Introduction I

A Few Methodological Considerations

Purpose and Content

During what could be considered the golden age of ancient Indian civilization, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti articulated and defended Buddhist philosophical principles. They did so probably more systematically than anyone before their time, the fifth to the seventh centuries C.E. In this work I analyze this Buddhist tradition and its relevance to a wider history of human ideas. My perspective is more philosophical than philologico-historical, though I do consider history as it relates to the evolution of ideas. My choice of a primarily philosophical mode of analysis reflects my own prejudices and preoccupations, but more significantly, it captures an important aspect of these philosophically inclined thinkers.

Previously scholars' efforts have tended to focus on basic Indian texts by Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their direct commentators. This work undertakes the quite different task of studying their ideas from the point of view of their later Tibetan reception. This work does not deal extensively with Dignāga, for the Tibetan thinkers important to my perspective have understood him mostly through the grid of Dharmakīrti's interpretations. Nevertheless, I do consider Dignāga's ideas on occasion to provide some background for Dharmakīrti's efforts and to indicate the relationship between the two authors. The main focus of this work, however, centers upon Tibetan articulations of Dharmakīrti's system as it pertains to epistemology, the domain of philosophy examining the nature of knowledge, in Indian terms the nature of *pramāṇa* (valid cognition or means of valid cognition). In addition to epistemology, Dharmakīrti's system addresses related fields such as ontology, philosophy of language, and logic (the aspect of Dharmakīrti's system that this work does not address).

My discussion attempts to capture the range and movement of Dharmakīrti's whole tradition. Even so I emphasize Tibetan thinkers working between the end of the fourteenth and the end of the fifteenth centuries. This is the heart of the period described by David Ruegg as the classical period of Tibetan Buddhism, representing "the high point of philosophical penetration, exegesis and systematic hermeneutics, accompanied by the final constitution of the Tibetan religious

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schools . . ."[1] At this time, Tibetan thinkers provided conflicting interpretations,[2] many of which prove advantageous to an understanding of Dharmakīrti's thought. I find this period particularly revealing of some of the most philosophically interesting questions raised by Dharmakīrti's system.

Among the wide array of Tibetan authors, I consider mostly thinkers belonging to the Ge-luk (*dge lugs*) and Sa-gya (*sa skya*) schools, opposing the realism of the former to the antirealism of the latter. This choice of schools is mandated by several considerations. Together, they largely encompass the range of ideas within which Tibetan epistemological thinking has evolved. Historically, these two schools do not subsume the whole of Tibetan epistemological thinking. Prior to and during the fifteenth century, there were several other epistemological traditions but they later disappeared. Of the four contemporary schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the remaining two, Ga-gyü (*bka' rgyud*) and Nying-ma (*rnying ma*), tend to follow the Sa-gya views with a few minor modifications. Moreover, through their lively and often vehement disagreements, the Ge-luk and Sa-gya schools effectively articulate diverging interpretations of Dharmakīrti. Thus, focussing on these two schools allows me to avoid unnecessary dispersion as well as to present Tibetan epistemology in its diversity.

In considering Tibetan contributions to the understanding of Buddhist epistemology, I do not mean to suggest that Indian and Tibetan traditions are identical. The great cultural and historical distance separating India and Tibet is undeniable, but this does not warrant a systematic assumption of incommensurability between the two traditions. Hence, it is meaningful to speak of Indian and Tibetan thinkers as belonging to a connected but not identical tradition of philosophical inquiry. Tibetan thinkers stand within an ongoing tradition of inquiry historically connected with the Indian original works. They belong to a milieu in which explanations, debates, doubts, and interpretations have been passed on through generations of highly qualified interpreters. This connection with the Indian tradition does not preclude Tibetan thinkers from developing their own original thought, but in doing so these thinkers proceed by commenting on Indian sources. Hence, it is not possible to study Tibetan logic and epistemology in isolation from the original Indian models. Tibetan thinkers do not write their philosophical works based only on their personal reflections. Rather, they develop their ideas by commenting directly or indirectly on basic Indian texts. These texts are approached through a commentarial tradition that consists of a first level of Indian commentaries and a second layer of Tibetan commentaries. This exegetical apparatus is completed by the use of textbooks (*yig cha*) that reflect the viewpoint of a scholar's school or even monastery. Therefore, Tibetan scholastic achievements must be appreciated in the light of the original Indian texts to which they relate.

Attending to interacting Tibetan interpretations assists my attempt to throw some light on Dharmakīrti's thought, as they describe some of the otherwise unacknowledged aspects of his philosophy. For example, I evince that his view of reality (the by now famous or infamous *svalakṣaṇa* or specifically characterized

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phenomenon) is complex. I also present an aspect of his theory of *apoha* (elimination) that has not been studied fully yet. In these ways, Tibetan commentary and scholarly tradition help identify Dharmakīrti's views and indicate their implications. Examining Tibetan ideas in light of the originals on which they comment is revealing not only of the achievements of the Tibetan tradition, but it also contributes to understanding the original model.

More important, Tibetan commentators bring out the philosophical content of and problems in Dharmakīrti's thought. They offer rich conceptual explorations of Buddhist epistemology on the basis of their ongoing participation in the Buddhist philosophical tradition. Although Tibetan thinkers are informed by historical considerations, their main strength is their ability to explore the philosophical content and implications of Dharmakīrti's works. In doing so, they help us appreciate some of the philosophical insights of the Buddhist epistemological tradition. For those patient enough to follow them, the intricate discussions of Tibetan thinkers provide a rich exercise in analytical and critical skills and serve as a guide to important philosophical questions. Hence, I hope that the audience of this book, which addresses the concerns of scholars and students interested in fields such as Tibetan civilization, Buddhism, and Indian philosophy, will not be limited to "Tibetologists" and other "Buddhologists." The use of a standard Western philosophical vocabulary is meant to allow nonprofessional readers to penetrate this often difficult but rewarding material.

The Commentarial Style of Indian and Tibetan Philosophical Traditions

While approaching this work, those philosophically inclined readers who are less familiar with Buddhist scholastic philosophy will have to keep in mind the commentarial nature of Indian and Tibetan philosophical style, one of the particularities of these traditions to which I have already alluded. An Indian or Tibetan philosophical system is usually close-knit and complicated, with boundaries and details that have been well elaborated over centuries. It is, however, hard to distinguish a clear philosophical method that characterizes Indian or Tibetan philosophical systems. Mohanty explains:

> In such a system, it is often a frustrating experience to look for an absolute beginning. Should the point be the scriptural texts which are then explicated and rationally justified? Should it be a primary cosmological and/or spiritual intuition which is then conceptually elaborated and defended against rival intuitions? Should the beginning be in the epistemological theory of *pramāṇas* or means of *knowledge* (with which the classical exposition began) from which the ontology, or theory of *prameya* (or objects of such knowledge) then follows? Or is the theory of *pramāṇas* itself a consequence of the implicitly presupposed metaphysics? Or, as may appear not unlikely to readers of Sanskrit philosophical texts, do the philosophers begin with ordinary experi-

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ence and ordinary language, *lokānubhava* and *lokavyavahāra,* and then unravel their implications by a peculiar combination of description, analysis and transcendental argument?[3]

In the great diversity of methods, considerations and arguments used by Indian and Tibetan philosophers, only one fact clearly emerges: all philosophical activities rely on and are intended to validate the framework given by the tradition. Philosophical problems are not discussed only on the basis of their philosophical merits but in relation to and under the form of commentaries to some basic text formative of the tradition. This is also the case of the area of Indian and Tibetan philosophical traditions to be described here. On the Hindu side, epistemologists comment on the *Nyāya-sūtra* or other basic texts. On the Buddhist side, thinkers elaborate their system by commenting on Dignāga's or Dharmakīrti's texts.

This explicit and fairly narrow reliance on a pregiven system distinguishes Indian and Tibetan philosophical traditions from, for example, pre-Hellenistic Greek philosophy, where reliance on tradition is more diffuse.[4] Aristotle relies on Plato, but often in a negative way, and proposes his own independent system of thought. This is not the way in which Indian and Tibetan philosophers proceed. For them, to do philosophy is not to examine philosophical propositions independent of any traditional framework, but always to examine other systems from within one's own and to defend or develop one's own positions. This is, for this tradition, responsible philosophizing as distinguished from irresponsible sophistry.

The importance of commentary is a well-known feature of religious traditions that are shaped by the authority of certain scriptures. Michael Fishbane describes the religious imagination as "an imagination whose creativity is never entirely a new creation, but one founded upon older and authoritative words and images."[5] So-called Eastern and Western religions often are based on a corpus of normative teachings in which the historical experience of their founder(s) is recorded, transformed, and given atemporal dimensions. This is an ongoing creative process, which must have a fixed point, provided in most traditions by scriptural authority. The atemporal claim to authority of scripture is the basis for the constant reappropriation of the content of the tradition which is carried on through commentarial reinterpretation. The famous Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem summarizes this process when he says that "revelation needs commentary in order to be rightly understood and applied."[6] Commentary is seen by its authors as an act of retrieving a truth that has been given once and for all and needs to be reappropriated. It does not overtly innovate but rests its enterprise on a perennial truth grounding the whole tradition. This ongoing process of reinterpretation renews the life of a tradition and keeps scriptures relevant to changing circumstances, thus facilitating the continuation of that tradition.

The commentarial character of Indian philosophy is due not only to the religious character of its conflicting systems, for commentary in India applies to domains of thought that have little soteriological value. Even discussions of logic, grammar or medicine often take the form of commentaries on a basic text. The

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study of Indian and Tibetan epistemological traditions follows this model. An obvious assumption of this model is that the texts commented on are authoritative. These texts are worthy of being commented on because they present a true and complete picture of the field one wishes to study. In the Buddhist case, commentators take Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as authorities, assuming that they provide a true and complete picture of Buddhist epistemology. That is, to get them right is tantamount to being right. In this perspective, philosophical disagreements become arguments about the meaning of Dharmakīrti's pronouncements. But this assumption of authority presupposed by the commentarial method goes further. Not only does it hold that what Dharmakīrti says is right, it also assumes that what is right in logic and epistemology must be said by Dharmakīrti. Hence, we will see Ge-luk thinkers arguing for their own interpretations of Dharmakīrti on the basis of mostly logical considerations. These scholars will feel no compunction in interpreting the numerous passages disagreeing with their interpretations, for they assume that there is a necessary congruence between Dharmakīrti's texts and truth in the field of logic and epistemology.

The assumption of authority granted to the texts formative to the tradition has limitations, especially in the case of the Tibetan interpretations of Dharmakīrti. There, thinkers often are quite aware that their basic views of reality partly differ from Dharmakīrti's. This divergence is usually handled through a doxographical model which I will examine later. For instance, most Sa-gya and Ge-luk thinkers describe themselves as Mādhyamika. They also recognize that Dharmakīrti is a Yogācārin and hence does not share some of their views. Nevertheless, they use his thought in the domains of logic, epistemology, and philosophy of language. They do so because, in a tradition in which philosophy is commentarial, a philosophical point cannot be made without being properly grounded in a previous tradition. In the logico-epistemological domain, Dharmakīrti provides this authoritative grounding. Tibetan thinkers are quite aware of his limitations but realize that there is no epistemological tradition within Indian Buddhism rich enough to provide a viable alternative. Hence, when dealing with Dharmakīrti's thought, Tibetan thinkers will assume that Dharmakīrti is right, except for matters that reflect his doxographical limitations.

An implication of this situation is that the opinions defended by commentators represent their own views to a certain extent. On some topics, particularly those concerning ontology, Tibetan thinkers will argue about what is right and wrong more in relation to Dharmakīrti's texts than in relation to their own opinions. For example, Ge-luk and Sa-gya thinkers commenting on Dharmakīrti will agree that partless atoms are real and argue about whether objects of commonsense, such as a jar, are real or not. Such views should not be understood as reflecting their own personal views but, rather, as commentaries on Dharmakīrti's philosophy. As Mādhyamikas, these thinkers mostly reject Dharmakīrti's distinction between the real and the conceptual. Thus, according to their own system, neither atom nor jar has any reality over and above its conventional status. Nevertheless, while discussing Dharmakīrti's philosophy, these authors suspend their own

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ontologies and argue about this point in implicit reference to Dharmakīrti's system. This allows them to use Dharmakīrti to deal with more strictly logico-epistemological matters where he is assumed to be right, everything else being equal. Therefore, throughout this work the reader should understand that my descriptions of Tibetan thinkers' views do not refer always to their positions, but to their commentarial interpretations of Dharmakīrti.

This commentarial style also has definite implications for this work. Since the views I examine are genuinely philosophical as well as commentarial, I will assess them from both standpoints. I will compare these views to the original they comment on, mostly Dharmakīrti's thought, as well as evaluate them on their own merit. When discussing the problem of universals, for example, I will explain Ge-luk and Sa-gya interpretations. I will compare them to Dharmakīrti's thought, stating which one is closer to the original model than the other. I will also present a more strictly philosophical evaluation of these traditions, showing their conceptual strengths and weaknesses.

Another noticeable feature of the material we will examine here is its great complication. This is partly a function of the commentarial nature of the tradition. Every philosophical point must be made in reference to some text, which has to be discussed in order to make the argument understandable. But there is more. The commentarial style encourages a highly technical style of philosophy that is best described as scholastic. This word, which has been used derogatorily by the Western Enlightenment, should be understood here to refer colloquially to a style of philosophy in which discussions involve highly developed analytical skills. In such a tradition, a technical question such as the problem of universals can receive great attention. A similar type of philosophy is found in the writings of Aristotle and his school, Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Medieval scholastics, as well as modern analytical philosophers. Hence, it is among these thinkers, particularly the last group, that I have found revealing similarities.

A common but mistaken assumption is that a scholastic philosophy is necessarily sterile and fruitless. Although scholasticism leads to a proliferation of subtle distinctions and is in danger of losing sight of important questions,[7] such a reproach can be made of any philosophical tradition. We could even argue that such a danger reflects the nature of philosophical inquiry itself. Whatever is the truth of this overly general statement, it remains that despite its limited popularity in these days of "fast thinking," technical analytical philosophy as practiced by European scholastics, Indian paṇḍits, Tibetan lama-scholars, or modern logicians has manifested the vigor of philosophical thinking.

The problem with scholastic philosophy is that describing its arguments is difficult, for they involve distinctions that are hardly understandable to those not specially trained. Throughout this work, I have tried to reach a compromise between excessive simplification and utter scholasticism. The reader should be aware that often I have simplified the complicated positions, and the arguments supporting them, to make them fit into my narrative. I have tried, however, to preserve some of the flavor of the scholastic voices presented in this text.

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Scholarly Context

In underlining the philosophical strength of the Tibetan tradition, I have relied greatly on both modern and traditional scholars. This work is not, however, a summary of their impressive accomplishments but, rather, presents a new picture of the Tibetan epistemological tradition. Of particular significance is the dialogue between the various Tibetan schools and the interactions between history and philosophy. In making these points, I see myself as continuing the dialogue between Tibetan scholarly tradition and modern academic scholarship started by David Ruegg, Katsumi Mimaki, and others.

The study of Tibetan Buddhism is a recent endeavor that has benefited greatly from the forced exile of learned Tibetan teachers. Their misfortunes have raised Tibetan studies to an unexpected level for such a young field, particularly in the domains of Buddhist philosophy, where the considerable knowledge of Tibetan scholars has allowed scholars such as Jeffrey Hopkins and Anne Klein to present significant explanations of the Tibetan epistemological tradition in a well-informed manner. Their studies, however, have focused mostly on the contributions of the the Ge-luk tradition, in isolation from other schools, and largely has left aside their historical context. Other scholars such as David Jackson and Leonard van der Kuijp have contributed invaluable historical studies of Tibetan epistemological traditions. They also have provided interesting glimpses into the rival Sa-gya tradition but have not explained its philosophy in great detail.

The excellent works of all these scholars have provided students of Buddhist thought with rich material, which was previously totally inaccessible. Nevertheless, there is ample room for further improvements. An example is the need to articulate in a clear philosophical language the views of Tibetan traditions, which Tom Tillemans, Paul Williams, Roger Jackson, and others have begun for the Ge-luk views, whereas the views of Sa-gya epistemology have remained mostly absent from the discussion.

More important, I believe that it is time to move toward a more encompassing approach to the study of the different Tibetan traditions. Instead of attending to the views of each school in isolation, we may now attend to the interactions between traditions. This approach to Tibetan Buddhism was not possible in the earlier stages, when correctly describing the views of the various traditions was most pressing. This task, although not complete, has been well carried on. We may now aim for a more contextualized view of the Tibetan tradition, so that its diversity is well accounted for and relations among its strands are not obscured. The Tibetan tradition is not a juxtaposition of self-enclosed schools but consists of a rich dialogue among competing traditions. It is also important at this point to relate historical and philosophical developments to each other, putting ideas in relation to their proper socio-political contexts and better understanding their evolution.

This work is indebted not only to Western scholarship. My study of Buddhist epistemology began during the 1970s when I became a full-time student in the

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Ge-luk tradition. I am fortunate to have spent my most formative years as a student there, in a milieu that had inherited the study of Buddhist philosophy through generations of highly qualified scholars. For seven years, I spent several months each year studying Dharmakīrti's texts, together with the best of the Ge-luk commentaries, under the guidance of these scholars. I am particularly indebted to the many teachers who patiently helped me develop my philosophical abilities through these studies. Ge-shay Rabten, Lati Rimbochay, Ge-shay Lo-sang-gya-tso (*blo bzang rgya mtsho*) and Ge-shay Nyi-ma-gyel-tsen (*nyi ma rgyal mtshan*), among many others, were particularly helpful in this regard. This work attempts to acknowledge the immense value of the scholarly tradition they have represented so well.

This indebtedness creates its own set of problems. The close link that I and many other students of Tibetan Buddhism have forged with traditional scholars is one of the greatest attractions of studying Tibetan Buddhism. Instead of being limited to texts, we have been fortunate to have access to well-informed scholars. As my colleagues surely recognize, this has been, and still is, a source of enormous strength from which we all have benefited. This closeness, however, can be an obstacle to a more mature understanding of Tibetan tradition. There is a danger of becoming dazzled by the quality of the scholarly expression and the personalities we encounter, which may in fact obscure the limitations of the positions asserted.

Living Tibetan traditions are institutions that make their own claims to authority. I find it necessary to be critical of these claims. I have attempted to do this in several ways, two of which seem particularly relevant here: placing their interpretations within the development of the overall Tibetan tradition, and keeping sight of the historical and political character of Tibetan schools. Failure to attend to such concerns could lead to an absolutizing of the viewpoints of Tibetan scholars. In actuality, although their views are valuable, they share the limitations of any interpretation. Establishing a degree of critical distance has allowed me to attempt to contribute to this tradition by bringing it into dialogue with modern academic scholarship.

Therefore, it should be clear that my use of Tibetan sources in no way implies an acceptance of the authority of this tradition. Although I rely on the insights of Tibetan commentators to understand the material I study, Dharmakīrti's ideas included, I do not claim that the truth about Dharmakīrti and his tradition is their sole possession. Nor am I arguing for a wholesale adoption of their interpretations, however "enlightened." On the contrary, this work presents a critical picture of the strengths and limitations of their approaches, even as it draws on them in developing an analysis and critique of Dharmakīrti's philosophy.

In this way, I attempt to give Tibetan traditions serious consideration within a sustained dialogue across boundaries. In the process, I do not intend merely to repeat the conclusions of Tibetan commentators. Hans-Georg Gadamer makes an important point when he says, "It is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all."[8] Hence, whatever is of value here must involve more than mere repetition: it must reflect some degree of insight into the material.

It is perhaps obvious that works of interpretation, this one included, reflect the limitations of the historical situations in which they have been written. It may

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be less apparent that our position as modern interpreters and that of traditional scholars are no different in this respect. Our understanding has historical limitations that are similar (but not identical) to those of ancient interpreters. However methodologically refined our works may be, they do not come into existence from a position of absolute neutrality but reflect our historical situation. As the ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre says, "[I]t is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground, some locus for rationality as such, which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions. Those who maintained otherwise either have covertly been adopting the standpoint of a tradition and deceiving themselves and others into supposing theirs was just such a neutral stand-ground or else have simply been in error."[9] Ethically and methodologically useful at times, the injunction to absolute neutrality usually given to modern scholars obscures the epistemological nature of the interpretative process. Understanding a text is not accomplished by eliminating all expectations and preformed ideas—that would be strictly impossible—but by unearthing them. As good interpreters we do not empty our minds to understand what an author means but check existing ideas and judgments against the evidence provided by the text and the context and confront our opinions against those of other informed interpreters. Therefore, the search for the meaning of a text or a system is not just an analytical process but involves a dialogical dimension as well.

This work considers Tibetan commentators to be partners in the kind of dialogue necessary for greater understanding. Because of their participation in an ongoing tradition of inquiry in the philosophy of Dharmakīrti's tradition, these highly educated interpreters are ideally suited to a dialogue with modern methodologically aware interpreters.

The dialogical dimension of scholarly work is particularly relevant to my own experience. After finishing my studies of the traditional curriculum offered by Ge-luk monastic universities, I continued my study of Buddhist epistemology while engaged in academic work in the United States. There my previous understanding of Dharmakīrti confronted that of modern scholars such as Bimal Matilal, Ernst Steinkellner, Masaaki Hattori, Masatoshi Nagatomi, Nandita Bandyopadhyay, Dharmendra Shastri, Richard Hayes, Ernst Vetter, Rita Gupta, and many others. In the process, I could not but notice the discrepancies between their views and the interpretations to which I had been exposed previously. I also noticed that these differences often corresponded to the points that I had felt had not been resolved adequately during my previous training. All this obliged me to go back to the study of Dharmakīrti's own texts. In the process I developed a diversified comprehension of Buddhist epistemology. I came to understand some of the sources and rationales for the discrepancies I had noticed earlier, realizing that they arose due to difficulties internal to Dharmakīrti's own system. This gave me a realization of the richness of Dharmakīrti's tradition that would have been difficult to develop solely through the study of his texts. I hope to share with my readers some of the enthusiasm that has taken me down this path.

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The Hermeneutical Significance of Comparison

Another methodological concern I would like to address is the partially comparative nature of my work and the resulting difficulties. Despite the problematic nature of this methodology, it remains at the center of the humanities. Let me make a few general remarks, following the penetrating analysis of Jonathan Z. Smith, a contemporary historian of religions.

Smith starts his investigation of comparison by underlining its cognitive importance: "The process of comparison is a fundamental characteristic of human intelligence. Whether revealed in the logical grouping of classes, in poetic similes, in mimesis, or other like activities—comparison, the bringing together of two or more objects for the purpose of either similarity or dissimilarity, is the omnipresent substructure of human thought. Without it, we could not speak, perceive, learn, or reason."[10] Despite its primordial importance, the role of comparison in the humanities is problematic. Comparison has led us astray at times, as for example in the comparative study of mysticism in which similarities have tended to be overemphasized. Nevertheless, despite its problematic nature and the disrepute into which it has fallen,[11] comparison remains a privileged tool of the humanities.

The first point to make is that comparison involves not only similarities between two or more elements but also dissimilarities. Comparison does not consist of saying "this is like that." This simplistic approach inevitably invites the unfair but devastating question mentioned by Smith,[12] "and so what?" If we want to avoid being either trivial or groundless, we have to take into account differences as well as similarities. This seems to have been ignored by many comparative studies of mysticism, which have assimilated different forms of religious experiences while relegating their differences to linguistic and cultural superstructures.

Such an assimilative approach to comparison falls into the extreme of presuming an overwhelming degree of similarity between mystical phenomena. Despite their transcendent vocations, however, even these cannot escape the status of cultural object. To be more fruitful, comparison must walk the finer path described by Dilthey: "Interpretation would be impossible if [past] expressions of life were completely strange. It would be unnecessary if nothing strange were in them. It lies, therefore, between these two extremes."[13] Whereas something utterly alien could not be understood, something identical is self-evident and requires no interpretation. Comparison requires the presence of some differences, "a methodological manipulation of difference, a playing across the 'gap' in the service of some useful end."[14] This play of differences and similarities answers the "how" question, but leaves open the "why." Why do we compare? How can we avoid the "so what" response mentioned earlier?

Dilthey's passage suggests that the main purpose of comparison is hermeneutical. Comparison is required by the nature of cultural objects, which require interpretation. This is most obvious in the field of religion, where the student is faced with a bewildering diversity of myths, beliefs, and practices. This alienness of cultural objects is not, however, limited to the unfamiliar domains explored by history

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of religions or anthropology. It affects any cultural object whose significance goes beyond the most basic level of communication.

Confronted by an unfamiliar object, we use comparison: we notice similarities and, more significant, differences. We situate the object, understanding it as belonging to a certain type or genre. We also notice differences that set this object apart from others. We thereby start to form certain anticipatory prejudgments,[15] which lead and inform our enquiry.

This work uses such a comparative method. It is not intended, however, as a full-blown comparative enterprise. My concern here is not to attempt a symmetrical comparison across cultures, extensively comparing Indian, Tibetan, and Western philosophies. Rather, I focus on Indian and Tibetan thinkers, using comparisons to determine the vocabulary of the enquiry.[16] Indian and Tibetan concepts are discussed using a standard Western vocabulary, and comparisons are briefly suggested rather than thematically developed. For example, I make extensive use of the opposition between realism and conceptualism concerning the problem of universals to reveal the logic of ideas in a tradition in which interpretative issues sometimes hide the more purely philosophical questions. Although the use of such terminology is not explicitly comparative, it involves an implicit comparison made to frame the vocabulary of my inquiry.

I also use some more explicit comparisons. For instance, I compare Dharmakīrti's philosophy to modern empiricism not just as a rhetorical device to introduce Dharmakīrti's ideas nor to present the alien through what is already known (because of the specialized nature of this work, it is in no way certain that most of my readers will know Locke better than Uddyotakara or Dharmakīrti!). My intention is to suggest a view of Dharmakīrti's tradition that facilitates its integration into the history of human ideas. Too often discussions of Indian philosophies fail to retrieve the philosophical content of the thoughts they examine. This leads to the unfortunate situation in which Indian thought is ignored by the philosopher and historian of ideas as being irrational, illogical, and altogether nonsensical.

It seems to me that one of our tasks as students of Asian thought is to present the material we examine so that it gradually becomes integrated into the larger history of ideas. There is a need for presenting non-Western ideas in terms that can be related to the concepts of other cultures. This task is not, however, without problems, for the "larger" scheme through which "the history of humankind" is written is hardly neutral. The "history of philosophy" is written from a perspective formed in ancient Greece and developed in Europe and, therefore, is heavily connected with a cultural context from which Asia (not to mention other non-Western cultures) has been largely excluded.

Integrating Indian or other cultures to a history written from this perspective is not without danger. For in introducing etic concepts we incur the risk of damaging beyond repair the material we intend to retrieve. For example, in comparing Uddyotakara with Aristotle and choosing a standard Western vocabulary to present the two systems, I run the risk of obliterating the particularities of the Nyāya phi-

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losophy (such as its close association with Sanskrit linguistics).

Still, it seems to me that the risk has to be taken, for the alternative, irrelevance, is hardly desirable. As a Western scholarly community, we cannot avoid using etic concepts in examining the ideas of other cultures. We have to use our own words, with all their history and associations, and face the prospect of transforming the traditions we examine. This risk cannot be escaped and is implied by the increasing cross-cultural dialogue characteristic of the contemporary situation. What we can do is to be careful not to succumb to the temptation of believing that the description we obtain by using a standard Western vocabulary is normative, that it is the last word on the question, which allows us to pass a judgment on the traditions we study. Rather, it seems to me that this is the first step, after which a deeper exploration of the tradition can take place.

The Structure of the Work

For its central theme this work explores the problem of universals, including the consequences various interpretations of this notion hold for epistemology and semantics in the Buddhist logico-epistemological tradition. The procedure I follow is straightforward: for most of the topics I examine I open with an introductory chapter discussing my terminology as well as the Indian context of Dharmakīrti's ideas. The next chapter discusses Dharmakīrti's philosophy, and the following ones compare his views with those of Tibetan scholars. This order is largely expository, however. It does not reflect the reality of the interpretive process underlying my thinking in this work. My understanding of Dharmakīrti's ideas is not independent of that of traditional Tibetan scholars, as it is based mostly on a philosophical reading of the Tibetan versions of his texts and their Tibetan commentaries. Nevertheless, my view of Dharmakīrti is not reducible to the Tibetan interpretations either. Although this work focuses the Tibetan reception of Indian Buddhist epistemology, it also investigates the Indian side of the story. By consulting some of the Sanskrit texts and the views of modern scholars on the topic, I have tried to present a philosophically meaningful interpretation of Dharmakīrti that is more than the sum total of the scholarly contributions on which I have relied.

The work is divided into two books. Book I analyzes the problem of universals from an ontological perspective, and investigates the importance of this question for the philosophy of language in the Buddhist logico-epistemological tradition. Book I is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the ontology of Dharmakīrti's tradition. There, I analyze Dharmakīrti's antirealist philosophy and the sharp contrast it makes between the real and the conceptual. I also contrast Dharmakīrti's anti-realist view with the moderate realism of the Ge-luk tradition. Part II of Book I deals with the problem of universals per se. I contrast realism and antirealism, showing how many doctrinal conflicts in the Tibetan tradition relate to this opposition. Part III of Book I examines the semantic consequences of realism

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and conceptualism. In particular, I analyze the famous *apoha* theory, the hallmark of Buddhist philosophy of language.

Book II considers the epistemologies implied by conflicting views of universals. It is divided into two parts, organized around the concepts of valid cognition and perception. The first part examines valid cognition, which is central to Dharmakīrti and his tradition. I consider the conflicting interpretations of valid cognition, showing how Dharmakīrti's rejection of universals makes it difficult for him to provide a convincing account of knowledge. I also show how this difficulty provides the basis for further discussions among his later Indian and Tibetan followers. Finally, the second part of Book II completes this analysis by considering the theory of perception. I analyze the opposition between representationalism and direct realism, showing how this opposition informs debates among Tibetan philosophers. I also investigate the views of Dharmakīrti and his followers concerning reflexivity. This allows me to draw out some of the possible soteriological dimensions of his work.

At the completion of this long investigation, though we may not have resolved the problem of universals, we will have learned a great deal about Buddhist epistemology. Moreover, the impossibility of reaching any final conclusion in such a discussion is by itself a great philosophical lesson. This is not only my own conclusion but that of the Tibetan tradition. The historical background of this discussion is the task of the next introductory section, which discusses the place of Dharmakīrti and his followers in the Indian and Tibetan traditions.

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