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CANDRAKĪRTI ON DIGNĀGA ON *SVALAKṢAṆAS*

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I. Introduction

Since the publication of Th. Stcherbatsky's *Buddhist Logic* in 1932, many scholars have followed the great Russian Buddhologist's lead in looking to the works of Dharmakīrti for help in understanding the works of Dignāga. Among other things, this has meant taking Dignāga to have understood *svalakṣaṇas* in terms of what Stcherbatsky characterized as "point-instants," a translation which perhaps plausibly conveys a sense of Dharmakīrti's understanding of this concept.

It is not surprising that scholars should thus have relied on Dharmakīrti in interpreting Dignāga, since understanding Dignāga's works is a task that presents significant interpretive difficulties. Unlike the case of Dharmakīrti (several of whose works survive in the original Sanskrit), Dignāga's works come down to us only in Tibetan translation[1]. Moreover, in the case of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, what we have are in fact *two* often quite divergent Tibetan translations, a state of affairs that reflects Richard Hayes's contention that the available translations "show signs of having been done by translators who were themselves not certain of the meanings of many passages in the original texts…"[2]. The available texts of Dignāga's works are thus more than usually underdetermined. Even more than is typically the case with respect to the characteristically elliptical works of Indian philosophers, then, a full understanding of Dignāga requires recourse to his commentators. In this regard, it is not surprising that a great many modern scholars have tread in Stcherbatsky's footsteps

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[1] Randle (1926) has compiled such Sanskrit fragments of Dignāga as can be gleaned from the quotations of him in other extant works of Indian philosophy.

[2] Hayes (1988), p.6. Note that Hattori's edition and translation of the first chapter of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (1968) gives editions of *both* Tibetan translations (i.e., the one supervised by the Indian *paṇḍita* Vasudhararakṣita, and the one supervised by Kanakavarman). Both Hayes and Hattori take the translation of Kanakavarman as their basic text.

and read Dignāga primarily through the lens of Dharmakīrti, who is, after
all, traditionally taken to have been Dignāga's grand-disciple, and whose
Pramāṇavārttika represents itself as what would thus be the earliest sur-
viving "commentary" on Dignāga's magnum opus.

In recent decades, however, several scholars have urged that Dharmakīrti
is a commentator in name only, and that his works in fact represent inno-
vative departures from Dignāga's works. Indeed, Radhika Herzberger has
gone so far as to urge that "Diṅnāga's thought is not encompassed by the
greater depth of Dharmakīrti's, rather it is washed away by it"[3]. The ques-
tion of Dignāga's understanding of *svalakṣaṇas* is one of the chief issues
with respect to which recent scholars have particularly questioned the value
of Dharmakīrti. Thus, for example, Hayes (1988, p.15) says that among the
views erroneously "imputed" to Dignāga by Stcherbatsky is "… the view
of particulars as point-instants, which amounts to a commitment to a doc-
trine of radical momentariness (*kṣaṇikavāda*)." Similarly, Shoryu Katsura
(1991, p.144) has urged that "[Dharmakīrti's view of] reality is charac-
terized by momentariness, an idea which has no place in Dignāga."

While such cautions may be appropriate, it nevertheless remains diffi-
cult to be sure exactly what Dignāga *does* understand *svalakṣaṇas* to be
like, since about the only thing he ever says about them is that they are
"ineffable," "unspecifiable," or "indefinable" — with all of these being
plausible renderings of *avyapadeśya* (Tib., *bstan par bya ba ma yin pa*),
the word that Dignāga uses. Thus, there is still light to be shed on the issue.
I propose, then, to weigh in on the question of how Dignāga ought to be
understood with regard to *svalakṣaṇas*. I propose to do so, however, not
by recourse to any of Dignāga's commentators[4], but by looking at an

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[3] Herzberger (1986), p.241; quoted by Hayes (1988), p.30. Hayes concurs with
Herzberger's assessment, adding that Dharmakīrti "also washed away much of the accom-
plishment of the Buddha as well." (p.310) Among other things, this reflects a significant
tendentiousness in Hayes's lucid presentation of Dignāga, but that is a subject for another
day.

[4] Hayes has urged that Jinendrabuddhi's *Viśālāmalavatīnāmapramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā*
represents a more helpful commentary on the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* than Dharmakīrti's
Pramāṇavārttika, despite the latter's being much earlier. However, not only is it the case
that Jinendrabuddhi's commentary (like Dignāga's text) survives only in Tibetan transla-
tion (as the *Yaṅs-pa daṅ dri-ma med-pa ldan-pa śes-bya-ba tshad-ma kun-las-btus-pa'i
'grel-bśad*, Tohoku 4268); moreover, Jinendrabuddhi (800-850) significantly post-dates
Dharmakīrti, and *Jinendrabuddhi himself* thus tends to read Dignāga through the lens of

early critic of him: specifically, Candrakīrti, the first chapter of whose *Prasannapadā* comprises a highly under-appreciated engagement with an unnamed interlocutor whose thought looks very much like that of Dignāga. In the standard edition of the *Prasannapadā*, this section spans some twenty pages[5]. Typical of the neglect of this section is the fact that, while it thus constitutes more than a fifth of Candrakīrti's opening chapter, Cesare Rizzi's 36-page summary of the chapter devotes a scant two pages to this "controversy with the Buddhist Logicians"[6]. This neglect perhaps owes something to the fact that some influential Tibetan discussions of at least parts of this section take Candrakīrti to have been continuing his attack on *Bhāvaviveka*, so that what is almost certainly an engagement with Dignāga's epistemology gets subsumed in the *svātantrika-prāsaṅgika* discussion that has instead preoccupied most scholars.[7]

Dharmakīrti. Cf., Hayes (1988), pp.224-6, for comments on Jinendrabuddhi's nevertheless being preferable to Dharmakīrti as a commentator on Dignāga.

[5] The standard edition is that of Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1903-1913), which was printed as volume IV in the Bibliotheca Buddhica. Based on additional manuscripts from Nepal, J. W. de Jong (1978) suggested extensive revisions to this edition. All translations in the present essay are my own, and are from the edition of La Vallée Poussin as revised by de Jong (with de Jong's changes noted). (The edition of Vaidya [1960], which provides the pagination from the Biliotheca Buddhica edition, can be used, but is effectively just a reprinting of La Vallée Poussin's edition without La Vallée Poussin's extraordinarily erudite and helpful footnotes. Vaidya can, though, occasionally prove useful for his judgments regarding which of La Vallée Poussin's variants to adopt.) In La Vallée Poussin's edition, the engagement with Dignāga runs from 55.11 to 75.13 (with references thus being to page and line numbers), with the entire first chapter spanning 91 pages.

[6] Rizzi (1987). The bulk of Rizzi's short book (pp.23-59) consists in what is usually a detailed paraphrase of the first chapter of the *Prasannapadā*; Rizzi's account of the section in question (i.e., that spanning pages 55.11 to 75.13 of La Vallée Poussin's edition) occupies a page and a half at pp.47-49.

[7] For the view that Candrakīrti is still occupied with Bhāvaviveka in at least part of the section I will consider, cf., Thurman (1991), pp.292-295 (and especially p.293, n.13); this translates a section of Tsoṅ-kha-pa's *Legs bśad snyiṅ po* that addresses (and quotes extensively from) a discussion occurring at pp.66.1-68.4 of the *Prasannapadā*. Cf., also, Eckel (1978), who similarly follows Tsoṅ-kha-pa's lead in taking this section to be addressed to Bhāvaviveka. Stcherbatsky (1927) understood this whole section of the *Prasannapadā* (i.e., pp.55.11-75.13) to have been addressing Dignāga, introducing his translation of it (p.142) as a "Controversy about the Validity of Logic," and characterizing Candrakīrti's *pūrvapakṣin* as "The Logician." (Stcherbatsky's translation of this section is at pp.142-174.) Hattori (1968) also understands Candrakīrti to have been addressing Dignāga, and his annotations to his translation from Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* frequently provide useful cross-references to Candrakīrti. The only other significant treatments of

Whatever the reason, this neglect is regrettable, and not least because, in my view, an understanding of Candrakīrti's engagement particularly with Dignāga affords us an unusually good opportunity for appreciating the logically distinct character of Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka[8]. For the present, however, I am chiefly interested in what Candrakīrti can tell us about how to understand Dignāga — and specifically, how to understand Dignāga's concept of *svalakṣaṇa*. I would like to show this by following Candrakīrti in elaborating, in effect, on what seems to me an apt observation from Shoryu Katsura (which will be noted in due course). As we will see, Candrakīrti elaborates a similar insight in such a way as to make clear precisely how Dignāga had (on Candrakīrti's reading, anyway) transformed the Ābhidharmika notion of *svalakṣaṇa* — specifically, how Dignāga had used a word which Ābhidharmikas understood to denote a species of universal to refer instead to what can plausibly be characterized as *bare particulars*. We can, then, flesh out Dignāga's spare account of *svalakṣaṇas* by appreciating what Candrakīrti thought Dignāga would find to be an unwanted consequence of his own view.

II. Svalakṣaṇa *in the Ābhidharmika context*

Insofar as it is characteristically Ābhidharmika usage that Candrakīrti will press against Dignāga, our account should begin with the discourse

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this section that I have been able to find are those of Mookerjee (1957, pp.42-58; this is basically a paraphrase of Candrakīrti's text) and Siderits (1981), who also takes Candrakīrti's target here to be Dignāga.

Recently, an interesting bit of evidence regarding Candrakīrti's *pūrvapakṣin* has come to light: Yoshiyasu Yonezawa (1999, 2001) has been preparing a critical edition of the *Lakṣaṇaṭīkā*, from a Sanskrit manuscript in Tibetan *dbu-med* script, recovered at Zha lu monastery by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana (1937, p.35). This very brief commentary on the *Prasannapadā* was, Yonezawa speculates, written under the supervision of Abhayākaragupta (2001, p.27), which would place it roughly in the 12th century. Among the things which this concise commentary does is identify the various unnamed interlocutors, and with regard to the section that will concern us, the anonymous author of this commentary specifically identifies Dignāga; cf., n.43, below. (I would like to thank Prof. Yonezawa for sharing this information with me.) Be that as it may, I would argue (and indeed, have done so in Arnold, 2002) that Candrakīrti has good reasons for finding the epistemological project of Dignāga in principle problematic, and that Candrakīrti's unnamed interlocutor throughout this section is in fact Dignāga.

[8] I have argued this at length elsewhere; see Arnold 2002.

of Abhidharma. According to standard Ābhidharmika accounts of the Buddhist reductionist project, *dharmas* are the really (though fleetingly) existent elements that survive characteristically Buddhist reductionist analysis; *dharmas* are, in other words, the elements *to which* existents (and paradigmatically, of course, *persons*) can be reduced, and a great deal of Ābhidharmika literature is devoted to the enumeration of the "*dharmas*" which should thus be permitted into a final ontology (where "ontology" thus has something like its standard meaning of a catalogue of ontologically primitive categories). A standard such enumeration, for example, lists 75 *dharmas* that constitute the ontological primitives upon which all other, derivative existents are supervenient[9]. Note, though, that the idea of there being 75 *dharmas* is not the idea that there exist only 75 unique particulars in the world; rather, these clearly delineate 75 ontologically primitive *categories* — *types* of which there can be, presumably, innumerable *tokens*. The Ābhidharmika notion of *dharmas* is closely related to what are, in this literature, the conceptually cognate notions of *svalakṣaṇa* (in this context, "defining characteristic") and *svabhāva* ("essence" or "intrinsic nature"). Thus, for example, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* explains that *dharmas* (literally, "bearers") are so called "because they bear (√*dhṛ*) *svalakṣaṇas*."[10] That is, what distinguishes something as exemplifying one of the 75 categories of ontological primitives (one of the *dharmas*) is the fact of its sharing the same defining characteristic that is common to all instantiations of that *dharma*. Thus, to bear such a "defining characteristic" or "essence" is, in effect, to qualify for inclusion in this final ontology.

Among the significant points about this understanding of *svalakṣaṇas* is that each of these amounts to a sort of *property* belonging to a

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[9] Cf., Cox (1995), p.12; Chaudhuri (1976), p.14(a). The language of "supervenience" is borrowed from Kapstein (1987), pp.90, ff.

[10] Pradhan (1975), p.2.10: *svalakṣaṇadhāraṇād dharmaḥ*. On the connection between *svalakṣaṇa* (as "defining characteristic") and *svabhāva* (as "essence"), cf., inter alia, Cox (1995), p.12, as well as *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam ad* 6.14cd (Pradhan 1975, p.341.11-12): *Kāyaṃ svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyāṃ parīkṣate. Vedanāṃ cittaṃ dharmāś ca. Svabhāva evaiṣāṃ svalakṣaṇam*: "The body is investigated in terms of its defining and general characteristics. Feeling and thought are dharmas; the essence of these is their defining characteristic."

dharma. That is, this discourse speaks of *dharmas* as the irreducible remainder of reductionist analysis, and speaks of these, in turn, as individuated or characterized by the defining properties that belong to them — as, for example, perceptual awareness (*vijñāna*) is definitively characterized in terms of some "conception regarding an object" (*viṣayaprativijñapti*), or as earth (*pṛthivī*) is definitively characterized by "hardness" or "resistance" (*khara* or *kāṭhinya*).[11] There is thus an important sense in which the *svalakṣaṇas* in virtue of which *dharmas* qualify as such are, in fact, universals or abstractions; for, say, a "conception regarding an object" is something that belongs to (and definitively characterizes) *every* instance of perceptual awareness — characterizes each, that is, as a token of the *type* of thing that belongs in a final ontology. The abstract nature of such "defining characteristics" figures particularly prominently in Sarvāstivādin arguments for the existential status of past and future moments of time. Thus, as Collett Cox explains,

> The term "intrinsic nature" [*svalakṣaṇa*] does not indicate a factor's [i.e., *dharma*'s] temporal status, but rather refers to its atemporal underlying and defining nature. Intrinsic nature thus determines the atemporal, existential status of a factor as a real entity (*dravya*). Nevertheless, it is precisely in this sense of intrinsic nature that factors can be said to exist at all times (*svabhāvaḥ sarvadā cāsti*); intrinsic nature, as the particular inherent characteristic, pertains to or defines a factor in the past, present, and future, regardless of its temporal status. (1995, p.139)

But even for Sautrāntikas who, following Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, reject this specifically temporal application of the point, it is nevertheless the case that the *svalakṣaṇas* that individuate existents as belonging to one or another dharmic category are fundamentally abstract. This is, I will suggest, among the salient points that will be transformed by Dignāga's use of the term, and it will be rendered clear by Candrakīrti's urging of Ābhidharmika usage against Dignāga.

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[11] The adducing of *viṣayaprativijñapti* as the *svalakṣaṇa* of *vijñāna* occurs at *Abhidharmakośa* 1.16a (Pradhan, p.11), and *khara* as that of *pṛthivī* at *Abhidharmakośa* 1.12 (Pradhan, p.8). For *kāṭhinya* as synonymous with *khara*, cf., Pradhan, pp.24.3, 78.7-8. These are the examples of *svalakṣaṇa* which, as we will see, Candrakīrti adduces contra Dignāga; cf.,n.48, below.

While macro-objects such as (paradigmatically) persons can thus be reduced to their basic parts, such reductionist analysis is thought by Ābhidharmikas to be capable of reaching bedrock, in the form of the *dharmas* that are individuated by uniquely defining characteristics. In Ābhidharmika literature, this intuition that reductionist analysis can yield ontological primitives is also advanced in terms of a debate regarding what is *dravyasat* and what is *prajñaptisat* — that is, regarding, respectively, what "exists as a substance," and "what exists as a *prajñapti*"[12]. Paul Williams, borrowing from Brentano, aptly renders these as (respectively) *primary* and *secondary* existence[13], and emphasizes that what is at stake here is not so much *what* exists, as *how* it exists. Thus, things that exist as *prajñapti* (*prajñaptitaḥ*) are invariably reducible to things that exist as ontological primitives (*dravysat*); the latter, in turn, exist irreducibly. In Vasubandhu's massive *Abhidharmakośa* and his *bhāṣya* thereon, the most prominently recurrent debate concerns the question of precisely *which* things are to be admitted as being *dravyasat*. Thus, if we follow the traditional doxographic view (according to which Vasubandhu's commentary reflects a Sautrāntika critique of the Vaibhāṣika perspective reflected in the *kārikās*), we might characterize the Vaibhāṣikas as ontologically promiscuous, and the Sautrāntikas as ontologically parsimonious; for throughout the course of Vasubandhu's massive work, various Buddhist categories are introduced and considered, with the Vaibhāṣikas characteristically asserting that they exist *dravyatas* ("substantially"), and the Sautrāntikas invariably rejoining that, in fact, they only exist *prajñaptitas* ("derivatively" or "superveniently," we might say).[14]

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[12] I leave *prajñapti* untranslated since I am dissatisfied with the customary rendering of this as "concept" (cf., e.g., Warder 1971). In the Mādhyamika context, much depends on the rendering, since the notion of *upādāya prajñapti* is pivotal for Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. I have argued elsewhere (Arnold 2002) that, particularly as deployed by Burton (1999), the translation of this as "concept" is highly misleading.

[13] Williams (1981). This is one of the best discussions of the conceptual motivation behind Ābhidharmika discussions of *dravyasat* and *prajñaptisat*. See also the discussion by Kapstein (1987), pp.90, ff.

[14] So, for example, the famous debate, in the fifth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośa*, regarding the existential status of past, present, and future moments. The characteristically Vaibhāṣika claim is that all three "really" exist, and that this reflects the proper interpretation of the Buddhist scriptural passage (*sarvam asti*, "everything exists") that gives adherents of this school the name "Sarvāstivāda" (the "'everything exists'-affirmers").

The reason it matters so much how these terms are allocated is that, given the intuitions that motivate the Ābhidharmika project, what is *dravyasat* ("substantially" or "primarily existent") is, *ipso facto*, admitted as being *paramārthasat* ("ultimately existent," "real," or "true"). On this view, in other words, the characteristically Buddhist contention that there are two levels of "truth" ("conventional truth," *saṃvṛtisatya*, and "ultimate truth," *paramārthasatya*) has a specifically ontological correlate: what is *conventionally* true is what is reducible, by way of critical analysis, to what is "ultimately real"; the latter category, in turn, thus consists in an enumerable set of ontological primitives. In an often-cited passage, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* makes this point explicitly:

> There are also two truths, conventional truth and ultimate truth. What are the characteristics of these two? … The conventionally true is that with respect to which the concept does not arise when it is broken into parts, as for example a jar; for with respect to that, when it is broken into pieces (*kapālaśo bhinne*), the idea of a jar does not arise. And that with respect to which, having excluded other *dharmas* by way of the intellect, the idea does not arise — that, too, should be known as conventionally true, as for example water; for with respect to that, having excluded, through the intellect, other *dharmas* such as form, the idea of water does not arise. Everything else is ultimately true; with respect to this, even when broken, the idea still arises, even when other *dharmas* are excluded by way of the intellect — that is ultimately true, as for example, form.[15]

Vasubandhu the Sautrāntika rejoins that he does not deny *that* these exist; he simply rejects the Vaibhāṣika claim regarding *how* they exist. Thus, "We, too, say the past exists; but the past is what existed previously, and the future will exist with respect to [presently] existent causes. And in this sense they exist, *but not substantially*." (Pradhan [1975], p.299.1ff: *vayam api brūmo 'sty atītānāgatam iti; atītaṃ tu yad bhūtapūrvam, anāgataṃ yat sati hetau bhaviṣyati. Evaṃ ca kṛtvā-astīty ucyate na tu punar dravyataḥ.*) On this whole debate, see Williams (1981) and Cox (1995, *passim*), who both provide very illuminating discussions.

[15] Pradhan (1975), pp.333-4: *dve api satye saṃvṛtisatyaṃ parmārthasatyaṃ ca. Tayoḥ kiṃ lakṣaṇam?… Yasminn avayavaśo bhinne na tad buddhir bhavati tat saṃvṛtisat, tadyathā ghaṭaḥ; tatra hi kapālaśo bhinne ghaṭabuddhir na bhavati. Tatra ca-anyān apohya dharmān buddhyā tad buddhir na bhavati taccāpi saṃvṛtisad veditavyam, tadyathā-ambu; tatra hi buddhyā rūpādīn dharmān apohya-ambubuddhir na bhavati…. Atonyathā paramārthasatyam; tatra bhinne 'pi tad buddhir bhavaty eva; anyadharmāpohe 'pi buddhyā tat paramārthasat, tadyathā rūpam.*

Collett Cox explains: "If the notion of a particular entity disappears when that entity is broken (e.g., a pot) or can be resolved by cognition into its components (e.g., water), that entity exists only conventionally. Entities that are not subject either to this further material or mental analysis exist absolutely. Thus, actual existence as a real entity (*dravyasat*) is attributed only to the ultimate constituent factors, which are not subject to further analysis"[16]. As an example of the latter, Vasubandhu has here adduced the case of "form" (*rūpa*) — presumably in the sense of the first of the five *skandhas*[17].

III. *Dignāga and the culmination of Ābhidharmika commitments*

That the foregoing represents the basic set of intuitions inherited by Dignāga is perhaps most clear in his *Ālambanaparīkṣā* ("examination of intentional objects"). This very short text — which consists in only eight *kārikās* together with a brief auto-commentary — represents Dignāga's attempt to argue that awareness can satisfactorily be explained provided only that we posit some *mental* phenomena as the "objects" intended by awareness; and indeed, that we cannot coherently posit any non-mental, external objects as what is directly intended by awareness. The latter is true insofar as any account of external objects necessarily presupposes some version of minimal part atomism, which, Dignāga argues, cannot coherently be adduced to explain our awareness of macro-objects. Clearly,

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[16] Cox (1995), pp.138-9. Cf., Williams (1981), p.237: "Saṃghabhadra [i.e., the Vaibhāṣika whose *Nyāyānuśara* — now extant only in Chinese translation — is traditionally held to represent a rejoinder to Vasubandhu's Sautrāntika criticisms] adds that the distinction between primary and secondary existence corresponds to that between ultimate and conventional truth (*paramārtha* and *saṃvṛtisatya*). This point is extremely important for it shows that in the Sarvāstivāda the distinction between *satyas* was not soteriological but primarily philosophical, in this case ontological."

[17] With the Vaibhāṣikas represented as admitting the *skandhas* to be *dravyasat*. The Sautrāntikas, in contrast, deny that the five *skandhas* exist as *dravyasat*, instead favoring the view that what is *dravyasat* are the 75 *dharmas* into which, inter alia, the *skandhas* can be reduced. Thus, for Sautrāntikas the category of *rūpa-skandha* exists only secondarily (*prajñaptisat*) insofar as it comprises the first 11 *dharmas* in the standard list of 75 (specifically, the five bodily senses, together with their respective objects, plus the category of *avijñaptirūpa*).

Dignāga's argument here owes something to Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*[18]. As with the latter work, there is some scholarly disagreement about whether Dignāga is best understood as arguing here for an idealist meta-physics, or simply for something like a representationalist epistemology involving sense-data (which allows the possibility of remaining neutral with respect to what might finally exist in the world).[19]

Be that as it may, what is of greatest interest to me here is Dignāga's clear allusion to the passage from Vasubandhu (considered above) on the "two truths." Thus, arguing that there is an unbridgeable gap between atoms as the putative *cause* of awareness, and medium-sized dry goods as the *content* thereof, Dignāga says: "Things like jars are [merely] con-ventionally existent, *because if the atoms are removed, the awareness that appears with respect to them is destroyed* [k.5c-d]. In the case of what is substantially existent, such as color, even when one has taken away what is connected with it, there is no removal of the awareness of the color itself"[20]. Like Vasubandhu, Dignāga thus suggests that what qualifies medium-sized dry goods (of which jars are a stock Indian example) as merely "conventionally existent" (*kun rdzob tu yod pa*; Skt., *saṃvṛtisat*) is the fact of their being reducible, while the constituent parts to which they can be reduced (such as "color," *kha dog*, which is shorthand for *rūpa* and the other *skandhas*) in turn exist "substantially" (*rdzas su, dravyataḥ*).

[18] On Vasubandhu's arguments against atomism in the *Viṃśatikā*, see, inter alia, Kapstein (1988).

[19] Hayes (1988), for one, opts for the latter characterization (with respect both to Dignāga and to Vasubandhu), and calls the view "phenomenalism"; see pp.96-104 (on Vasubandhu) and pp.173-178 (on the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*).

[20] As with Dignāga's other works, the *Ālambanaparīkṣā* survives only in its Tibetan translation. I have used the edition of Tola and Dragonetti (1982), which gives: *bum pa la sogs pa ni kun rdzob tu yod pa ñid do / "rdul phran yoṅs su bsal na ni / der snaṅ śes pa nyams 'gyur phyir //" rdzas su yod pa rnams la ni 'brel pa can bsal du zin kyaṅ kha dog la sogs pa bźin du raṅ gi blo 'dor pa med do*. (The part italicized in the text repre-sents *kārikā* 5c-d, which is, in the edition of Tola and Dragonetti, marked off with quota-tion marks. I will follow the convention of italicizing portions from the *kārikās* in all sub-sequent citations from the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, as well.) Note that Hayes (1988, p.177) translates, "In the case of what is *rigorously real*…" (my emphasis) — which suggests that the text reads *paramārthasat*, for which Hayes has adopted the translation equivalent "rigorously real." But the text in fact reads *rdzas su yod*, which suggests instead *dravyasat* — though as I have been arguing, the two terms are, in the Ābhidharmika context which presently concerns us, conceptually co-extensive.

In the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Dignāga alludes to the same discussion, this time explicitly putting the issue in terms of what is "ultimately existent" (*paramārthasat*). Thus, arguing that a cognition cannot properly be named after the object that produces it, Dignāga says: "These individual [atoms], when aggregated, are the cause [of cognition], but it is not the *aggregate* [itself that is causally efficacious], since this exists only conventionally…. *if [a cognition be produced] from an object, that [object] must be [a real entity, and what is real is] ultimately unnamable…*"[21].

Clearly, then, Dignāga's understanding of the reductionist project (and correspondingly, his understanding of the two truths as consisting in the enumerable sets of those existents that are reducible and those that are not) is substantially the same as Vasubandhu's, and we can safely say that Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa* thus represents one of several significantly correlated terms: *svabhāva, svalakṣaṇa, dharma, dravyasat, paramārthasat*. That is, Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa* represents the culmination of the Ābhidharmika intuition that there exist basic (*dravyasat*) and irreducible entities — ontological primitives which are the sole remainder of critical analysis, and which are defined vis-à-vis *svalakṣaṇas*; and that the "ultimately real" or "ultimately true" (*paramārthasat*) consists in an enumerable set of such things[22]. The same point is particularly clearly put by Dharmakīrti, who thus elaborates Dignāga's ideas vis-à-vis the category of pragmatic efficacy (*arthakriyā*): "Whatever has the capacity for pragmatic efficacy is said in this context to be ultimately true;

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[21] *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad* 1.15: *de dag bsags pa na yaṅ so so ba rgyu yin gyi de bsags pa ni ma yin te tha sñad du yod pa'i phyir ro…. "gaṅ las de ni don dam par / de la tha sñad du ma byas /"* [1.15c-d]. The Tibetan (per the translation of Kanakavarman) is at Hattori (1968), p.189, with Hattori's translation at pp.34-5. I have followed Hattori's translation particularly of the *kārikā*, retaining his insertions; cf., Hattori's nn.2.24-25 (p.120) for an elaboration, together with relevant Sanskrit fragments.

[22] In this regard, the thumb-nail doxographical sketch provided by the 18th-century dGe-lugs-pa dKon-mchog 'jigs-med dbaṅ-po is interesting, and quite accurately states what I have here taken to be the most significant aspect of this approach: "A phenomenon that is established as bearing critical analysis with regard to its own way of being, independent of the imputation of terms or conceptions: that is the definition of ultimate truth. 'Existent,' 'ultimate truth,' '*svalakṣaṇa*,' 'impermanent,' 'constructed,' and 'truly established' are synonyms." (Mimaki, p.84: *sgra daṅ rtog pas btags pa la ma ltos par raṅ gi sdod lugs kyi ṅos nas rigs pas dpyad bzod du grub pa'i chos de don dam bden pa'i mtshan ñid / dṅos po daṅ / don dam bden pa daṅ / raṅ mtshan daṅ / mi rtag pa daṅ / 'dus byas daṅ / bden grub rnams don gcig/*)

everything else is conventionally true. These two [sets consist, respec-
tively, in] unique particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) and abstractions (*sāmān-
yalakṣaṇa*)."[23]

In what sense, though, does Dignāga's understanding of *svalakṣaṇa*
represent, as I have put it, the "culmination" of Ābhidharmika intuitions?
That is, just what are the *svalakṣaṇas* which, for Dignāga, thus constitute
the set of really existent things? It seems to me that it is in his concep-
tion of this notion that Dignāga perhaps most significantly parts com-
pany from Vasubandhu[24]. I have indicated that a salient point about the
Ābhidharmika usage of *svalakṣaṇa* is that it denotes some *property*
— specifically, the "defining characteristics" of which *dharmas* are the
"bearers." Indeed, Vasubandhu's etymology of the word *dharma*
(*svalakṣaṇadhāraṇād dharma*, "it is a 'bearer' because of 'bearing' a
defining characteristic") turns on precisely this notion. I have also sug-
gested that the *svalakṣaṇas* ("defining characteristics") thus "borne" by
dharmas are abstract or universal, in that *any instance* of some *dharma*
qualifies as such by virtue of its sharing with *every other* instance of that
dharma the property which defines it as belonging in a final ontology.[25]

We can highlight the contrast with this Ābhidharmika usage by noting
that *Dharmakīrti* understands *svalakṣaṇas* as *unique, objective particulars*
of some sort — specifically, as the kind of vanishingly small bare par-
ticulars that fit with Dharmakīrti's metaphysics of "momentariness"

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[23] *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.3 (Miyasaka [1971/72], p.42): *arthakriyāsamarthaṃ yat tad atra
paramārthasat / anyat saṃvṛtisat proktaṃ te svasāmānyalakṣaṇe //*. It is important to note
(as Hayes and Katsura have) that the notion of "pragmatic efficacy" (*arthakriyā*) as the
criterion of the ultimately real is among Dharmakīrti's innovations.

[24] Katsura (1991, p.136) agrees, saying with respect to *svalakṣaṇas* that "Dignāga
accepted the Abhidharmika's concepts of them at least in general. Nonetheless, he appears
to have attached to them new significances." In characterizing this as Dignāga's most sig-
nificant departure, I am only speaking, of course, in terms of the issues relevant to the pres-
ent discussion. A more comprehensive account of Dignāga's innovations would of course
have to assess the significance of his *apoha* doctrine, and of his formulation of rules for
valid inferences.

[25] Again, cf. Katsura (1991, p.137): "…it is clear that *svalakṣaṇas* of Abhidharma, viz.
dharmas which are actually named as *rūpa, vedanā*, etc., should be regarded by Dignāga
not as *svalakṣaṇas* but as *sāmānyalakṣaṇas*. Consequently, Dignāga's *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*
corresponds to both *sva-* and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* of the Abhidharma, which cannot be regarded
as real in Dignāga's system."

(*kṣaṇikatva*). Thus, for example, John Dunne has urged that, on Dhar-makīrti's understanding, it must be the case that *svalakṣaṇas* have no spa-tial extension.[26] At least in Dharmakīrti's thought, then, the Ābhidharmika tradition reaches its culmination in the insight that the irreducible onto-logical primitives in the system cannot be said themselves to *have* any properties; for if they did, they would be reducible (i.e., into *dharma* and *dharmin*, "property" and "property-possessor"). Thus, it is no longer the case that *svalakṣaṇas* are the "defining characteristics" *possessed by dhar-mas*; rather, *svalakṣaṇas just are* the ontological primitives on this view, and they are simply "self-characterizing." Dunne (1995: 195) nicely expresses the upshot: "This is best illustrated by a genitive construction such as, 'The nature of the infinitesimal particle.' Dharmakīrti maintains that in such expressions the *dharma* is actually identical to the *dharmin* itself. The apparent separation of the *dharma* from the *dharmin* is simply part of the exclusion process, and is hence conceptual." This reflects an extension or "culmination" of the Ābhidharmika project, then, insofar as the idea of irreducibility has here been taken to its logical extreme, such that what is irreducible cannot be said even to have any *properties* — here, in other words, we have the idea that for ontological primitives even to be simply *logically* reducible is to compromise the basic idea.

As I have noted, though, several scholars have recently challenged the idea that Dignāga understood *svalakṣaṇas* in the way that Dharmakīrti thus understood them. That may be the case. In fact, though, it seems to me that it is not altogether clear what Dignāga means by *svalakṣaṇa*, since he never formally defines the concept. Indeed, about the only thing Dig-nāga says about *svalakṣaṇas* is that they are "indefinable" or "unspeci-fiable" (*avyapadeśya*; "ineffable" is a frequently met translation for this). Thus, Dignāga begins his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* by arguing:

> *Perception and inference are reliable warrants*. There are only two, since *there are [only] two [kinds of] warrantable objects*; there is nothing war-rantable other than *svalakṣaṇas* and abstractions. It is perception that has *svalakṣaṇas* as its objects, and inference that has abstractions as its objects[27].

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[26] Cf., Dunne (1999), p.131.
[27] *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad* 1.2: *"mṅon sum daṅ ni rjes su dpag / tshad ma dag ni" gñis kho na ste, gaṅ gi phyir "mtshan ñid gñis / gźal bya" raṅ daṅ spyi'i mtshan ñid dag*

As for the "sphere of operation" (*gocara*) of the perceptual senses (*indriya*): it is the "indefinable (*anirdeśya*) form which is to be known in itself."[28] Later on, in contesting the Naiyāyika account of perception (which has it that perceptual awareness is "ineffable"),[29] Dignāga urges that this qualification is unnecessary, because redundant. He explains: "It is not possible that a definable (*bstan par bya ba*) object be the object of a sense-cognition (*dbaṅ po'i blo*, =Skt. *indriyabuddhi*), since what is definable is [always] the object of inference. [Therefore,] there is no [possibility of a sense-cognition's] variance in regard to indefinability."[30]

Just what does it mean, though, for *svalakṣaṇas* thus to be "indefinable"? Here again, Dignāga's own account is frustratingly underdetermined. What nevertheless seems clear, though, is that this idea has something to do with Dignāga's taking them to be the *objects* (Tib., *yul*, Skt., *viṣaya*) of perception — and, in turn, with his characteristic insistence on the fact that perception (*pratyakṣa*) is definitively characterized by its being "free of conceptual elaboration" (*kalpanāpoḍha*). Apropos of this, Dignāga says: "*Perception is free from conceptual elaboration*; that awareness which is without conceptual elaboration is perception. And what is this which is called 'conceptual elaboration'? *Association with name, genus, etc*"[31]. The basic idea here is that a bare perceptual event is constitutively non-linguistic, with the subsequent addition of linguistic interpretation representing, among other things, the point at which

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las gźan pa'i gźal bar bya ba med do. raṅ gi mtshan ñid kyi yul can ni mṅon sum yin la spyi' mtshan ñid kyi yul can ni rjes su dpag pa'o…. Tibetan per Hattori (1968), p.177.

[28] *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.5c-d: *svasaṃvedyam anirdeśyaṃ rūpam indriyagocaraḥ* (Sanskrit fragment in Hattori 1968, p.91, n.1.43, which also provides some useful elaboration; among other things, Hattori reports an alternative reading from another source: *svalakṣaṇam anirdeśyam….*).

[29] Cf., *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.4, given by Hattori (1968) at p.121, n.3.1.

[30] *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad* 1.17: *dbaṅ po'i blo la bstan par bya ba'i yul ñid srid pa ma yin te, bstan par bya ba ni rjes su dpag pa'i yul yin pa'i phyir yo. bstan par bya ba ma yin pa ñid la yaṅ 'khrul ba yod pa ma yin te….* (Hattori, p.191) Cf., also, *Pramāṇasamuccya* 2.2a: *raṅ gi mtshan ñid bstan bya min* ("the *svalakṣaṇa* is indefinable").

[31] *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.3, with *vṛtti*: "*mṅon sum rtog pa daṅ bral ba.*" *śes pa gaṅ la rtog pa med pa de ni mṅon sum mo. rtog pa śes bya ba 'di ji lta bu śig ce na, "miṅ daṅ rigs sogs bsres pa'o.*"

cognitive error can creep in. To be sure, it is not *necessarily* the case that any subsequent linguistic elaboration introduces error, as some such is necessary merely to yield the kind of propositional knowledge which alone could make the initial perception useful. Thus, for example, Dignāga exemplifies the steps of the cognitive process by saying: "One [initially] apprehends the non-conventional [i.e., because ultimately real] *svalakṣaṇas* (*raṅ… mtshan ñid dag tha sñad du bya ba ma yin*; Skt., **avyavahār-tavyasvalakṣaṇāni*) and the abstraction 'being colored.' Then, by means of the operation of the mind, one relates [being colored] to [the universal] impermanence, and expresses [the resulting cognition in the judgment] 'colored things and so forth are impermanent.'"[32]

While discursive elaboration in terms of universals is thus held to be indispensable to the development of propositional knowledge, it is nevertheless the case that a part of Buddhism's "deep grammar," as it were, is the idea that our cognitive and soteriological defilements are adventitious to our basic epistemic faculties, such that the removal of these defilements would leave untrammeled perception free to register things as they really are. If discursive elaboration of our basic percepts is thus necessary to yield propositional knowledge, then, it is nevertheless the case that such, in one form or another, is also precisely the problem to be overcome by Buddhist practice. That intuitions such as these are in play is made more clear by Dharmakīrti, who revises Dignāga's account by adding that perception is not only "free of conceptual elaboration," but also "non-mistaken."[33] In this way, "conceptual elaboration" (*kalpanā*)

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[32] *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad* 1.2c-d (Hattori 1968, p.177): *raṅ daṅ spyi'i mtshan ñid dag tha sñad du bya ba ma yin pa daṅ kha dog ñid dag las kha dog la sogs pa bzuṅ nas, kha dog la sogs pa mi rtag go śes mi rtag pa ñid la sogs par yid kyis rab tu sbyor bar byed do.* Here, I have basically followed Hattori's translation (p.24), with some adjustments; cf., Hattori's n.1.19, p.81, for extensive Sanskrit fragments from commentaries on Dharmakīrti. In these, *avyapadeśya* is again the word used to characterize *svalakṣaṇas*. For the Sanskrit underlying the Tibetan translation of Dignāga's *tha sñad du bya ba ma yin*, I have taken *avyavahārtavya* from Chandra (1959-1961, p.1010), whose usage is from the *Nyāyabindu* of Dharmakīrti.

[33] *Nyāyabindu* 1.4 (Shastri 1985, p.20): *tatra pratyakṣaṃ kalpanāpoḍham abhrāntam*; cf., *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.123, ff. (Miyasaka 1971/72, pp.56, ff.). While the introduction of this as a definitive feature perhaps represents an innovation by Dharmakīrti, cf., *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad* 1.17: Having said that the Nyāya definition of perception involves a redundant reference to *avyapadeśyatva* (cf., n.29, above), Dignāga adds: "Nor is

is implicated as the point in the cognitive process at which error comes in. Moreover, Dharmakīrti also expands Dignāga's contention that conceptualization involves "association with name, genus, etc.," with the significant adjustment that conceptualization involves simply any idea that is *suitable* for association with discourse[34]. With this emphasis, Dharmakīrti means to allow that conceptual activity is the sort of thing which may be (and is in fact) found even in such pre- or non-linguistic creatures as infants and animals — which must be the case if one is to avoid the unwanted consequence that the main soteriological defilement does not exist for infants or animals[35].

Clearly, then, the idea of the "indefinability" of *svalakṣaṇas* can serve important intuitions about the non-linguistic character of perception — intuitions according to which perception is thought to yield access to uniquely *uninterpreted* data, which, being "knowable in themselves" (*svasaṃvedyam*), amount to something that is simply "given" to awareness as the uniquely certain foundation for all other knowledge. Such has been the contention of Tom Tillemans, who aptly appeals to Wilfred Sellars's characterization of the "myth of the given":

> One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be noninferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or general truths; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims — particular and general — about the world. (Sellars 1963, p.164)

there a possibility of [perception's] having an erroneous object, since an erroneous cognition has as its object an illusion produced by the mind" (Tibetan at Hattori, p.193: *'khrul ba'i yul nyid kyaṅ srid pa ma yin te, 'khrul ba ni yid kyi 'khrul ba'i yul ñid yin pa'i phyir ro*; cf., Hattori's n.3.7, p.122).

[34] *Nyāyabindu* 1.5 (Shastri 1985, p.25): *abhilāpasaṃsargayogyapratibhāsapratītiḥ kalpanā* ("*Kalpanā* is a conception which has an appearance suitable for association with discourse").

[35] It is thus important to note just how much is excluded, by Dharmakīrti, with the characterization of perception as "*kalpanāpoḍha*"; for to the extent that contemporary scholars hope to explicate Dharmakīrti's thought vis-à-vis developments in contemporary philosophy, it becomes quite significant that Dharmakīrti's idea of what it would mean for perceptual cognitions to be (in one contemporary idiom) uninterpreted is thus meant to include instances (to retain the idiom) of "interpretation" even on the part of infants and animals. The kind of "conceptualization" thus ruled out must be very general indeed.

Following this lead, Tillemans explains that *svalakṣaṇas*, for the Buddhist Epistemologists, represent "the *purely particular*, known without prior reliance on concepts or any general truths," such that "particulars (*svalakṣaṇas*), be they accepted as external or as only mental, are the sort of thing *naturally suited to be present to non-inferential awareness*, and hence can be considered as a type of given — this is what is involved in Buddhists saying that particulars are *the* exclusive objects of perception"[36].

While the Ābhidharmika usage had it that *svalakṣaṇas* were "defining characteristics," it thus seems clear that Dignāga's characterization of *svalakṣaṇas* as *avyapadeśya* is part of a project in which these are now understood as *unique particulars* of some sort. Surely, then, the *avya-padeśyatva* of *svalakṣaṇas* thus goes hand in hand with the idea of perception as definitively free of conceptual elaboration, and as having *svalakṣaṇas* as its object. In attempting to understand just what *kind* of "unique particulars" we are talking about, though, I would like to consider the possibility that Dignāga's characterization of *svalakṣaṇas* as "indefinable" is meant to advance a stronger claim — one such that Dignāga's version of *svalakṣaṇas* might resemble Dharmakīrti's, after all (or at least, such that it is not clearly incompatible with Dharmakīrti's). In this connection, it is interesting to start by noting Masaaki Hattori's translation of part of *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.2 and the *vṛtti* thereon — specifically, the passage that reads [*tshad ma*] *dag ni gñis kho na ste, gaṅ gi phyir mtshan ñid gñis / gźal bya*..[37]. Hattori translates: "They [i.e., *pramāṇas*] are only two, *because the object to be cognized has [only] two aspects*," reading (with my emphasis) as though *mtshan ñid gñis* (*lakṣaṇadvayam*) were a *bahuvrīhi* compound standing for *gźal bya* (*prameya*)[38]. Against such a reading, Shoryu Katsura makes what seems to me exactly the right point about Hattori's translation: viz., that it "may suggest that the object to be cognized is a possessor of the two *lakṣaṇas* and [is] something different from them…. [But] I do not think that Dignāga admitted any bearer of the two *lakṣaṇas*"[39]. And it is at this point, finally, that I would like

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[36] Tillemans (2003), p. 98. See also Tillemans (1990), pp.41, ff.

[37] Cf., n.27, above. Hattori's translation (1968) is at p.24.

[38] Cf., the Sanskrit reconstruction given in Katsura (1991), p.136, n.29: … *pratyakṣam anumānaṃ ca pramāṇe dve eva, yasmād lakṣaṇadvayaṃ prameyam.*

[39] *Ibid.*

to introduce Candrakīrti; for one reason I am inclined to opt for Kat-
sura's more straightforward reading (according to which the compound
is not a *bahuvrīhi*, and *prameyam* is more literally gerundive) is that *Can-
drakīrti has seized on precisely the same conceptual issue that Katsura
here notes*. Let us, then, see how Candrakīrti develops this point.

IV. *Candrakīrti on Dignāga on* svalakṣaṇas

Having devoted a considerable part of the first chapter of the *Prasan-
napadā* to refuting Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti turns to address the objec-
tion of an epistemologist, who wants to know what *pramāṇas* warrant
the claims made in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 1.1. Specifically, Can-
drakīrti's interlocutor here wants to know whether Candrakīrti's "cer-
tainty" or "conviction" (*niścaya*) is or is not produced by an accredited
pramāṇa ("reliable warrant")[40]. Candrakīrti's initial rejoinder is remi-
niscent of Nāgārjuna's well-known disavowal, in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*,
of any "thesis" (*pratijñā*), with Candrakīrti here disavowing any claim
to the conceptually cognate category of "certainty" (*niścaya*)[41].

After ringing the changes on this theme, Candrakīrti turns to consider
commitments such as are specific to Dignāga. He sets up this considera-
tion by anticipating the claim that Dignāga is merely thematizing our con-
ventional epistemic practices, and so cannot be charged with striving for the
sort of ultimacy that is only the purview of a fully realized Buddha[42]. Thus:

> [Objection:] Or perhaps [the Epistemologist will suggest:] "It is [simply]
> worldly convention (*vyavahāra*) regarding warrants and warrantable objects
> which has been explained by us through [our system's] treatise."

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[40] *Prasannapadā* 55.11-15: *Atra kecit paricodayanti: Anutpannā bhāvā iti kim ayaṃ
pramāṇajo niścaya uta-apramāṇajaḥ? Tatra, yadi pramāṇaja iṣyate, tadā-idaṃ vaktavyam:
kati pramāṇāni, kiṃlakṣaṇāni, kiṃviṣayāṇi, kiṃ svata utpannāni, kiṃ parata ubhayato
'hetuto vā-iti? Atha-apramāṇajaḥ sa na yuktaḥ, pramāṇādhīnatvāt prameyādhigamasya.
Anadhigato hy artho na vinā pramāṇair adhigantuṃ śakyata iti, pramāṇābhāvād arthād-
higamābhāve sati, kuto 'yam samyagniścaya iti?*

[41] 56.4-5: *Ucyate: Yadi kaścinniścayo nāma-asmākaṃ syāt, sa pramāṇajo vā syād
apramāṇajo vā. Na tv asti.*

[42] For Candrakīrti had urged that the demand for putatively probative arguments (*upa-
patti*) makes no sense insofar as "ultimate truth is a matter of venerable silence" (57.7-8:
*Kiṃ khalv āryāṇām upapattir na-asti? Kena-etad uktam asti vā nāsti vā-iti? Paramārtho
hy āryas tūṣṇībhāvaḥ* [per de Jong]).

[Response:] Then it should be stated what the fruit of [your] explanation of this [i.e., of worldly usage] is.

[The Epistemologist continues:] It [i.e., worldly usage] has been destroyed by bad logicians (*kutārkikaiḥ*), through their predication (*abhidhāna*) of false characteristics. Its correct characteristics have been explained by us.

[Reply:] If [this is said, we rejoin:] This doesn't make sense, either. For if, based on the composition of a false definition by bad logicians, *everyone* made a mistake regarding what's under definition (*kṛtaṃ lakṣyavaiparītyaṃ lokasya syāt*), [then] the point of this [i.e., of your proposed alternative to Nyāya epistemology] would be one whose effort was fruitful. But it's not so, and this effort is pointless.[43]

It is significant that Candrakīrti thus introduces his consideration of commitments such as are specific to Dignāga with this exchange about whether or not Dignāga can credibly claim to be offering an account of conventional epistemic practices; for from this point on, Candrakīrti's governing concern will simply be that of rejecting this claim. Candrakīrti has, in other words, introduced his survey of commitments specific to Dignāga by setting it up in such a way that he will only need to show that Dignāga's categories are not only not *used* conventionally, but cannot even *account* for conventional usage. To show this, on Candrakīrti's view, is to show that, notwithstanding his likely protests to the contrary, Dignāga is really trying to *explain* conventions by getting behind them to something that is more "real" than they are (specifically, really existent

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[43] 58.14-59.3: *Atha syād eṣa eva pramāṇaprameyavyavahāro laukiko 'smābhiḥ śāstreṇānuvarṇita iti. Tadanuvarṇasya tarhi phalaṃ vācyam. Kutārkikaiḥ sa nāśito viparītalakṣaṇābhidhānena. Tasya asmābhiḥ samyaglakṣaṇam uktam iti cet. Etad apy ayuktam. Yadi hi kutārkikair viparītalakṣaṇapraṇayanaṃ* [Tib., *praṇayanāt*…; adopted by Vaidya] *kṛtaṃ lakṣyavaiparītyaṃ lokasya syāt. Tadarthaṃ prayatnasāphalyaṃ syāt. Na ca etad evam iti vyartha evāyaṃ prayatna iti.* It is with respect to this passage that the anonymous author of the **Lakṣaṇaṭīkā* (cf.,n.7, above) specifically identifies Dignāga as Candrakīrti's interlocutor: "He says that on this view, it makes sense only [to speak of] the *worldly* convention regarding warrants and warrantable objects, not [what is] ultimate[ly the case]. [This is what is said in the passage] beginning '*Atha*….' ['Its correct characteristics have been explained] by us' means *by Dignāga*, et al. It's the master [i.e., Candrakīrti] who says, at this point, 'the fruit of this intention should be explained,' and it's Dignāga who rejoins, '[It has been destroyed] by bad logicians.' 'It' [here] means convention." (*Lakṣaṇaṭīkā* 2b4: *laukika eva pramāṇaprameyavyavahāro yukto na pāramārthika ity asmin pakṣe āha / athetyādi / asmābhi<r> Dignāgādibhiḥ / tadanubandhanasya <<pha>>laṃ vācyam ityatrāryaḥ, kutārkkikair iti Dignāgaḥ, sa iti vyavahāraḥ*). Thanks to Yoshiyasu Yonezawa for sharing this fragment with me.

svalakṣaṇas). And having shown only this much, Candrakīrti will have reduced Dignāga's project to absurdity, insofar as Candrakīrti's project, as contra Dignāga's, consists (as Jay Garfield aptly says of Nāgārjuna) in "taking conventions as the foundation of ontology, hence rejecting the very enterprise of a philosophical search for the ontological foundations of convention"[44].

With this set-up in place, then, Candrakīrti devotes the remainder of his lengthy engagement with this interlocutor to showing that the categories of *svalakṣaṇa* and *pratyakṣa* — specifically as they are understood and correlated by Buddhist philosophers like Dignāga — cannot accommodate familiar examples of what are, after all, perfectly ordinary words in the Indian context. Our concern here, of course, is particularly with Candrakīrti's reading of Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa*. Candrakīrti begins:

> Moreover, if you say there are [only] two reliable warrants, corresponding respectively to the two [kinds of warrantable objects, i.e.,] unique particulars[45] and abstractions, [then we are entitled to ask,] does the subject (*lakṣya*) which has these two characteristics exist?[46] Or does it not exist? If it exists, then there is an additional warrantable object; how, then, are there [only] two reliable warrants? Or perhaps [you will say] the subject [which is characterized by these characteristics] does not exist. In that case, even the characteristic, being without a locus, doesn't exist, [and] how, [in that case,] are there [as many as] two reliable warrants? As [Nāgārjuna] will say: "When a characteristic is not in play, a subject to be characterized doesn't stand to reason; and given the unreasonableness of a subject to be characterized, there is no possibility of a characteristic, either."
> Or this could be said [by Dignāga]: It is not that '*lakṣaṇa*' means "that by which [something] is characterized." Rather, [following Pāṇini's rule at III.3.113, i.e.,] *"kṛtyalyuṭo bahulam"* ["the gerundive affix is variously applicable"], taking the affix in the sense of an object (*karmaṇi*), '*lakṣaṇa*' means "what is characterized."

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[44] Garfield (1995), p.122.

[45] This is how I render *svalakṣaṇa* when it is Dignāga's usage that is in play; one of the difficulties in this whole section of the *Prasannapadā* is that of keeping clear on whose usage is in play, with Candrakīrti urging that the word conventionally means "defining characteristic."

[46] Alternatively: "… is that which has these two characteristics a *lakṣya*, or not?"; or, to take *lakṣya* more literally as a gerundive, "is that which has these to be characterized, or not?"

[Reply:] Even so, this same fault [still obtains], since that instrument by which something [i.e., some *object*] is characterized has the quality of being a thing other than an object (*yena tal lakṣyate tasya karaṇasya karmaṇo 'rthāntaratvāt*), owing to the impossibility of something's being characterized by itself (*tenaiva tasya lakṣyamāṇatvāsaṃbhavād*).[47]

In this way, Candrakīrti's opening salvo trades on the notion that the idea of a "characteristic" (*lakṣaṇa*) is by definition the idea of a *relationship* — specifically, a relationship between a "characteristic" (*lakṣaṇa*) and the "thing characterized" thereby (*lakṣya*). Thus, Candrakīrti urges that Dignāga's *sva-* and *sāmānya-lakṣaṇas*, precisely insofar as they are (etymologically) types of "characteristics," must be instantiated in some *subject of characterization* (*lakṣya*) — which Dignāga cannot admit without compromising his commitment to the view that there are only two types of existents, since the subject in which these were instantiated would seem to represent an additional existent. On the other hand, it is incoherent to suppose that these are not the "characteristics" *of* anything, since the conventional understanding of the term definitionally involves the characteristic / characterized relationship.

What is particularly interesting for our present purposes is that Candrakīrti presses this point — viz., that the idea of a "characteristic" definitively includes the idea of a "subject of characterization" — as an unwanted consequence for Dignāga. That he does so clearly reflects his having read Dignāga as wanting to claim, to the contrary, that *svalakṣaṇas* are irreducible, being neither the characteristics *of* nor characterized *by* anything else. Thus, on Candrakīrti's reading (as on Katsura's), Dignāga did not wish to admit any separate "bearer" (*dharma*!) of his *svalakṣaṇas*, which is precisely why Candrakīrti can (as he does) urge that Dignāga must think of *svalakṣaṇas* as simply "self-characterizing" — against

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[47] 59.7-60.3: *Kiṃ ca yadi svasāmānyalakṣaṇadvayānurodhena pramāṇadvayam uktaṃ, yasya tallakṣaṇadvayaṃ kiṃ tallakṣyam*[per de Jong; so, too, Vaidya] *asti? Atha nāsti? Yady asti, tadā tadaparaṃ prameyam astīti, kathaṃ pramāṇadvayam? Atha nāsti lakṣyam, tadā lakṣaṇam api nirāśrayaṃ nāstīti kathaṃ pramāṇadvayam? Vakṣyati hi: "lakṣaṇāsaṃpravṛttau ca na lakṣyam upapadyate, lakṣyasya anupapattau ca lakṣaṇasyāpy asaṃbhavaḥ," iti.* (This quotes *MMK* 5.4.) *Atha syān na lakṣyate 'neneti lakṣaṇam. Kiṃ tarhi "kṛtyalyuṭo bahulam" iti karmaṇi lyuṭaṃ kṛtvā lakṣyate tad iti lakṣaṇam. Evam api* <u>*tenaiva tasya*</u> [per de Jong] *lakṣyamāṇatvāsaṃbhavād —* <u>*yena tallakṣyate*</u> [per de Jong] *tasya karaṇasya karmaṇo 'rthāntaratvāt — sa eva doṣaḥ.*

which view, Candrakīrti here exploits standard grammatical analyses of the "characterizing" relationship as necessarily involving both a *characteristic* (*lakṣaṇa*) and a *thing characterized* (*lakṣya*).

To complete Candrakīrti's basic characterization of Dignāga's position, we need only attend to the passage that immediately follows what we have just seen. Having thus charged that his interlocutor's account incoherently posits something essentially *self-characterizing*, Candrakīrti now anticipates moves intended to salvage the possibility of such a thing. Ultimately, this will lead to a consideration of Dignāga's account of *svasaṃvitti* (reflexive awareness), which will be adduced as the unique example of something that *is* at the same time both an object and an instrument. We can, however, appreciate Candrakīrti's basic point without entering that thicket; for the main point in what follows is Candrakīrti's clarification of the sense in which Dignāga's understanding of *svalakṣaṇa* differs from what Candrakīrti takes to be the conventional sense. Thus:

> [The Epistemologist rejoins:] Well, perhaps this could be said: Because awareness (*jñāna*) is an instrument, and because this [i.e., *jñāna*] is included in [our concept of] the unique particular, there is not the fault [with which you charge us].
> [Reply:] Here [in the world], that which is the nature (*svarūpa*) of existents, [i.e.,] their own, not shared with anything else, that is their defining characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*). For example, the earth's [defining characteristic] is resistance, [the defining characteristic] of feeling is experience, [and the defining characteristic] of awareness is a conception regarding any object; for [in each of these cases,] by that [quality the thing in question] is characterized. By one who, disregarding (*avadhūya*) the usage which follows the familiar sense based on this (*iti kṛtvā*), [instead] accepts the definition [of *svalakṣaṇa*] as an object, and positing [at the same time] the instrumental nature of perceptual awareness, it is said [in effect] that one unique particular has the quality of being an object, and *another* unique particular has the quality of being an instrument. In this case, if the unique particular which is perceptual awareness is an instrument, then it must have a separate object (*tasya vyatiriktena karmaṇā bhavitavyam*). *This* is the fault [in your position].[48]

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[48] 60.4-61.2: *Atha syāt: Jñānasya karaṇatvāt, tasya ca svalakṣaṇāntarbhāvād, ayam adoṣa iti. Ucyate: Iha bhāvānām anyāsādhāraṇam ātmīyaṃ yat svarūpaṃ, tat svalakṣaṇam. Tadyathā pṛthivyāḥ kāṭinyaṃ, vedanāyā* <u>anubhavo</u> [per de Jong, Tibetan]*, vijñānasya viṣayaprativijñaptiḥ. Tena hi tal lakṣyata iti kṛtvā,* <u>prasiddhyanugatāṃ</u> [per de Jong, Tibetan] *ca vyutpattim avadhūya karmasādhanam abhyupagacchati. Vijñānasya ca*

In this particular case, the examples of the conventional usage — which, we note, are taken from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*[49] — are particularly contrasted with a usage which takes the word *svalakṣaṇa* as "denoting an object" (*karmasādhanam*)[50]. It is not only with reference to Candrakīrti's chosen examples, then, but also with this contrast in mind that I render *svalakṣaṇa*, when Candrakīrti uses the word as he thinks it is conventionally used, as "defining characteristic"; and what seems to characterize the relationship between, say, earth and its "defining characteristic" (viz., "hardness" or "resistance") is the fact of their being *inseparable*, such that "hardness" is not an object that could be perceived apart from

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karaṇabhāvaṃ pratipadyamān̲e̲n̲a̲-̲i̲d̲a̲m̲ ̲u̲k̲t̲a̲ṃ [per de Jong, Tibetan] *bhavati, svalakṣaṇasyaiva karmatā, svalakṣaṇāntarasya karaṇabhāvaśceti. Tatra yadi vijñānasvalakṣaṇaṃ karaṇam, tasya vyatiriktena karmaṇā bhavitavyam iti sa eva doṣaḥ.*

Though conceptually fairly straightforward, particularly the latter part of this section is grammatically tricky, and I have found it helpful to consult the Tibetan here, with particularly those passages underlined in the following having proved useful: *ci ste śes pa byed ba yin pa'i phyir la | de yaṅ raṅ gi mtshan ñid kyi khoṅs su 'du ba'i phyir ñes pa 'di med do sñam na bśad par bya ste | re źig 'dir ji ltar des de mtshon par byed 'di sa'i sra ba daṅ | tshor ba'i myoṅs ba daṅ | rnam par śes pa'i yul so sor rnam par rig pa ltar bdag ñid kyi raṅ gi ṅo bo gźan daṅ thun moṅ ma yin pa gaṅ yin pa de ni raṅ gi mtshan ñid y̲i̲n̲ ̲n̲a̲ | r̲a̲b̲ ̲t̲u̲ ̲g̲r̲a̲g̲s̲ ̲p̲a̲ ̲d̲a̲ṅ̲ ̲r̲j̲e̲s̲ ̲s̲u̲ ̲'̲b̲r̲e̲l̲ ̲p̲a̲'̲i̲ ̲b̲y̲e̲ ̲b̲r̲a̲g̲ ̲t̲u̲ ̲b̲ś̲a̲d̲ ̲p̲a̲ ̲b̲o̲r̲ ̲n̲a̲s̲ ̲|̲ ̲l̲a̲s̲ ̲s̲u̲ s̲g̲r̲u̲b̲ ̲p̲a̲ ̲k̲h̲a̲s̲ ̲l̲e̲n̲ ̲ź̲i̲ṅ̲ ̲r̲n̲a̲m̲ ̲p̲a̲r̲ ̲ś̲e̲s̲ ̲p̲a̲ ̲b̲y̲e̲d̲ ̲p̲a̲'̲i̲ ̲ṅ̲o̲ ̲b̲o̲r̲ ̲r̲t̲o̲g̲s̲ ̲p̲a̲s̲ ̲n̲i̲ ̲|̲ ̲r̲a̲ṅ̲ ̲g̲i̲ ̲m̲t̲s̲h̲a̲n̲ ̲ñ̲i̲d̲ k̲h̲o̲ ̲n̲a̲ ̲l̲a̲s̲ ̲ñ̲i̲d̲ ̲y̲i̲n̲ ̲ź̲i̲ṅ̲ raṅ gi mtshan ñid gźan ni byed pa'i ṅo bo yin no źes bya ba 'di smras par 'gyur ro |.*

[49] Cf., n.11, above. Cf., also, *Madhyamakāvatāra* 6.202-3 (La Vallée Poussin's edition, p.316), where Candrakīrti trots out a similarly Ābhidharmika list of "defining characteristics" (*svalakṣaṇas*) of all of the *skandhas*: "Form has the defining property (*svalakṣaṇa*) of color and shape; *vedanā* has the nature of experience; *saṃjñā* grasps characteristics; *saṃskāras* fashion [things]; the defining property of perceptual awareness is a conception regarding any object" (*gzugs ni gzugs ruṅ* [sic; read *raṅ*] *mtshan ñid can | tshor ba myoṅ ba'i bdag ñid can | 'du śes mtshan mar 'dzin pa ste | 'du byed mṅon par 'du byed pa'o || yul la so sor rnam rig pa | rnam śes raṅ gi mtshan ñid do |*). Cf., inter alia (and in addition to n.10, above), *Abhidharmakośa* 1.14 (Pradhan, p.10: *vedanā-anubhavaḥ saṃjñā nimittodgrahaṇātmikā*), which gives some more of the defining characteristics repeated here by Candrakīrti.

[50] As is evident in n.48, above, the Tibetan translation renders this as *las su sgrub pa*, "established as an object." For the sense of *-sādhana* as "denoting" or "expressive of," I follow Apte, p.1666, meaning #4. On the compound *karmasādhana*, see also Renou (1942), p.125, who gives: "qui a l'objet-transitif (i.e. une notion passive) pour mode de réalisation." We could easily follow this lead and transpose this discussion into the key of grammatical terms (hence, e.g., "denoting an *accusative*"), with little change in significance.

"earth." That is, when one encounters an instance of "earth," one *just is* encountering an instance of "hardness"; indeed, this is just what it means for the latter to be a defining characteristic of the former. Moreover, as I have suggested, this understanding of *svalakṣaṇa* qualifies it as what Dignāga would consider to be a universal; for a "defining characteristic" is what is common to any and all instances of the thing defined thereby. Thus, to be sure, we can separate a thing and its defining characteristic analytically, as we do when we specify which is the thing *being defined* ("earth," the *lakṣya*), and which is the thing adduced as its *definition* ("hardness," its *svalakṣaṇa*). What we cannot do, though, is *encounter* these separately as ontologically "given" entities. And this is precisely what is required, according to Candrakīrti, on Dignāga's usage of the term, which is such that we can render *svalakṣaṇa* as "unique particular" when it is Dignāga who is using the term. For Dignāga, *svalakṣaṇas* are the unique *objects* of the cognitive act which is perception, they are what (following Tillemans) perception *encounters* as "*naturally suited to be present to non-inferential awareness.*"

Taken together, the two passages we have considered from Candrakīrti provide a clear sense of how he considers Dignāga's doctrine of *svalakṣaṇas* to differ from the examples of the Ābhidharmika usage of the term adduced by Candrakīrti. Thus, Candrakīrti rightly understands the Ābhidharmika usage as not denoting any kind of *object*; rather, it denotes the sort of "defining characteristics" which are, in fact, *abstractions*. Candrakīrti would concur, then, with Shoryu Katsura, who notes that "*svalakṣaṇas* of Abhidharma… [must] be regarded by Dignāga not as *svalakṣaṇas* but as *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*"[51]. This point is underscored by Can-drakīrti's characterization of Dignāga's usage as *karmasādhanam*, "denot-ing an object." Moreover, as Candrakīrti stresses in the first of the two passages we have just considered, "defining characteristics" are the kinds of abstractions that are definitively *inextricable* from the existents they define — they are not only not *objects*, but it makes no sense to think of encountering them in the way we encounter objects, since they are defin-itively *relational* abstractions. Among other things, this means they are necessarily instantiated in some *lakṣya*, some "bearer" of the defining

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[51] Cf. n. 25, above.

property in question — and on Candrakīrti's reading, Dignāga cannot coherently concede this, since his position requires that there be no additional *kind* of existent to which *svalakṣaṇas* could belong.

V. Are Dignāga's svalakṣaṇas *"bare particulars"* ?

As I have suggested, what is most significant for Candrakīrti is that Dignāga's usage cannot accommodate what Candrakīrti takes to be attested usage, with demonstration of such failure of adequacy to conventions being sufficient for Candrakīrti's purposes. It is interesting, though, that Candrakīrti reduces this failure to absurdity particularly by way of an argument to the effect that any attempt by Dignāga to accommodate conventional usage will issue in infinite regress. This fact makes clear how Candrakīrti reads Dignāga's doctrine of *svalakṣaṇas*; for all of the foregoing centrally has to do with Candrakīrti's basic rejection of *svalakṣaṇas* understood as *self-characterizing*. Candrakīrti's argument here can plausibly be characterized, I think, as fundamentally similar to some contemporary arguments against the sort of "bare particulars" presupposed by "substratum theories" similar to the Ābhidharmika version of reductionism. Thus, the view that medium-sized dry goods are reducible to more fundamental constituents is often expressed in terms of a "bare substratum" in which various properties are instantiated, but which is itself without any properties. Such an account is intended to bring the exercise of reductionism to rest, explaining the numerical diversity of ontological primitives without presupposing that the reducible properties are themselves such primitives. It has been persuasively argued, however, that the idea of bare particulars as the "ultimate" (i.e., because themselves irreducible) exemplifiers of the properties of a whole is incoherent, insofar as putatively bare particulars can always be *essentially* characterized — that is, characterized by such "essential" properties as *being a substratum or a human being*. Michael Loux succinctly summarizes this line of argument:

> The difficulty is that once we concede this fact, we find that the very problem substrata were introduced to resolve arises in their case. Substrata turn out to be complexes or wholes themselves, complexes or wholes constituted by the attributes essential to them. Unfortunately, the attributes essential to

any one substratum seem to be precisely those essential to any other. They are all essentially subjects for attributes, all essentially diversifiers, all essentially different from the number seven, all essentially colored if green, all essentially red or not red. But, then, while being numerically different from each other, they begin to look like qualitatively indiscernible entities. And so we need an account of their numerical diversity; and the only account that will do is one that posits a lower-level substratum in each of our original substrata, a lower-level substratum that makes each of our original substrata different from each other. But since nothing can be bare, the same problem arises for these new, lower-level substrata; and we seem once again to be off on an infinite regress[52].

We can express Loux's argument more perspicuously simply by pointing out that any particular must at least have the "property" of *being a unique particular* — with the latter being an abstract state of affairs that can be said to be a universal or abstraction (i.e., since the property "being a unique particular" is one that is shared by all unique particulars!)[53]. But in that case, the basic problem of *how particulars are characterized* (which is essentially the problem of how particulars are related to their defining properties) is not avoided by claiming that particulars are defined as such simply by their having *only themselves* as "characteristics"; for this move opens an infinite regress insofar as there remains a sense in which *this characterization itself* necessarily involves a relationship between characteristic and thing characterized (*lakṣaṇa* and *lakṣya*). I suggest that Candrakīrti's opening argument against Dignāga's *svalakṣaṇas* trades on a fundamentally similar point. Thus, the point that Candrakīrti makes in terms of the "characterizing" relationship is that it is incoherent to think that anything without characteristics (any "bare particular") could in the end be all that really exists, insofar as any object (*karman*) we encounter as possessing characteristics *must* be in relation

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[52] Loux (1998), pp.116-17. Among the thinkers whom Loux here follows is Sellars; cf., Sellars (1963), pp.282-3n.

[53] Thus to suggest that "bare particulars" must at least be capable of being "essentially" characterized is, it seems to me, basically to make David Armstrong's point that a truly *bare* particular "would have no nature, be of no kind or sort" (Armstrong 1989, p.94); and the argument is that this is self-referentially incoherent insofar as saying something is a "bare particular" *just is* to say that it is of some kind or sort. As Armstrong puts it: "Perhaps a particular need not have any relations to any other particular — perhaps it could be quite isolated. But it must instantiate at least one property." (*Ibid.*)

to what characterizes it (*karaṇa*) — with the force of necessity here com-
ing from the unavoidability of talk about what Loux has called "essen-
tial characteristics"[54]. And just as with the line of argument summarized
by Loux, the logic of Candrakīrti's argument against Dignāga similarly
trades on the charge that Dignāga's account involves an infinite regress
— with such an argument gaining its power insofar as it is precisely the
point of Dignāga's project to bring the reductionist project to rest in some-
thing not further reducible.

It can of course be questioned, though, whether abstract properties (like
the property *being a unique particular*) should be admitted as in any sense
"real." Indeed, to the extent that Dignāga's whole project centrally
involves the denial even of first-order property-universals, it might be
thought that the adducing of what Loux has called "essential character-
istics" (which are basically second-order properties: the property of *being
something with such-and-such properties*) will have little purchase against
Dignāga[55]. But there is a non-trivial point at stake here, and we would do
well to take seriously the problem raised by these cases. Thus, Candrakīrti
has argued that *svalakṣaṇa* (in the sense of "defining characteristic") nec-
essarily involves a relationship between two things; and I have proposed
reconstructing this as an argument to the effect that even an irreducibly
unique particular necessarily has (hence, stands in relation to) the prop-
erty of "*being a unique particular*." Such a reconstruction helps to make

[54] It is particularly this part of my exegesis of Candrakīrti that involves an effort at
rational reconstruction; for Candrakīrti, of course, argues simply on the basis of standard
Sanskritic grammatical analyses of the various parts of speech necessarily involved in any
instance of *lakṣaṇa* ("characterization"). (That Candrakīrti's procedure here is standard in
Sanskritic philosophical discourse is suggested, I think, by the perceptive remarks of Ingalls
1954.) What I have suggested is that the *necessarily* relational quality of any instance of
"characterization" can be argued by appeal to the unavoidability of saying at least that par-
ticulars can be "essentially characterized."

[55] Note, though, that these seemingly second-order constructions ("*being* X or Y") in
fact neatly reflect one of the main ways of discussing universals in Indian philosophy.
Thus, one of the points at issue between *apohavādins* such as Dignāga and, say,
Mīmāṃsakas, is whether or not a word such as *go* ("cow") gains its usefulness by refer-
ring to some universal abstraction (*gotva*) that is common to all cows. In much of the sec-
ondary literature on such debates, words like *gotva* are often rendered as "cow-ness." But
in fact, the traditional commentarial gloss on the -*tva* suffix involves *bhāva* ("being"),
and we are probably better off thinking of *gotva* as expressing the property "*being a cow*."

clear how Candrakīrti can plausibly argue that on Dignāga's account of *svalakṣaṇa* (i.e., as neither *being* nor *having* any characteristic), it becomes impossible to say of any *svalakṣaṇa* even that it is one!

And indeed, might not this radical reading make sense of Dignāga's own claim that *svalakṣaṇas* are characterized only by their unspecifiability (their *avyapadeśyatva*)? But here we are on the verge of a very dense thicket, and any full accounting of what Dignāga may have been up to would surely require significant attention to his *anyāpoha* theory of meaning (which Candrakīrti seems not to have engaged). For I have tried to give Candrakīrti's argument against Dignāga greater purchase by introducing the case of "essential characteristics"; but I have also indicated that thus adducing a problem involving universals would count for little in Dignāga's view, insofar as his whole project centrally involves *denying* the reality of universals. And in the context of that project, it is the *anyāpoha* ("exclusion") theory of meaning that is meant to explain how language is possible — how, e.g., it is possible to *predicate* of some particular a certain characteristic (such as "being a unique particular") — without reference to any really existent universals. The *apoha* doctrine, then, is meant precisely to explain how one can do away with really existent universals (how one can deny, that is, that an abstraction like *being a unique particular* should be allowed to count as a really existent state of affairs), while yet retaining the ability at least usefully to *say* that a unique particular is "of a certain kind or sort." Perhaps, then, an answer to the difficulties with bare particulars that Loux and Armstrong have identified would be forthcoming from an attempt to link this discussion with Dignāga's account of *apoha*. If the attribution to Dignāga of a theory "bare particulars" (in abstraction, at least, from other crucial parts of his program) does not, then, finally turn out to represent the most hermeneutically charitable reading of Dignāga's project, it is nevertheless a plausible reading of his contention that *svalakṣaṇas* are "characterized" only by their *avyapadeśyatva*; and it is, I am suggesting, the reading that is recommended by Candrakīrti's engagement with Dignāga.

It is clear, in any case, that Candrakīrti (like Katsura) read Dignāga as wanting to affirm that *svalakṣaṇas* do not themselves *have* any characteristics (and that they are not, in turn, the characteristics *of* anything else) — which is precisely why Candrakīrti can (as he does) take it as an

unwanted consequence for Dignāga that *svalakṣaṇas* must be the characteristics *of* something else. With this in mind, we might put the difference between the Ābhidharmika usage of *svalakṣaṇa* (which is what Candrakīrti favors) and Dignāga's Sanskritically, in terms of two different analyses of the compound *sva-lakṣaṇa*: on the Ābhidharmika usage, the compound is a *karmadhāraya*, such that a *svalakṣaṇa* denotes simply whatever "property" or "characteristic" (*lakṣaṇa*) is definitively "proper" or "specific" (*sva-*) to something (i.e., something's "*own* characteristic"); Dignāga, on the other hand, can be said to read the compound as a *bahuvrīhi*, such that *svalakṣaṇa* denotes what "has *itself* (*sva*) as [its only] characteristic." But recall Dunne's characterization of Dharmakīrti's notion of *svalakṣaṇa*: the irreducibility of *svalakṣaṇas* "is best illustrated by a genitive construction such as, 'The nature of the infinitesimal particle.' Dharmakīrti maintains that in such expressions the *dharma* is actually identical to the *dharmin* itself. The apparent separation of the *dharma* from the *dharmin* is simply part of the exclusion process, and is hence conceptual." If Candrakīrti and Katsura are right, it seems to me that Dignāga is after essentially the same idea: in order to be consistent, the Ābhidharmika version of Buddhist reductionism cannot come to rest with the idea of *dharmas*, if such are thought to "have" some defining characteristic; rather, it must be pressed to the point where the only ontological primitives in the system are not even *logically* resolvable even into "properties" and "property-possessors." *Svalakṣaṇas*, on such a view, thus become not only unique, objective particulars, but *bare* particulars.

Such a reading has the advantage, at least, that it might tell us something about what Dignāga meant in characterizing *svalakṣaṇas* as "indefinable." That is, perhaps Dignāga's point is that *svalakṣaṇas* cannot be "defined" or "specified" (*vyapadiśyate*) specifically *as having any properties*; rather, the only irreducible *svalakṣaṇas* worth the name must be "indefinable" in that they admit of no logical reduction into *dharma* and *dharmin*, "property" and "property-possessor."[56] It is no longer the case,

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[56] Cf., Dignāga's recurrent point that the distinguishing of separate *viśeṣa* and *viśeṣya* ("characteristic" and "thing characterized") is a constitutively *conceptual* operation — in which case, perception can never itself register such a distinction. Thus, e.g., *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.23, where Dignāga adduces the case of perception's perceiving such a distinction as a counterfactual entailing problematic consequences: "If it were admitted

that is, that *svalakṣaṇas* are the "defining characteristics" *possessed by dharmas*; rather, *svalakṣaṇas just are* the ontological primitives on this view, and they are simply *self*-characterizing. Having followed Candrakīrti, then, we see that the upshot of Katsura's apt point regarding Hattori's translation is thus to emphasize that, on Dignāga's view, *svalakṣaṇas* are no longer "borne" by anything; they are simply themselves the *direct objects* of perception, and that only insofar as perception is uniquely devoid of the sort of conceptual activity that is concerned with discerning distinguishing properties.

VI. *Conclusion*

This stronger claim about what it takes for something to qualify as irreducible seems to me to cut against several of those interpretations of Dignāga's *svalakṣaṇas* that emphasize his differences from Dharmakīrti. Consider, for example, the interpretation of Dignāga put forward by Jonardon Ganeri, according to whose trope-theoretical reconstruction, Dignāga's *svalakṣaṇa* seems to denote simply *any* "object" of perception — i.e., such as the garden variety macro-objects we typically take ourselves to perceive[57]. Thus, Ganeri would seem to agree with Candrakīrti that Dignāga takes *svalakṣaṇa* as "denoting an object" (*karmasādhanam*)[58], but

that both [*viśeṣaṇa* and *viśeṣya*] were objects of the same [sense,] unaccepted consequences would follow" (Tibetan at Hattori, p.207: *yul mtshuṅs ñid du 'dod ce na / mi 'dod pa yaṅ thal bar 'gyur //*).

[57] This reading would seem to be recommended by, *inter alia*, dKon-mchog 'jigs-med dbang-po, who adduces a pot as an example (*lta bu*) of a *svalakṣaṇa* as the "Sautrāntikas" understand the latter. See Mimaki (1977: 85): *don dam par don byed nus pa'i chos de / raṅ mtshan gyi mtshan ñid / mtshan gźi ni / bum pa lta bu*…. (Of course, dKon-mchog has Dharmakīrti in mind here.) While it is not my task here to elaborate a complete interpretation of Dignāga (much less of Dharmakīrti) in relation to later Tibetan interpretation, it seems worth at least noting that this reading of *svalakṣaṇas* (i.e., as exemplified by macro-objects like pots) could in principle be reconciled with Dunne's contention that, for Dharmakīrti, *svalakṣaṇas* have no spatial extension (n.26, above); for the latter claim could have chiefly to do with a representationalist epistemology, according to which dKon-mchog 'jigs-med dbang-po's "pot" could simply be understood as a sense-datum.

[58] Which would, to be sure, be sufficient to distinguish Dignāga's usage from that of the Ābhidharmikas. In making this point, Ganeri follows Katsura (1991, p.138), who says: "I would like to assume that in Diṅnāga's system *svalakṣaṇa* is the object itself which is to be grasped directly by perception, which is neither expressible nor identifiable at that moment…."

would disagree with the further claim that it denotes something like "bare particulars." On Ganeri's reading, then, the "indefinability" (*avya-padeśyatva*) of these consists simply in their being unavailable to any *comprehensive* intuition. As Ganeri says,

> Properties are conceptual constructs. They are potential contents of conception because it is possible, in principle, to know everything about them…. Objects, on the other hand, are not potential constructs of conception because it is not possible, even in principle, to know everything about them. Again, on the trope-theoretic analysis, what this means is that one cannot know every member of a class of concurrent tropes — all the trope-constituents of this vase, for example[59].

On this reading, the point is that "objects" (*svalakṣaṇas*) are indefinable *simply as given to perceptual awareness*, and that insofar as perceptual awareness can never comprehensively apprehend all facets of an object.

Note, though, that Ganeri's interpretation seems to be licensed by a reading particularly of Hattori's translation of Dignāga — and specifically, of *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.5a-b, which Hattori renders: "a thing possessing many properties cannot be cognized *in all its aspects* by the sense"[60]. Richard Hayes (1988, p.138; my emphasis) instead translates: "*no knowledge at all* of a possessor of properties that has many characteristics is derived from a sense faculty." Explaining the difference from Hattori, he ventures an interesting point:

> Please note that the Tibetan translation construes the modifier 'sarvathā' as governing the negative 'na' and so renders the core of the sentence modally: 'rtogs srid ma yin' or 'knowledge is impossible.' The point is that knowledge of a multi-propertied whole is impossible through the senses. Hattori's translation… implies [the] weaker claim… that while sensation can capture some of the aspects of a multi-propertied whole, it cannot know the whole exhaustively. But I think the point is clearly that the whole cannot be known

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[59] Ganeri (2001), p.106. On "trope" theories, cf., Armstrong 1989: 113-133.
[60] Hattori (1968), p.27; my emphasis. Ganeri (2001, p.101) follows Hattori, modifying slightly: "A thing possessing many forms (*rūpa*) cannot be cognised in all its aspects by a sense-faculty." Kanakavarman's Tibetan is at p.181: *du ma'i ṅo bo'i chos can ni / dbaṅ po las rtogs srid ma yin.* Hattori (p.91, n.1.43) gives the Sanskrit as quoted by Prajñākaragupta: *dharmiṇo 'nekarūpasya nendriyāt sarvathā gatiḥ.* Cf., n.28, above, for *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.5c-d.

at all by the senses, because the notion of a whole is superimposed upon a multiplicity of discrete data of sense[61].

Thus, while Hayes is (as I have noted) critical of those who follow Stcherbatsky in seeing Dignāga's *svalakṣaṇas* as the "point-instants" of Dharmakīrti, he nevertheless reads Dignāga's point about the "indefinability" of *svalakṣaṇas* as a strong claim that they are radically different from what is present to propositional awareness; and, in keeping with his emphasis on Dignāga's as a "phenomenalist" epistemology[62], he nevertheless reads Dignāga's *svalakṣaṇas* not as (macro-) objects themselves, but as the component sense-data out of which such are constructed: "… individuals, which are the referents of singular terms, are regarded by Diṅnāga to be the synthesis of a multiplicity of cognitions and hence are treated as classes rather than as particulars"[63].

Hayes's point seems to me to be generally correct, and not obviously incompatible with the reading I have developed following Dharmakīrti. As I indicated in beginning this essay, though, it is hard to be sure precisely what Dignāga means by his use of the term *svalakṣaṇa*, since he says so little explicitly about it, and that in texts that come down to us mainly in divergent Tibetan translations. What is nonetheless clear, in any event, is that Dignāga has transformed the Ābhidharmika sense of the word, and that Candrakīrti can help us to understand the nature of this transformation. For the present, I am not concerned with whether or not Candrakīrti's arguments against Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa* have any purchase (though such is, of course, an interesting question). Rather, I wish only to have suggested that Candrakīrti's engagement with Dignāga represents, inter alia, one traditional reading of what Dignāga claimed regarding *svalakṣaṇas* — a reading that, having been developed perhaps only a generation or two removed from Dignāga, might well be helpful to our understanding of what is, in the texts of Dignāga, a frustratingly underdetermined concept.

And what Candrakīrti clearly tells us is that Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa* represents a transformation of the Ābhidharmika notion.

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[61] Hayes (1988), p.170, n.20.
[62] Cf., n.19, above.
[63] Hayes (1988), p.189.

The latter notion is that of uniquely defining "properties" or "characteristics" borne by *dharmas*, with Vasubandhu having invoked the latter's "bearing" (√*dhṛ*) of these to explain their name (*dharma*, "bearer"). Clearly, on the spartan epistemology espoused by Dignāga, such "defining characteristics" would not be the sort of thing that could be encountered in perception, and would instead have to be counted as among the things Dignāga considers to be "abstractions" (*sāmānyalakṣaṇas*). On Dignāga's usage, in contrast, *svalakṣaṇas* are the *unique particulars* encountered by perception, and are "characterized" only by their "indefinability" (*avyapadeśyatva*) — which is, perhaps, simply to emphasize the irreducible uniqueness of particulars, as opposed to the eminently *categoreal* notion at play in the idea of *dharmas*. Whether or not we understand the latter point as intended to delimit the kinds of vanishingly small "point-instants" that Dharmakīrti will have in mind, it is clear that this characterization advances the intuition that our epistemic faculties yield some sort of access to a simply *given*, uninterpreted sort of data. And whether or not Dignāga can rightly be thought to have upheld a Dharmakīrtian doctrine of momentariness, it is at least not *obviously* the case that his doctrine of *svalakṣaṇas* is incompatible with one. In any case, what is clear is that, at least as Candrakīrti reads him, Dignāga has eschewed the conventional usage and clearly posited something very much like *bare particulars*.

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