamānagrāhyāvabhāsamānājñānaphalā / tad yathā kāmāturasya kāmīnībhāvanā / yathoktaviśeṣaṇatrayayuktā ca sarvākārasarvagata-nairāmyabhāvanā kāruṇikasyeti svabhāvahetuḥ / na cāsiddho hetuḥ / kāruṇika-syārthitvena tathā pravrttisambhavasya pratipāditatvāt / nāpy anaikāntikatvam / yataḥ sarvadharmagatanairātmyālambanasya manovijñānasya dharmiṇo yathoktaviśeṣaṇatrayayuktabhāvanāsaṃsprṣṭatvena hetunā sphuṭapratibhāsītvam sādhyam / etena ca sādhyadharmeṇa yathoktasādhanadharmasya vyāptiḥ siddhā / kāraṇāntarānapekṣitvāt sphuṭapratibhāsītvasya / tataś ca sāmartyāt sarvajñatvenāpi vyāptiḥ siddhā / yasmāt sarvavastugatanairātmyādyālambanasya manaso dharmiṇo yat sphuṭapratibhāsītvam tad evāsya sarvajñatvam nānyat / tathā hi bhāvyamānavastusphuṭapratibhāsītvā bhāvanāyāḥ sāmānyena vyāptau siddhāyām sāmartyāt sarvajñatvenāpi siddhaiva / yathoktadharmiṇo ’nyasya sphuṭapratibhāsītvāsambhavāt / “The proof-statement is as follows: That meditation which has the qualities of being intense, uninterrupted and of long duration results in an awareness in which the object appears as [if it were] held in the palm of the hand, like the love-stricken man’s meditation on his beloved. And a compassionate person’s meditation on the all-pervasive selflessness in all its aspects is endowed with the above stated three qualifications. The evidence is an essential property. And this evidence is not unestablished, since it has been established that it is possible to engage in this kind [of meditation] due to the fact that a compassionate person is desirous [of engaging in it]. Nor is it inconclusive, for the following reason: the fact of possessing a clear appearance is that which is to be proved (*sādhyā*); [this predicate applies to] the subject*

implication is that the particular that the yogi knows in meditating on emptiness is not all *dharmas* in a literal sense, but rather only the momentary mental consciousness that takes the 'emptiness of all *dharmas*' as its meditational object.²⁶ To be sure, the authors believe the perfection of this form of yogic perception to be deserving of the name omniscience, both because the emptiness that is directly known therein is non-different from the emptiness of all things, and because the arising of that clear appearance eliminates all traces of ignorance.²⁷ But no equivocation in the term 'all *dharmas*' occurs, whereby the yogi starts off meditating on a mentally constructed image and ends up by knowing literally everything.

Like Āryadeva and Candrakīrti, the authors of the TS/P embrace the *knowing all through knowing one* approach to omniscience, where knowledge of emptiness equals knowledge of all. The difference is that for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, knowledge of all results from the knowledge not of the emptiness of just any *dharma*, but from the knowledge of emptiness as it pertains to one *dharma* in particular: the mental image 'all *dharmas*.'²⁸ Since for these thinkers a mental image is

(*dharmin*) which is a mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) that takes as its object the selflessness of all *dharmas*; [this is to be proved] by means of the evidence, namely that [the subject, the mental consciousness] is mingled (*saṃsprṣṭa*) with a meditation (*bhāvanā*) endowed with the threefold qualification mentioned above; and the pervasion (*vyāpti*) of the above-stated establishing property (*sādhana-dharma*) by that *probandum* (*sādhya-dharma*) is established, since possessing a clear appearance does not depend on any other cause. And therefore, the pervasion [of that mental consciousness] by omniscience is also indirectly established, since that clear appearance possessed by the subject, i.e., the mind (*manas*) that takes as its object the selflessness and so on that are possessed by (*gata*) all things, is nothing other than the omniscience of that [person]. That is, since it has been generally established that meditation is pervaded by a clear appearance of the thing that is being meditated upon, therefore, by implication, it is indeed established [that the mind that is meditating on the selflessness of all *dharmas*] is pervaded also by omniscience, since it is not possible for that clear appearance [of the selflessness of all *dharmas*] to exist in anything other than the above stated subject [i.e., the mind meditating on that very selflessness of all *dharmas*]."

26. This reading of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's position thus corresponds with STEINKELLNER's findings concerning Jñānaśrīmitra's understanding of the particular that is known in yogic perception. See STEINKELLNER (1978): 132-133.
27. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla model their discussion of this point on Dharmakīrti's PV2. See PEMWIESER (1991) for an edition and translation of a relevant portion of the TS/P.
28. On the construction of the concept 'all' (*sarva*), see TS 1184-87 and TSP *ad cit.*

not different from the mind in which it appears, one might even say that omniscience results from meditating on the emptiness of one's own mind, when one's mind is configured in a certain way. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla do not put things like this in the final chapter of the TS/P, but perhaps they refrain from doing so on account of their rhetorical stance. For at the end of that chapter, Kamalaśīla declares that the proof of omniscience was not undertaken from the authors' preferred Vijñānavādin perspective, but rather only having provisionally adopted an 'externalist' (*bahirarthavādin*) perspective in order to convince those "addicted to external objects."²⁹ Much earlier in the TS/P, the authors *do* speak from their preferred metaphysical perspective, in which the individual natures (*svabhāva*) necessary to the conventional process of knowing – i.e., the object known, the subjective knower, and so on – are all progressively and thoroughly dismantled. In that context, the authors present an alternative vision of omniscience, one that I am tempted to call a knowing all through knowing *none* approach to omniscience.³⁰ Does this mean that the demonstration based on *yogipratyakṣa* in the final chapter is a mere sophism, designed solely to get opponents like Sāmaṭa and Yajñāta off their backs? I don't think so. Rather, what I think we can say is that for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, knowledge of emptiness really does produce knowledge of all – but as there are multiple ways of conceiving the nature of 'all,' there are equally multiple fashions of understanding the nature of the knowledge of all and also how that knowledge comes about through the knowledge of a single thing.

29. Cf. TSP *ad* TS 3645: *yeyam asmābhir vijñānavādashitair nirākāracintā prāg akāri sā sāmpratamaḥ bāhyārthābhiniṣṭhān bhavato mīmāṃsakān prati bahirartham abhyupetya sarvajñe pratipādyamāne bhavatāḥ bahirarthavādināḥ katham api nopayujyata eva kartum* |.

30. See especially TS 2048-2049: *kalpapādapavat sarvasaṅkalpapapavanair munih / akampye 'pi karoty eva lokānām arthasampadam // tenādarśanam apy āhuḥ sarve sarvavidamaḥ jinam / anābhogena niḥśeṣasarvavitkāryasambhavāt* ||. Cf. also TS 1852-1855. In these passages and the commentary on them, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla present a vision of Buddhahood in which teachings and other verbal communications issue spontaneously from the Buddha who remains utterly free from concepts. For a discussion of a similar model in Candrakīrti's MAvBh, see DUNNE (1996): 548-550. For parallels in other Mahāyāna sources, both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, see GRIFFITHS (1994) and MAKRAVSKY (1997).

Abbreviations

CŚ	<i>Catuḥśataka</i> of Āryadeva
CŚV	<i>Catuḥśatakavṛtti</i> of Candrakīrti
D	<i>sDe dge</i> edition of the Tibetan <i>bsTan gyur</i>
MA	<i>Madhyamakālaṃkāra</i> of Śāntarakṣita
MAv	<i>Madhyamakāvātāra</i> of Candrakīrti
MAV	<i>Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti</i> of Śāntarakṣita
MAP	<i>Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā</i> of Kamalaśīla
MAvBh	<i>Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya</i> of Candrakīrti
MMK	<i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i> of Nāgārjuna
NB	<i>Nyāyabindu</i> of Dharmakīrti
PrasP	<i>Prasannapadā</i> of Candrakīrti
PS/PSV	<i>Pramāṇasamuccaya</i> and <i>Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti</i> of Dignāga
PV	<i>Pramāṇavārttika</i> of Dharmakīrti
PVin	<i>Pramāṇaviniścaya</i> of Dharmakīrti
TS	<i>Tattvasaṃgraha</i> of Śāntarakṣita
TSP	<i>Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā</i> of Kamalaśīla

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