

BUDDHIST 'FOUNDATIONALISM' AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERCEPTION

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Introduction

The persistence of 'perceptual' ambiguities, even under the best conditions of observation, is a challenge in any attempt to ground knowledge on a foundation of empirical experience. Few philosophers, however, would argue that the reliability of perception is a nontrivial issue for epistemology. If anything, inferential reasoning on the basis of empirical data would be compromised, as in the classical example of trying to infer the presence of fire from an observation of smoke while mistaking dust for smoke. For Buddhist philosophers of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition the problem of the reliability of perception is central to the epistemological project: they argue that empirical awareness, when properly deployed, can and does reveal the nature of reality at its most fundamental level: a causally interdependent nexus of psychophysical phenomena in a constant state of flux.

This Buddhist claim about perception is, of course, strongly counterintuitive: ordinarily we experience the world as populated with autonomous, enduring entities (and selves) that do not change from moment to moment. It is this basic intuition about continuance that allows us to recognize previously encountered entities and make predictions about their future. From a phenomenological standpoint, however, what we take to be 'selves' and 'entities' are disclosed as series of discrete cognitive episodes and aggregated phenomena of experience. Moreover, an intentional consciousness is always co-present in each instance of perception, manifest in the fact that there is *something it is like* to be apprehending an object.

This transitory nature of the perceived *as perceived* is one of the main reasons, I will argue, why a phenomenological account of perception on the model provided by, for instance, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, best serves to translate the intuitions of the Buddhist philosophers about the cognitive function of perception. The Buddhist is a kind of phenomenologist because for him, given the immediacy and directness of sense experience, the sense-object relation is an issue of continuous concern (just as for Husserl perception is ultimately constituted by intentional content). Hence the Buddhist's insistence on treating each cognitive event as a new introduction to an object. This continuing concern for the sense-object relation explains why the Buddhist treats cognition as bearing the characteristic marks of embodiment: it is the dynamics of the five aggregates that gives the cognitive event its expression. It also explains why the pursuit of reliable cognitions, contrary to popular opinion, does not automatically qualify Buddhist epistemology as a type of foundationalism.

This essay, which draws on a set of interrelated issues in the phenomenology of perception, calls into question the assumption that Buddhist philosophers of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition pursue a kind of epistemic foundationalism. It further argues that the ‘founding givenness’ provided by direct perception is not that of any ontologically distinctive particulars, be they unique ‘properties’ or ‘property bearers.’ Instead, direct perception is akin to the co-presence of sense and object characteristic of the ‘raw’ phenomena of experience. The main point of the Buddhist epistemological project is, then, pragmatic: in Dharmakīrti’s celebrated formulation it is because all successful human actions are preceded by right knowledge that epistemology, understood as an inquiry into the sources of valid cognition, is a worthwhile enterprise.¹

Teasing out the ‘founding givenness’ of perception in a way that lays no recognizable claim to foundationalism should become clear if we consider one central aspect of the phenomenology of perception: our *reflection* on the contents of experience, unlike perception itself, is not perspectival. In other words, whereas no single instance of perception can ever exhaust the object, perceptual judgments always apprehend the object exhaustively by laying out certain claims about its nature. This is why the Buddhists and their principal opponents, the Naiyāyikas, understand conception to have such a different role in apprehending the contents of perceptual awareness.

Consider the different positions that Buddhists and Naiyāyikas adopt vis-à-vis perceptual ambiguities. For instance, when the early Naiyāyika philosopher Vātsyāyana gives the example of a person unable to decide whether what is seen rising in the distance are (columns of) dust or smoke,² he touches upon one of the most complex questions in the phenomenology of perception: what turns the continuous flow of sense data into perceptually distinct objects? Vātsyāyana is mainly concerned with the consequences of this indecisiveness for perception, precisely by noting the fact that one could easily mistake such cognitions, resulting from contact between the sense and the object, for perception (that is, for indirect perception, which alone can serve as a basis for certainty). But he is also preoccupied with meeting the demand of Nyāya epistemology that a causal account of perception include both indeterminate and determinate types of cognitive awareness. The first is resolved by adding to perception the qualifier ‘nondeceptive’ (*avyabhicāri*) (thus eliminating perceptual illusions) and the latter simply by adding the qualifier ‘determined’ (*vyavasāya*) (thus eliminating ambiguity).

It is precisely with similar sorts of demands for defining the boundary conditions of empirical knowledge, I shall argue, that the Buddhist defines perception as a cognition entirely free of any conceptual content, thus rejecting the intuitively more plausible account that perception starts with the indiscriminate sense data and ends up with something like a set of universal features. Much of the dispute between the Buddhists and the Naiyāyikas on precisely what sort of cognitive capacities perception has, in fact is directed at solving the ambiguity dilemma.

The placing of logical constraints to insure that perception discloses precisely

the categories of a realist ontology, it seems, does not fully address the issue of perceptual indecisiveness. For the Naiyāyika, thus, the idea that the sense-object relation sometimes reveals ambiguities and illusions is a problem rather than a topic of study. Indeed, the Buddhist-Nyāya debate reveals an asymmetrical engagement in the epistemological project: the Buddhist account, informed by Abhidharma psychology, regards conceptual proliferation as the cause of rather than the solution to the persistence of ambiguity; for Nyāya, on the other hand, perceptual judgments are the key, since perception is also defined as having the capacity to pick out universals.

In this essay I defend a central thesis of the phenomenology of perception: our cognitive faculties are embodied and embedded within the environment of which we are a part. I further argue that this intuition, which informs recent efforts within the Western philosophical tradition to overcome the legacy of the disembodied Cartesian cogito, is also professed, albeit in a modified form, by Buddhist epistemologists of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition. A central premise of the embodied cognition thesis, in the words of the cognitive scientist Francisco Varela, philosopher Evan Thompson, and psychologist Eleanor Rosch, is that “first, cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in the more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural contexts.”³

It is this constant interaction with a world of transient phenomena that explains, for instance, why perceptual constancy forms the backbone of successful experience and insures that, to give an example, red apples remain red under all natural conditions of luminance and people appear to retain their size even as they are about to disappear from view. The embodiment thesis, then, leaves the question of epistemic foundations open to negotiation, as first-person phenomenological perspectives gather to unravel the ‘raw’ data of experience: the unique particulars that constitute the objects of experience become, as proposed by Varela et al., the “paradigm of a cognitive domain that is neither pre-given nor represented but rather experiential and enacted.”⁴ Thus the subject-object relation extends beyond the cognitive to the experiential domains: “perception is not simply embedded within and constrained by the surrounding world; it also contributes to the enactment of this surrounding world.”⁵

I will argue that the unique particulars that, the Buddhist contends, we apprehended in perception, are neither the properties of physical objects nor some abstract universals. Rather, they correspond to the dynamic co-determination of sense-consciousness and object characteristic of each cognitive event. The naturalist perspective informing the embodied-cognition thesis is also an invitation to explore the role of perception pragmatically. The epistemic question of discerning the truth-value of our cognitive states becomes, then, a subject for pragmatics. Indeed, the view that perceptual awareness has a pragmatic nature resonates rather well with the Buddhist notion that any theory of valid cognition ultimately depends on the purposeful efficacy of cognitions (*arthakriyākaritva*).

Foundationalism and the 'Given'

It is commonly assumed that Buddhist philosophers of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition pursue a foundationalist agenda. This assumption is based on the requirement that at least some perceptions must be treated as intrinsically valid (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*). The project of the Buddhist epistemologists is thus framed in ways that resonate with the sort of foundationalism that one finds criticized, for instance, in Sellars. This criticism centers on the so called “Myth of the Given,” the idea that all knowledge ultimately rests on a foundation of noninferential knowledge.

Epistemological foundationalism is primarily concerned with the justification of knowledge—which, of course, should be the main concern of any critique of Buddhist foundationalism. The basic view, recently articulated by Tom Tillemans, is that Buddhist philosophers adopt a position rather common among philosophers both East and West: that is, while conception might not accurately capture the contents of our experience, at least the *data* of experience, in itself, “must be real and unassailable.”⁶ We are thus told that the Buddhist preoccupation with defining what counts and what doesn’t count as a reliable source of knowledge—one that insures unmistakable access to the Given—is precisely that of traditional epistemology. But, the story goes, traditional epistemology contains irreconcilable tensions.

Of course, if we interpret epistemic foundationalism as grounding all knowledge in intrinsically valid cognitions, then the key initiators of the Buddhist epistemological project, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, *do* appear to be pursuing a foundationalist agenda (even though the issue of epistemic foundations is only explicitly treated in the commentarial literature on Dharmakīrti).⁷ Their concern, however, is a different sort of concern than, for instance, that of modern empiricists targeted in the anti-foundationalist campaign. Here I want to make a heuristic suggestion: perhaps we ought to frame the question of what motivates these Buddhist philosophers to accord perception a preeminent status over any other source of knowledge as two separate issues: first, the notion that the reliability of perception must be intrinsically ascertained, except for those instances where the connection with the object is uncertain (in which case its reliability is extrinsically ascertained),⁸ and second, the question of whether the intrinsic ascertainment clause reflects a logical concern with avoiding infinite regress or an epistemic concern with how best to secure an indubitable status for perceptual cognitions.

The *locus classicus* of anti-foundationalism—at least within the tradition of analytic philosophy—is Sellars’ critique of the sense-datum theorists; his criticism targets the distinction between the act of awareness, which is purported to give access to a phenomenologically simple, further irreducible, ‘Given,’ and the object, the pure sense datum of experience (for instance, a patch of color). While acknowledging various disagreements among sense-datum theorists about whether or not these acts of pure sensing are further analyzable, Sellars is keen to point out that the *sensum* itself is, ultimately, a relational property, since we cannot refer to a sensed something without reference to a *subject* of experience. Even alternative notions, such as *sensibles* or *sense properties*, still give the impression that “sensed items could exist

without being sensed”⁹—a presupposition that Sellars and all critics of sense-datum theories find problematic.

But there is another reason why the epistemological category of the Given is regarded by Sellars as problematic: for sense-datum theorists the Given is neither the subject-object relation nor the phenomenally simple act of sensing, but the particular itself. In other words, the sense-datum theorist is confronted with a dilemma: either we sense particulars, in which case sensing is not epistemically warranted, or sensing is epistemically warranted, and what is thus sensed are facts, that is, states of affairs, rather than particulars. Either way, the presumption of some special epistemic access to noninferential knowledge is ruled out: sensed colors, for instance, are not phenomenal data but epistemic facts about the content of experience.

Indeed, on Sellars’ reading of the empiricist program, the Buddhist, insofar as he grants perception cognitive status, is a foundationalist. But although it is true that even at the level of ‘raw’ phenomenal experience sensing is cognitive, the reliability of this perceptual cognition needs two further constraints: first, the requirement that only a restricted class of nondeceptive and noninferential cognitions be counted as perception and, second, the assignment to perception of a privileged epistemic status. It is the conflation of these two constraints that blurs the philosophically interesting consideration of whether or not the Buddhists pursue a foundationalist agenda in epistemology. Bimal Krishna Matilal was right, I think, to point out that the Buddhist argument—that perceptual awareness must necessarily be free of conception—is quite compelling if we take the view that perceptual cognitions reflect the causal power of the apprehended object: “if a perceptual awareness ... can represent things that are in no way connected with the perceptual occasion, then one can be perceptually aware of anything and everything at any occasion since there would be no restriction on what the awareness could and would represent.”¹⁰ Any counter-argument that expands the range of perception beyond what is empirically given must necessarily confront the restriction problem: perception, then, becomes more like imagination in its (unrestricted) capacity to represent anything and everything.

Particulars and the Phenomenology of Perception

The question of the epistemic status of perceptual cognitions is not the only problem with a foundationalist reading of the Buddhist epistemological project. I want to suggest a model that will seem, hopefully, a more suitable alternative: while it is true that Buddhist epistemology is preoccupied with finding reliable grounds for knowledge, its program resembles that of the Husserlian phenomenologist rather than that of the modern empiricist or rationalist. Buddhist epistemology, at least in the main tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, is phenomenological.

First of all, for the Buddhist, the nondeceptiveness of perception (i.e., its epistemically warranted status) does not imply, *pace* Tillemans, that its contents are factual *qua* objects extrinsic to awareness. Rather, perception is epistemically warranted because of, and only when, its contents, that is, the perceptual image as intended, reflect the phenomena of experience via a direct causal-cognitive link. Second, this

notion of perception as a cognition that is free of conception and capable of direct and unmistaken access to the phenomenal world already represents an evolved stage in the formation of a cohesive theory of perceptual knowledge (*pratyakṣaj-ñāna*) within the Buddhist tradition. Dignāga, for instance, did not view error as something that was in the purview of perception,¹¹ but rather as a consequence of conceptual discriminations. Unlike the Naiyāyikas, who use the qualifier ‘non-erroneous’ to exclude perceptions caused by some kind of sensory impairment (e.g., color blindness or astigmatism), Dignāga treats perceptual illusions as a type of mental delusion. In the end, however, the Buddhist epistemologist agrees with Dharmakīrti that distorted perceptions may in fact be caused by defective sense organs.¹² It is the pragmatic efficacy of the given object that acts as a corrective, excluding from perception ambiguities and illusions.

Because the Buddhist conceives of perception as a constantly new introduction to an object, then the ‘given’ is not any structurally unique entity but change itself or, rather, the principles underlying change: dependent arising and momentariness. But, we may ask, how can perception effectively cognize aggregates of atoms, which are in constant motion, as enduring, unitary, objects without the aid of concepts and higher-order thought processes? After all, the (Sautrāntika) Abhidharma is clear that the object of perceptual awareness is the particular only as cognizable *sensibilia*. For example, only what is audible can be heard and only what is visible can be seen, and what is thus heard and seen are not substantive entities but unique phenomenal properties. Dignāga’s response to the question above invokes the ‘holistic’ character of perceptual cognition:

It is mentioned [in the Abhidharma treatise] that “these [sense-cognitions] take a unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) as their object insofar as it is the particular in the form of a [cognizable] sense-sphere (*āyatana-svalakṣaṇa*) and not in the form of a [constituent] substance [namely an atom] (*dravya-svalakṣaṇa*).” How is this to be understood? There [in the Abhidharma passages cited above], that [perception], being caused by [the sense-organ through its contact with] many [aggregated] objects, takes the whole (*sāmānya*) as the object of its sphere of operation. Since it [namely perception] is caused by [the sense-organ through its contact with] many substances [namely aggregates of atoms], it is said, in respect to its sphere of operation, that it takes the whole as its object; but [it does] not [mean that it operates] by conceptually integrating that which is many and separate.¹³

Dignāga seems to be suggesting here that in perception the fragmentary and discrete sense data are apprehended as a unitary whole. This does not mean, however, that we perceive an object in its entirety, as though all its aspects were available at once: it only means that each instance of perception reveals a unique phenomenal characteristic of experience, where ‘unique’ here stands for both the particular aspect of the experienced *as experienced* and for an agent’s perspective. Thus, to use an example, perceiving color means experiencing within the visual sphere a specific shade, such as cherry red or lime green. It is not as though red and green exist, as universal color categories, over and above the cognitive events in which they are instantiated. Rather, color qualia is just that: the qualitative experience of unique shades, that is,

the product of particular circumstances of luminance and the physiology of light perception. If the appearance of sense data in perception as a unitary structureless whole is not the result of a subsequent process of conceptual construction, then how do we recognize it as such? We do, says Dignāga, because every instance of perceptual awareness is accompanied by self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*). We do not simply perceive color: we have the experience of what it is like to be perceiving color.

This observation is interesting, I think, because it highlights the mutual tripartite constitutiveness of object intended, the intentional act, and the structureless given. It is here that the Buddhist parts with traditional epistemology both East and West. Like a Husserlian phenomenologist, he contends that experience extends the boundaries of the given, constraining “our reason to go beyond intuitionally given physical things.”¹⁴ These physical ‘things’ are either the natural kinds of the realist or the sense datum of the empiricist. In either case, the Buddhist agrees with Husserl that “whatever physical things there are,” and whatever their ontological status, “they are as experienceable physical things.”¹⁵ In Buddhist terms, these discrete entities that bear their own distinctive mark (*svalakṣaṇa*) are particulars only *qua* phenomena of experience.

Phenomenologically, then, the Given is a noninferential cognitive *event* that cuts through the dilemma of the sense-datum theorist: sensing *just is* the sort of perceptual awareness best suited to apprehend the constitutive elements of experience—it is not knowledge of ‘facts.’ This phenomenological sensing is, I think, fittingly captured by Merleau-Ponty’s notion that reflection bears upon and discloses an unreflected experience. As a reflection, however, it depends on, and has to acknowledge, the primacy of the world over its own operations—not an abstract or putatively independent world, but a world that is “given to the subject because the subject is given to himself.”¹⁶

But does this ‘unreflected experience’ have any cognitive content? Hubert Dreyfus has recently argued that this pure phenomenological sensing does, indeed, have “a kind of *intentional* content: it just isn’t conceptual content.”¹⁷ Phenomenology, thus, opens up a third alternative beyond the “bare Given” and the “mere conceptual.” Hence, Dreyfus’ invitation to “accept the possibility that our ground-level coping opens up the world by opening us to a *meaningful* Given—a Given that is *non-conceptual* but not bare.”¹⁸

Despite the ambiguities in Husserl’s statement that there is a direct correspondence between an inherent noetic content and a noematic content,¹⁹ such that each perception “has its noema” or the “perceived as such,” there is little doubt that Husserl conceives of the phenomenological reduction (or *epoché*) as precisely the instrument by which we can describe the data of perception *as perceived*: “What is this perceived as such? . . . We can obtain the answer to the above question by pure openness to what is essentially given; we can describe ‘what appears as such’ in complete evidence.”²⁰

But there is more to being (phenomenologically) aware of the perceived as such than seizing upon the noema of what is essentially given: we only apprehend it

(namely the Given) one aspect at a time, and this apprehension of the discrete elements of experience creates a certain allure for what, indeed, is yet to be given. Commenting on what the infinite potentialities of experience hold for our apprehension of the given, Husserl writes:

The division applying to what is genuinely perceived and what is only co-present entails a distinction between determinations with respect to the content of the object that are actually there, appearing in the flesh, and those that are still ambiguously prefigured in full emptiness. Let us also note that what actually appears, is, in itself, also laden with a similar distinction. Indeed, the call resounds as well with respect to the side that is already actually seen: “Draw closer, closer still; now fix your eyes upon me, changing your place, changing the position of your eyes, etc. You will get to see even more of me that is new, ever new partial colourings etc. You will get to see structures of the wood that were not visible just a moment ago, structures that were formerly only viewed indeterminately and generally,” etc. Thus, even what is already seen is laden with an anticipatory intention. It—what is already seen—is constantly there as a framework prefiguring something new.²¹

Thus, each instance of perception reveals a new aspect of an object, making accessible what was hitherto unknown (but brimming with potentiality). There is more, for instance, to visual consciousness than what is immediately apprehended: the prefiguration of what is yet to be seen or of what might be seen. This distinction between what is genuinely perceived and what is merely co-present in the perceptual event becomes clear only after the *epoché*: it is only the *genuinely perceived*, then, that counts as nonconceptual noematic content.

I want to claim that the Buddhist approach to the epistemology of perception is phenomenological in a sense that captures the intent of Husserl’s method of *epoché*: its aim is to convey that particulars are not unique entities, not even specific relations or properties, but a kind of nonconceptual noematic content.²² This epistemologically relevant nonconceptual noematic content (e.g., that specific apple-like shade of red by which something is apprehended as a red apple) cuts through the dilemma of choosing, on the one hand, between a coherence theory of justification (in which beliefs are justified because they belong to a coherent system of beliefs) and a (presumably bare) perceptual ‘Given.’²³ Second, I want to suggest another reason why the “Myth of the Given” (so-called by Sellars) and the “doctrine of the Naturally Given” (Rorty’s terminology)²⁴—namely, that knowledge essentially stands for any cognitive apprehension of entities immediately present to consciousness—do not capture the intent of the Buddhist epistemological program.

Before turning to these Buddhist thinkers, let’s consider two of the most robust responses to current debates about foundationalism: phenomenology and naturalized epistemology. For its part, phenomenology relies on a methodology of bracketing the natural attitude, and thus resists the tendency to rest arguments about foundationalism on a naïve acceptance of the world and of our common experience of it. On the other hand, naturalized epistemology diverts the discussion about foundationalism in the direction of the sciences of cognition, where investigations into the

structure and dynamics of cognitive events take precedence over issues of justification and a priori reasoning.

Phenomenology starts with the premise that any critique of foundationalism, which neither brackets nor examines the natural attitude, is essentially limited to logical reductions only: at best it can shift the attention from inquiring about the epistemic nature of statements, insofar as they reflect facts about the world, to analyzing their logical content and their propositional meaning. Consider, for instance, John Drummond's argument that phenomenology provides a different response to foundationalism, and that "albeit apodictic and transcendental" it is effectively a "non-foundationalist discipline."²⁵ Responses to foundationalism, then, may be sorted along three main critical attitudes: (1) logical (the Fregean tradition), (2) epistemological, and (3) phenomenological (the Husserlian tradition). For the logical attitude, the concern is mainly confined to the distinction between valid and sound arguments. To this logical distinction, the epistemological attitude adds concerns about the formal content of a statement and the experienced objectivity. It is only in the phenomenological attitude, however, that we attend to intentional consciousness, which means that any phenomenological account of knowledge must take into account *three* things: (1) the knowing or experiencing subject, (2) the experienced object itself, and (3) the experienced object *as* experienced.

It is precisely to the extent that we go beyond the interplay between sense and object and seek to account for the structure of the intentional act that we operate within the phenomenological attitude. The anti-foundationalism that drives most debates in epistemology testifies to this oversight, lacking, as it mostly does, an account of intentional consciousness. Most modern epistemologies either neglect intentionality or are guilty of reductionism; as Drummond points out, "they reduce the immediate object of our experience from the object itself to the perceptual content, thus subjectifying the objective content, and they conceive this content as a psychic content."²⁶

It is well known that both Frege and Husserl conceived of their projects as reactions to psychologism. But their conception of what should count as foundational for knowledge is substantially different. For his part, Frege's reduction of the experienced content to a third realm of logical sense effectively collapses the experienced content onto a realm of self-evident and self-justifying statements about relations between subject and object, the inner and the outer. This relation is conceived either externally, that is, as causation, presentation, representation, et cetera, or, most often, left unexplained. The contrast with the phenomenological attitude could not be more obvious: subject and object are not externally correlated 'wholes' but parts of the all-encompassing intentional act. The object is the intentional object as intended, which is why, as Drummond maintains in his critique of the foundationalism debate, "the experienced or the intentional content of experience is not 'psychologized' or 'logicized.'"²⁷ 'Experience,' 'experienced object,' and 'experienced object as experienced' are all defining events within the same *experienced objectivity*.

Now let's see whether these arguments in favor of a nonfoundational phenomenological reflection, and of the inherent intentionality of consciousness, serve better

to illustrate the Buddhist philosophical program of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and thus whether this philosophical program might, despite its apparently foundationalist stance, share a common ground with phenomenology and its method. The question, then, is whether or not the Buddhist epistemological commitment to knowledge of the 'Given' is suggestive of a foundationalist project.

Let's begin, first, with the Buddhist Abhidharma notion that only partless entities count as (ultimately) real. This point is demonstrated by Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* while differentiating things such as pots and clothes, which exist only conventionally, from what is ultimately real. The argument at play here is that entities that can be physically fragmented or dissolved through cognitive analysis are not ultimately real, unlike those, such as the *dharmas*, that are:

When the apprehension of an entity persists after that entity has been reduced through cognitive analysis, that entity exists ultimately, e.g., *form*: while form may be reduced to atoms, and while we may exclude from it through cognitive analysis other qualia (such as taste, etc.), the apprehension of the proper nature of *form* persists. Feelings too are to be understood [as ultimately true]. As this [empirical awareness] exists ultimately, it is [also] ultimately true. As declared by older authorities: the manner in which entities are perceived, either by means of a supra-mundane cognition or by means of a subsequently acquired mundane cognition, is how they ultimately exist.²⁸

Several arguments are put forward here: first, that only entities whose form persists after physical fragmentation and cognitive analysis count as ultimately real; second, that our sense experiences (feelings, vision, etc.) are real, by virtue of our condition of embodiment, and that what they disclose is also real; and finally, that the manner in which entities are apprehended is precisely how they ordinarily exist (keeping in mind that the unique particular is here understood to refer to qualia within the sphere of perception (*āyatana-svalakṣaṇa*), thus to the perceived *as perceived*, not to the properties of a substantive entity (*dravya-svalakṣaṇa*). The arguments adduced in support of the view that ultimate reality is further irreducible depend on the doctrine of momentariness: what we apprehend as distinct spatiotemporal entities are, in fact, discrete series of phenomena undergoing constant change.²⁹ In equating reality with momentariness, the Buddhist adheres to the phenomenological atomism that is a common characteristic of all Abhidharma schools.

There is, however, an important shift in emphasis from ontological to epistemological concerns within that particular school of Abhidharma, the Sautrāntika-Yogācāra, to which the Buddhist epistemologists belong. The 'real' is described in pragmatic rather than ontological terms. If phenomenal reality were made up of changeless and enduring entities, the effects produced by such entities would be equally changeless and enduring, thus giving rise to a logical impossibility: what does not change cannot produce any effect, for its effect either would be identical with the generating cause or would consist in a perpetual reiteration of itself. This conclusion is particularly drawn by Dharmakīrti, who expands on Vasubandhu's notion of the partless nature of the real. For Dharmakīrti, thus, *causal efficacy* or the ability of an object to perform a function (*arthakriyāsamartha*) is the true mark of the real:

This individual [characteristic] alone constitutes an object [of perception]; other [characteristics, e.g., universal properties and the like] are concealed [from the purview of perception]. This [individual] is referred to in terms of cause and effect and is what we mean by [the term] “particular.” As we have said, only an entity which has causal efficacy is deemed a real object [of perception]. And it is [this specific characteristic which we] referred to as an individual object.³⁰

Indeed, as it has been recently argued, and I think convincingly, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers do not use the concepts of ‘particular’ and ‘universal’ in their original Abhidharmic sense. While examining its meaning and use by Vasubandhu in his earlier Abhidharma works, John Dunne, for instance, notes that “a *svalakṣaṇa* is a way of characterizing an object in terms of a property that is peculiar to the type of entity in question” such that in attending to the *svalakṣaṇa* “one understands it to have ‘the characteristic of being disturbed [by contact, etc.]’ (*rūpaṇalakṣaṇa*).”³¹ Thus used, *svalakṣaṇa* indicates “a defining characteristic of a single type of entity (*dharma*) in the Abhidharma typology,”³² rather than an external referent (namely a unique particular).

But even if the Buddhist epistemologist shifts the focus of perception from a unique particular (a token) to a uniquely characterized phenomenon (a type), the ‘uniqueness’ of the perceived *as perceived* stems from the fact that it presents its own form (even though for the Buddhist the ultimately real has no spatial or temporal extension). But the manner in which an object presents its own form is also reflective of its mode of apprehension. On the Abhidharma account, the unique and irreducible elements within its complex taxonomy are always related to conceptually cognate terms such as ‘unique particular’ (*svalakṣaṇa*) and ‘intrinsic nature’ (*svabhāva*). These terms are cognitive equivalents of what is generally designated as a ‘bearer’ (*dharma*).³³ Examples of such unique particulars in Vasubandhu’s ontology are feelings and thoughts, although the focus is less on what they are and more on how they are disclosed. As he states: “The body is examined in relation to its particular and universal characteristics. Feelings and thoughts are dharmas; the nature of these [feelings and thoughts] is their particular characteristic.”³⁴ It is here, I maintain, that a phenomenological reading of the experience of the particular better serves to capture the intent of the Buddhist epistemological project. Thoughts and feelings are momentary and discrete, if recurrent, and reflect the dynamics of the psychophysical aggregates that are constitutive of human experience. Ultimately, however, they are reflective of our condition of embodiment, to which perceptual awareness provides constant and unmediated cognitive access.

As Merleau-Ponty tells us: “In perception we do not think the object and we do not think ourselves thinking it, we are given over to the object and we merge into this body which is better informed than we are about the world, and about the motives we have and the means at our disposal.”³⁵ Perception does not provide a descriptive image of reality, an internal map of what is externally available, but a normative account of how the world must be for my experience of it to be practically efficacious or, in Merleau-Ponty’s terminology, to have maximal grip on it. Thus, the

Buddhist agrees with Merleau-Ponty that “every perception takes place in an atmosphere of generality” even though “when seen from the inside, expresses a given situation: I can see blue because I am *sensitive* to colors.”³⁶

Whether such unique particulars are regarded as real and unitary entities existing over and above an apprehending consciousness, or as phenomenal properties of experience that supervene upon it cannot be settled on the grounds of conceptual analysis alone. Granted an ontological commitment to realism (of the Sautrāntika type), perception, for the Buddhist, seems perfectly suited to apprehend both empirical and conceptual entities. And, while conceptual entities are beyond the realm of phenomenal experience, the nonconceptual elements of experience or, in phenomenological terms, its noematic content are *not*, despite the fact that it is only by means of its unique defining characteristics that we intend a particular as such. It is not an *object* that is thus intended but a set of interdependent phenomenal properties. Perception, then, can only apprehend distinct qualia such as hardness, softness, roughness, luminance, et cetera. But when these qualitative experiences are fused together into something like a distinct spatiotemporal object, we no longer have the perception of unique particulars but the conceptual apprehension of an aggregated entity.

So, do we apprehend these phenomenal properties, even if their constitutive elements are never dissociated all at once? For some Abhidharma philosophers, like the Vaibhāṣikas, all aggregated entities comprise the four elements, but the phenomenal nature of any given aggregated entity depends on additional causes, so that under certain circumstances something solid may become liquid, like heat causing the melting of a block of ice into water. For others (the Sautrāntikas)—whose position Vasubandhu clearly states—phenomenal qualities are present only as mere potentialities. In a block of ice, the fire element is only potentially present, for without this potentiality ice cannot melt and become water. The primary property of any given substance thus depends on the preponderance of any one element (namely earth, water, etc.) with which that property is associated.³⁷ The same principle of preponderance applies in the case of all natural kinds. In the case of aggregated entities such as trees and cows, it is no longer the principle of preponderance that applies but rather that of being a product of certain causes and conditions. A cow is not a mere collection of elements with a certain predominant property like solidity, heat, or the capacity to produce milk. It is also not a conceptually constructed entity like a forest, or a car, that is analytically reducible to its primitive parts.

If particulars designate the phenomenal properties of objects *as experienced objects*, then what is given in perception is partless wholes rather than differentiated structural elements. The question, then, becomes that of whether this Abhidharma analysis tells us something about the nature of the particular itself or, rather, something about the epistemic status of perception; surely, this question is a crucial one for any epistemological project, foundationalist or otherwise. Pursuing a similar sort of question, Dan Arnold has recently concluded that it is Dignāga’s intuition about particulars that is served by his account of perception, rather than the other way around.³⁸ In other words, perception ultimately aims to justify the existence of par-

particulars as uniquely qualified entities. This means that Dignāga is to a certain degree constrained to adopt a specific definition of perception in order to justify his understanding of the particular.

Dignāga's understanding and definition of the particular is the logical conclusion of a long tradition of speculation about the irreducible elements of existence. Now, are these 'particulars' in the sense of 'irreducible phenomenal properties of experience' or in the sense of 'ontologically primitive categories'? Arnold interprets Dignāga as departing from Vasubandhu's view that these are particulars as types rather than things, "types of which there can be, presumably, an infinite number of tokens."³⁹ Arnold proposes that we understand the particulars as *properties* of phenomenal objects, because such an understanding reflects the common usage of the term in Abhidharma texts. Whether or not we treat particulars as types, it is obvious that Vasubandhu's Abhidharma project seems concerned with more than sorting through an elaborate taxonomy of ontological primitives—the sole purpose of which is to provide a causal account of what is taken to exist only conventionally.

For the Buddhist epistemologist the 'phenomenally given' particular does not correspond to any inherent physical property of an object, notwithstanding the debate about whether or not someone like Dharmakīrti wavers between externalism and internalism. Rather, what is given emerges fully in perception along with an intentional act of consciousness. Consciousness may be characterized as "awareness of an object,"⁴⁰ as inherently intentional, essentially as consciousness *of* something in the Husserlian sense. This consciousness is essentially an object-oriented consciousness in the same manner in which 'hardness' or 'resistance' is an inherent property of the experience of what we generically designate as 'earth.' Thus, on Arnold's reading the Abhidharmakas' view that "*svalakṣaṇas* in virtue of which *dharmas* qualify as such are, in fact, universals or abstractions"⁴¹ effectively collapses the difference between the particular *as a support* for the perceptual cognition and the particular *as perceived*.

But, whereas Vasubandhu's analysis of types in the *Abhidharmakośa* includes both 'substantial' properties and 'conceptual' designations, Dignāga's understanding of the particular as found, *inter alia*, in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, is purely phenomenological: the particular is a sort of uniquely characterized phenomenon accessible only through a perceptual cognition or noema. For Dignāga, then, the particular is not simply internal, uniquely characterized, sense data, but veridical nonconceptual content. What makes it veridical is the fact that it is intersubjectively available and pragmatically effective. Indeed, the causal efficacy of objects informs both Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's arguments that what is generally termed 'perception' consists in a series of distinct cognitive events that are causally related. In this model, contact between sense and object gives rise to a perceptual image (*ākāra*) that represents the specific characteristics of the object, and the relationship between the perceptual image and the empirical object is one of similarity (*sādrśya*). Thus, whereas the perceptual image is causally determined by the object, the manner of its appearance (i.e., its aspect)⁴² is determined by factors that are intrinsic to cognition itself.

As Dharmakīrti states: "Except for a cause, there is nothing else that [could

constitute an entity's] being an apprehended object. Among the [causes of awareness], that [cause] in the image of which awareness [arises] is called the apprehended object of that [awareness]."⁴³ Note, however, that although both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti appear to adopt an empirical standpoint regarding the status of external objects, their analysis of perception reflects an internalist perspective that denies the ultimate reality of external objects.

Now let's continue our discussion with the idea that the reliability of perception must be intrinsically ascertained. It seems to me that when the Buddhist defends the idea that perception must be intrinsically ascertained, the primary concern is avoiding the problem of infinite regress. As Śāntaraṣita reminds us, "there can be no infinite regress if validity depends [on an external cause]. Hence, certainty about self-validity only ensues when there is an apprehension of effective action."⁴⁴ Indeed, what is characteristic of perceptual cognitions is precisely the fact that they reflect the causal power of the apprehended phenomena. For the Buddhist, thus, I know that I am perceiving fire, for instance, when I perceive an entity as capable of fulfilling a certain purpose, such as burning and radiating heat. An opponent, in this case a Mīmāṃsāka realist, would be curious, of course, to find out exactly what kinds of specific conditions must be in place in order to facilitate differentiating between succeeding cognitions. The answer comes in the form of a unique type of Buddhist pragmatism: the condition of validity is defined by the formal similarity of cognition with the real entity—a similarity whose warrant is none other than the continuous cognition of practical efficacy.

But 'practical efficacy,' we are told, does not come in leaps and bounds. Each perception always manifests its practical efficacy with certainty, even in the case of perceptual illusions, which is precisely why no subsequent cognition of practical efficacy is ever needed. Śāntaraṣita's view that only cognitions causally anchored in reality count as knowledge is a typical case of reiterating Dharmakīrti's definition of an epistemic warrant as that cognition which is in conformity with its object. Isn't it true, says the Buddhist, that it is only when one wants to attain a certain goal that the reliability of cognitions becomes a matter of concern? How else would one get thinking about epistemic warrants? I take it that here we have a classic case of reducing the epistemic disposition to various apparent and less apparent motivations, whether psychological or social, that are part of the structure of being. Presumably, on Dharmakīrti's suggestion, if one were not concerned with actions and their results, one would not be particularly bothered with issues of reliability or justification. It is only because successful action requires some evaluation of the veridicality of cognition (i.e., its conformity with the object) that an individual is driven to epistemic inquiries.

While it may be true, as J. N. Mohanty observes, that "the distinction, common in Western thought, between the causal question and the question of justification was not made by the Indian theories,"⁴⁵ there is an important way in which this could simply reflect the pragmatic concerns of the Indian philosopher rather than a failure to address the normative question—of why might we be justified in believing something—on its own. If, indeed, Indian epistemologies treat as warranted only

that cognition which “corresponds to its object” and “is produced in the right way,”⁴⁶ it seems they have a way of explaining the epistemic disposition as a consequence of our condition of embodiment rather than as the instrument of a disembodied cogito (serving the justification of its beliefs).

Foundationalism and Its Discontents

Recall the observation above that the self-validity of perception is mainly geared to address the problem of infinite regress. But this discussion about perceptual cognition being self-validating addresses in fact two main issues: (1) the fallacy of infinite regress, where cognition always depends on another cognition for its validation, and (2) the practical efficacy of perceptual cognitions since, unlike conception, perception constitutes a direct introduction to an object. It is the first of these issues—the construal of perception as self-validating—that has forced upon the epistemological program of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti the label of empiricist foundationalism.

Now, let’s return to Tillemans’ view that Buddhist epistemology is best described as a type of foundationalism about empirical facts. It was first sketched in a study of the dispute between the Svātantrikas and the Prasaṅgikas Mādhyamikas on the existence of self-validating cognitions.⁴⁷ Recently, however, Tillemans has argued cogently—and at some length—that the Buddhist, like his Western counterpart, not only asserts the givenness of particulars but does so regardless of whether he operates from an externalist or an internalist perspective. Particulars are the sort of things available only as objects of perception.

Here, it is helpful to recall that both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti treat particulars either as external objects or as perceptual images intrinsic to awareness, depending on whether they operate from the perspective of external realism or phenomenism. Tillemans argues: “Particulars are the sort of thing *naturally suited to be present to non-inferential awareness*, and hence can be considered as a type of given.”⁴⁸ All this, despite the fact that the Buddhist, unlike his Western counterpart, employs a sliding scale of analysis, whereby particulars are treated first as external objects but eventually as mental appearances or perceptual images, and thus not as genuinely real.

Tillemans again: “Not surprisingly, in the Yogācāra-Svātantrika system of Śāntarakṣīta and Kamalaśīla, appearances (*pratibhāsa*) to perception end up being the customary-truth counterparts to the particulars of the Buddhist logician’s Yogācāra ontology.”⁴⁹ To illustrate his interpretation of the apparitional nature of empirical objects, which supposedly confirms their adherence to the Yogācāra ontology, Tillemans quotes Kamalaśīla as advocating the notion that images appearing in consciousness *erroneously* lack intrinsic natures, despite being restricted to a specific time and place.⁵⁰

The idea that particulars are restricted in time and space is discussed extensively by Dharmakīrti throughout his work.⁵¹ A close look at Dharmakīrti’s account of how particulars are apprehended in perception should make clear that, despite their uniqueness, they are not pure representational images but in fact can become the

object of empirical awareness.⁵² So: what Dharmakīrti means by the ‘unique particular’ are phenomena within the reach of empirical consciousness, in other words, entities determined by their spatiotemporal location and formal appearance. Thus, for Dharmakīrti, conceptual entities are necessarily *unreal*, precisely because they lack spatiotemporal determination. The contrast with perceptual objects is now obvious: these, unlike concepts, are positioned outside the arbitrary realm of thought.

Tillemans’ position only becomes more problematic if we factor in the well-known observation that a necessary condition for inference is the presence of “appearing objects.”⁵³ It is these objects appearing to perceptual consciousness that provide “the actual subject of debate.” Foundationalism, at least on Tillemans’ reading of the Buddhist epistemological program, obtains only if these appearing objects are a kind of perceptual given. But if we understand perception in a phenomenological sense, as providing the perceiving subject with a mode of engaging the world in such a way that her intentions are realized, then perception is foundational for knowledge only in the sense that it provides an implicit basis for these ‘appearing objects.’

Now, this phenomenological account also captures, I think, what Georges Dreyfus has in mind when he points out that for the Buddhist epistemologist perception and inference “are distinguished not only on the basis of their modes of apprehension but mostly on the basis of their objects.”⁵⁴ In other words, perception has the capacity to apprehend real individuals by virtue of the fact that its contents are non-conceptually given in experience, whereas inference can only apprehend what are essentially conceptual constructs. This co-presence of perception and object as *perceived* explains why only perception can be said to be providing a cognitive link to reality, with the caveat that ‘reality’ here stands for the particular ways in which ‘self’ and ‘other’ are empirically disclosed.

I take Dreyfus to be reiterating here—in no uncertain terms—Dignāga’s position that perception and conception operate with different objects. That, as Dignāga declares, “there is no object of cognition other than the unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the universal (*samanyalakṣaṇa*), because perception has as its object the unique particular and inference the universal.”⁵⁵ Conception, in Dignāga’s view, is a remote, secondary-order cognition, so understood because of the chasm between the world *as experienced* and its conceptual apprehension. There is, however, more to the story: contrary to the empiricist thesis—that knowledge is reducible to experience—perception in and of itself does not provide knowledge of relations and concepts. Indeed, propositional knowledge requires the participation of perceptual judgments, and perceptual judgments, as we all know, require memory. How do perceptual judgments become knowledge? Through apperception, which bridges the memory gap and retrieves previously learned concepts. In addition, apperception is ‘indubitable’: we may well be mistaken about the object of our experience, but we can never be mistaken about the object of experience *as experienced*, about our awareness of any experience whatsoever.

Capitalizing on this seemingly unbridgeable gap for the Buddhist between the indeterminate perception of particulars and the sphere of conception, Monima

Chadha has recently argued that something like a Nyāya-Kantian understanding of perception, as always involving the participation of conception, further undermines the Buddhist intuition about the cognitive function of perception. Her thesis is that, because any perceptual cognition requires the possibility of *recognition*, recognition is possible only when perceptual awareness is restricted to universal features: “the very notion of experience or perceptual cognition is that of cognizing or (recognizing) the particular datum as an instantiation of a property or a universal.”⁵⁶

While not directly addressing the question of epistemic foundationalism, Chadha’s arguments are relevant for another reason: they raise the hermeneutically interesting question of what interpretive model best serves to translate, in this case, the Buddhist and Nyāya epistemological programs and, conversely, to what extent these programs anticipate, or complement, similar philosophical programs in the West. In his defense of the Buddhist epistemological position (and in response to Chadha) Mark Siderits is right, I think, to point out that—epistemic considerations apart—a Naiyāyika, a Sautrāntika-Yogācāra Buddhist like Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and someone like Kant work with rather different notions of the ‘given.’⁵⁷ For the Naiyāyika the category of the ‘given’ (the object of perceptual awareness) includes both particulars (entities such as red roses) and the universals by which they are qualified (such as *redness* and *rosehood*). The Nyāya claim is that particulars are always cognized as such: individuals bearing a relation of inherence to a universal. For the Buddhist, perception can only apprehend a unique (phenomenal) characteristic (a *svalakṣaṇa*), whereas for someone like Kant the ‘given’ is simply the phenomenal appearance of objects seen by the transcendental ego through the lens of noumena.

Thus, enlisting Kant’s support to claim that we never perceive particulars as such and that concepts mediate our awareness of what we take to be phenomenally (as opposed to metaphysically) real, confronts Chadha with all sorts of unwarranted assumptions about the scope of the Kantian epistemological project on the one hand, and of what we take to be phenomenally real on the other. Moreover, there is an important way in which both the Buddhist and the Naiyāyika agree that indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*) stands for an awareness of the particular alone, whose causal-pragmatic link to perceptual cognition is undisputed. A dispute only arises when the Buddhist and the Naiyāyika consider whether or not this causal-pragmatic model also applies to perceptual judgments. Note, though, that for the Naiyāyikas indeterminate perception only apprehends unrelated entities (e.g., roses, red color, rosehood, etc.) and that this apprehension is not epistemically warranted (i.e., it occurs prior to a distinction between truth and falsity).

Obviously, the Kantian model of apperception is a statement about the anti-foundationalist role of apperception. Tillemans, too, calls into question the Kantian model of the role of apperception in cognition, pointing out that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti advocate a thesis that is exactly contrary to Kantian antifoundationalism: intuitions (or, for the Buddhist, perceptions) are not blind without concepts. Perceptions are indeed cognitive, even if only rudimentarily so. Tillemans takes the Buddhist to be “saying pretty much the opposite: it is concepts that are blind, while sense intuition does see, albeit unintelligently.”⁵⁸

Tillemans' contention is that insofar as Dharmakīrti and his followers regard any cognition that conforms with its object as warranted (i.e., as a *pramāṇa tout court*) they are empiricists of a foundationalist bent: "The fact is, however, that people of an empiricist bent have consecrated considerable energy and ingenuity to doing epistemology this way and have thought that perceptual awareness is not just one of the many animal functions necessary for cognition to occur, but is itself a type of cognition of a certain kind of thing. I think that Dharmakīrti is one of these empiricists, and I think that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are too."⁵⁹

To support his claim that Dharmakīrti and that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as well are full-fledged empiricists, Tillemans interprets their commitment to reflexivity—namely that each cognitive episode is accompanied by self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*),⁶⁰—to mean that in the direct apprehension of an object perceptual cognition and self-awareness are fused into one dual-property cognition.

Tillemans quotes favorably Robert Brandom's interpretation of the "Myth of the Given" to mean that direct perception is always accompanied by a special sort of awareness that can discern objects and their properties without the aid of concepts: "The 'Myth of the Given' is the idea that there can be a kind of *awareness* that has two properties. First, it is or entails having a certain sort of *knowledge* . . . that the one whose state it is possesses simply in virtue of being in that state. Second, it entails that the capacity to have that sort of awareness . . . does not presuppose the acquisition of any *concepts*—that one can be aware in that sense independently of and antecedently to grasping or mastering the use of any concepts (paradigmatically through language learning)."⁶¹

Now, it is not, I think, too much of a stretch to understand the Buddhist epistemological program as roughly analogous to phenomenology, at least in the minimal sense that here we come across a systematic investigation of the (nonconceptual, but not bare) contents of awareness and of intentionality as the intrinsic feature of a cognitive event. Here I wish to concentrate on the issue of whether Dignāga and Dharmakīrti do indeed pursue a foundationalist project in epistemology or whether, *pace* Tillemans, they could be seen as phenomenologists (of the Husserlian type) concerned with the intentional character of the phenomenal contents of experience as experienced from the first-person point of view. It seems to me that the Buddhist's reaction to the realist's (chiefly the Naiyāyika and the Mīmāṃsāka) claim that in perception one apprehends real objects endowed with both individuality and generality works against the sort of foundationalism advocated by twentieth-century sense-datum theorists. This point is made quite clearly by Matilal in his own attempt to position the classical debate between the Naiyāyikas, the Mīmāṃsākas, and the Buddhists in a modern philosophical context:

There is . . . one important difference between the nature of the given according to the Buddhist and that which is current among the modern Western phenomenologists. The given, which the Buddhist would call *svalakṣaṇa*, has no structure. It is a structureless unitary whole. But a Russellian datum would probably have the structure 'x is Q' or 'x resembles y.' This is what Wilfred Sellars has called the structure of 'primordial awareness' required by all abstractionists or foundationalists.⁶²

Matilal makes this observation in the context of his discussion of Kumāriḷa's analysis of the phenomenology of perception. For Kumāriḷa, as for the Naiyāyikas, perception marks the gradual progression from a stage of indetermination to a stage where the object is clearly apprehended both as a particular and as the locus of a universal.

Rather, I think, the Buddhist epistemologist seems to come not only on the side of phenomenologists but also of philosophers like Quine, who labored in the past few decades to naturalize epistemology. To be sure, Quine's understanding of naturalism as empirical psychology differs significantly from that of Husserl, who essentially sees it as the intersubjective basis of experience, which, among other things, allows for the abstraction of the body as *Körper* from the living Body (*Lieb*). It also differs from Merleau-Ponty's conception of naturalism, confined as it is to the Gestalt psychology he critically adopts in his rejection of (reductive) behaviorism. Like Husserl's, the Buddhist epistemologist's naturalism is circumscribed to a certain conception of the body that attributes to it the marks of intentional or purposive activity. In the case of perception, this purposive activity takes the form of direct apprehension of particulars. Thus, when Dharmakīrti reacts against certain definitions of perception that attribute to it the capacity to apprehend generalities, he is essentially saying that indirect perception is not veridical. Without an awareness that lacks the determination of (perceptual) judgments, one could not claim to be perceiving at all, but rather to be constantly superimposing upon the stream of sensory experience whatever one imagines to be the case. In this latter sense, the Buddhist appears to be saying that *ordinary, untutored perception, as conceived by the realist, does not count as an epistemic warrant, and that an effective epistemology can rely neither on the testimony of common sense nor on any inferential processes thereof*. For the Buddhist, a trained perception (*abhyāsavat pratyakṣa*) is a perception that does not err, and thus one that holds the key to successful epistemic practices. While not exactly an invitation to disciplined observation, Quine's often-quoted plea for naturalism rests on the assumption that we stand a better chance of knowing how we arrive at our picture of the world if we let (empirical) psychology explore the nature and function of cognition:

But why all this creative reconstruction, all this make-believe? The stimulation of his sensory receptors is all the evidence anybody has had to go on, ultimately, in arriving at his picture of the world. Why not just see how this construction really proceeds? Why not settle for psychology? Such a surrender of the epistemological burden to psychology is a move that was disallowed in earlier times as circular reasoning. If the epistemologist's goal is validation of the grounds of empirical science, he defeats his purpose by using psychology or other empirical science in the validation. However, such scruples against circularity have little point once we have stopped dreaming of deducing science from observation.⁶³

Unlike Quine's appeal to what is essentially a third-person psychological perspective on the mechanisms that underpin perception and belief formation, the Buddhist relies on the complex introspective psychology of the Yogācāra tradition. Like Quine, the Buddhist, too, is concerned with the causal processes of belief formation.

But there is a difference in motivation between Quine's project of naturalizing epistemology—that is, making philosophy more receptive to the findings of the natural sciences and withdrawing the claim that epistemology, construed as a metatheoretical discourse, is foundational for all knowledge—and the Buddhist's pragmatic-phenomenological approach to epistemology: the Buddhist wants to understand the mechanisms and function of belief formation (or, of the invariable concomitance [*avinābhāva*] between conscious apprehension and bodily behavior), and seeks knowledge only insofar as he intends to reach a certain goal, whether a simple one such as object recognition (e.g., whether or not the variegated colors of a butterfly's wings are perceived by a single instance of perception), or a more metaphysically challenging one (e.g., the ontological status of constructed phenomena like sound).

Thus, to doubt the trustworthiness of ordinary sense experience is to call into question, on naturalist rather than skeptical grounds, the foundationalist's claim that ordinary experience is a trustworthy source of knowledge. For someone like Quine, epistemology can benefit from being placed in a psychological setting because it solves the 'enigma' of a priori reasoning. Indeed, a cursory review of some of the empirical data would suffice as proof that the embodied-cognition thesis is a more accurate working hypothesis for how we come to form beliefs and be justified in holding them. Take several examples from vision science: first, light irradiates the retina in two dimensions, yet we see the world three-dimensionally; second, color sensitivity is only available in a small central region of the visual field, yet it does not seem as though there is a difference in our experience of color saturation between the central and peripheral regions of the visual field;⁶⁴ third, there is a discrepancy between the seeming richness and presence of the visual world and the rather poor and fragmentary data processed by the visual system;⁶⁵ finally, we ordinarily see the world as complete, dynamic, and uniformly detailed, when, in fact, it is constructed out of momentary retinal images within a certain threshold of awareness.⁶⁶ These examples suggest that there is more to perception than the transparency claimed for it by the (naïve) realist. Furthermore, perceiving is not simply knowing *what* object appears as endowed with *which* specific characteristics. Rather, on the pragmatic-phenomenological model, perceiving is learning the rules of sensorimotor contingency, that is, the nonpropositional form of *knowing how*, which governs how changes in the orientation of our sensory apparatus transform the character of the perceived world.⁶⁷

For the Buddhists, whose approach to knowledge is basically phenomenological, the return to naturalism in epistemology should be regarded as a welcome move. Indeed, as Mark Siderits has noted, Indian epistemology has never displayed the sort of nonnaturalism characteristic of the Cartesian tradition: "The very idea of epistemology as *pramāṇavāda*—determining the number and nature of reliable means of belief formation—suggests a non-foundationalist and externalist project. Non-foundationalist because the project presupposes the existence of knowledge, instead of seeking to prove its very possibility. And externalist because it seeks to distinguish between veridical and non-veridical states of the subject in terms of causal factors, and not in terms of states that are necessarily accessible to the subject."⁶⁸

The Buddhist's own interest in grounding epistemology in the psychological analysis of cognition, it seems, echoes both the Husserlian phenomenological project as well as the shift of focus in much of the contemporary philosophy of mind toward working in close collaboration with the sciences of cognition. I should make clear at this point that the non-empiricist reading of Buddhist epistemology outlined above does not address the issue of the importance of Sautrāntika and Yogācāra psychologies in informing the Buddhist epistemological account of how cognition actually operates, partly because Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers seldom expand on the psychological views that underpin their theories.

Conclusion

I would like to suggest, in conclusion, that mere surface resemblances between the sense-datum theorist and various other brands of modern naïve empiricism, on the one hand, and the Buddhist epistemological project, on the other, might, indeed, suggest that the Buddhists operate from a foundationalist stance; however, this intuition is misguided. To say about an instance of perceptual awareness that it discloses some truth and, as such, provides a basis for valid reasoning is already equivalent to “placing it within the logical space of reasons,” to use Sellars' expression. From a distance, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti may well appear guilty of according perception this grounding status. When looked at more closely, however, their account of the role of perception as a sort of anchorage into the given does not appear to support a foundationalist reading.

Indeed, it should be possible to offer an antifoundationalist reading of the Buddhist epistemological project if we abandon the requirement that perceptual awareness provide a justification for basic empirical beliefs. After all, self-awareness and various types of cognitive conditioning are central to the Buddhist epistemological program. For the Buddhists, seeing (and any other type of perceptual knowing) is already conditioned by past experience and operates as a function of the enactive and intentional aspects of consciousness.⁶⁹ I do think, however, that we can move beyond the argument that memory and self-awareness are precisely the conditioning factors necessary for a perceptual event to become cognitive.

There is another angle from which the problem of the “Myth of the Given” does not quite capture the intent of the Buddhist epistemological enterprise: that of the *contents* of the perceptual event. If we take the ‘Given’ to refer to noematic content, rather than to some presumably independent unique particular, then what is given in perception is not extrinsic to it. What is given in perception is a cognitive image (*ākāra*), notwithstanding the causal process that traces the appearance of that image to some phenomenal entity. We may, thus, interpret these cognitive images neither as some kind of internal representations of external reality nor as imaginative or constructive aspects of cognition. Rather, following proponents of the embodied-cognition thesis, such as Lakoff and Johnson,⁷⁰ we may interpret them—in terms of embodiment—as image schemas or Gestalt structures of experience: cognitive and thus part of the intentional act, yet indirectly connected to the external world. Thus,

a phenomenal entity counts as a given only insofar as it causes the sensory signal to travel across the sensory pathways and emerge as a particular instance of intentional consciousness. Moreover, the manner in which impressions select and group across these sensory pathways, drawing the contour of a unique particular, depends as much on the functioning of the perceptual systems and the propensity of intentional consciousness toward grasping after aggregated objects as upon the empirical properties of the phenomenal entity itself.

At the level of pure sensations, however, only intentionality is present; determined 'selves' and 'entities' are yet to emerge from the perceptual stream. Once more, Merleau-Ponty provides a vivid account of what it might be like to be fully immersed in the perceptual experience: "If I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive. Every sensation carries within it the germ of a dream of depersonalization such as we experience . . . when we really try to live at the level of sensation."⁷¹

In his own attempt to explain the causes of perceptual illusions, Kamalaśīla claims that one conjures and grasps after things—such as a circle of fire caused by the fast rotation of a firebrand—that, in fact, do not exist: "The appearance of this mental illusion (*mānasī bhrānti*) is not due to the connection of successive visual perceptions. Then what (kind of illusion) is it? [It is an error] which originates simultaneously and at once from the sensory systems in the form of a circle, [and] as the result of specific causal conditions."⁷² For his part, Kamalaśīla uses this example to argue that in some sense all ordinary, untutored perceptions are like that—generating the illusion of aggregated objects having enduring, substantive, natures.⁷³ These untutored perceptions are, in fact, typical of what the Husserlian phenomenologist calls the 'natural attitude.' The problem lies not in perception, whose mechanisms are generally not alterable at will, but *in the awareness that attends to it*. For it is the latter that, when devoid of any conceptual content, gives perceptual experience the directness that the Buddhist claims for it. Untutored perception is determined, for it already appears laden with judgment. By contrast, direct perception is an intentional cognitive act, at least in the sense that, given the inherently intentional nature of consciousness, to perceive means to apprehend directly whatever appears in awareness without allowing the surge of conceptualization to interfere. This process is precisely why, for instance, Dharmakīrti describes the phenomenology of perception in causal terms.

The causal model of perception adopted by the Buddhists thus rests on two sets of premises: first, what is apprehended in perception is merely the effect of a causal chain reaching back to the co-presence of sense, object, and empirical consciousness; second, real objects are capable of producing real effects, even when additional circumstances cause a cognitive discrepancy between the object and its perceptual representation, as in the case of perceptual illusions. In the final analysis, the Buddhist argues that, given immediate acquaintance with our own mental states, the nonconceptual noema of a pure act of intending is truly the only warranted type of perception. The only indubitable cognitions we have, whatever the status of the

particulars they represent, are those nonconceptual, noninferential cognitions that define direct, nonmediate perception.

Whether or not we interpret phenomenology as antifoundationalist, I hope that I have suggested, at least, that something like a phenomenological attitude more aptly describes the philosophical program of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers. I have not argued that current debates about foundationalism in epistemology are not relevant as interpretive tools for the student of Buddhist philosophy; I am, however, persuaded that considerable philosophical insights can be gained from exploring the Buddhist epistemological program through the intentionally wide-angled lens of the Western phenomenological tradition.

Notes

I am grateful to Sheridan Hough for reading through this essay and suggesting many conceptual and stylistic improvements, and especially to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful advice and comments. An earlier version of this essay was read at the Pacific Division meeting of The American Philosophical Association in San Francisco, April 2007.

- 1 – Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu* I, 1: “Right knowledge precedes the attainment of all successful human action, [and] this [is the reason for] giving an exposition of it” (*samyagjñānapūrvikā sarvapuruṣārthasiddhir iti tad vyutpādyate*).
- 2 – See *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra* I.1.4.
- 3 – Varela, F., Thompson, E., and Rosch, E., *The Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 172–173. This conception of embodiment, which finds its roots in Husserl’s notion of the lived body (*Lebenswelt*), was first discussed at length in Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Can’t Do* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).
- 4 – Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, p. 171.
- 5 – *Ibid.*
- 6 – Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” in Georges Dreyfus and Sarah McClintock, eds., *The Svātantrika-Prasaṅgika Distinction: What Difference Does It Make?* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), p. 90.
- 7 – Note that Dignāga does not address the issue of the intrinsic validity (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*) of cognitions, and Dharmakīrti only frames it terms of their practical efficacy. For Devendrabuddhi, who distinguishes between *svataḥ-* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, perceptions are generally not intrinsically valid, except when related to the accomplishment of a human goal (*arthakriyāviśayaṃ pramāṇam*) (see *Pramāṇavārttika-pañjikā* D5a6–7, and translation in John Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy* [Sommerville, MA: Wisdom Publications,

2004], p. 376). Śākyabuddhi adds to the requirement above that the causes of error be absent for perception to be reliable (see *Pramāṇavārttika-ṭīkā* D72a4-b1, and translation in Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, p. 375 n. 4). Dharmottara is the first to give a more nuanced account of the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic validity in the case of perceptual cognitions: an entity's universal characteristics may be intrinsically apprehended (e.g., I see an entity with branches and leaves), but its specific characteristics (namely whether it is a Dhava [*Anogeisus latifolia*] or a Palāśa [*Butea frondosa*] tree) are extrinsically apprehended (see *Pramāṇa-viniścaya-ṭīkā* 13.1–2.). The most comprehensive treatment of the nature of cognitions is found in the *Svataḥ prāmāṇyaparīkṣā* section of the *Tattasamgrahapañjikā*, where Kamalaśīla adds “trained perception” (*abhyāsavat pratyakṣa*) to the list of valid perceptual cognitions (see especially *Tattasamgrahapañjikā ad Tattasamgraha* 2944, in Svāmī Dvārikadāsa, ed., *Tattvasamgraha of Āchārya Shāntarakṣita with the Commentary 'Pañjikā' of Shrī Kamalaśīla*, vol. 2 [Vārāṇasī: Bauddha Bhāratī Series, 1968], p. 647). For a detailed treatment of the status of intrinsic and extrinsic cognitions in the Buddhist epistemological literature see also Helmut Krasser, “On the Ascertainment of Validity in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31 (2003): 161–184.

- 8 – Cf. note 7 above. Thus, to use an example, I know I am perceiving fire when my apprehension of fire also leads to the apprehension of that entity as having the capacity to burn, radiate heat, cook meals, et cetera. For a discussion of the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic validity with regard to Devendra-buddhi and Śākyabuddhi see Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, pp. 294–297. In *Tattasamgrahapañjikā ad Tattasamgraha* 2944, however, Kamalaśīla clearly demonstrates that cognitions are only intrinsically valid in some limited cases, while in most other cases they depend on external conditions.
- 9 – W. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, eds., *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume I: The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1956), p. 1.
- 10 – Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 319.
- 11 – Dignāga treats perception (*pratyakṣa*) as an inerrant (*aviabhicārin*) cognition, an idea he adopts from the Nyāya definition of perception as found in *Nyāyasūtra* I.1.4: “Perception is a cognition generated through the contact between the object and the sensory faculty, [and] which is inexpressible, inerrant and definitive” (*indriyārthasannikarṣoṭpannaṃ jñānamavyapadeśyam avyabhicāri vyavasāyātmakaṃ pratyakṣam*).
- 12 – Note that in the *Pramāṇavārttika* Dharmakīrti follows Dignāga's definition of perception without any modifications (“Perception is [that cognition which is] devoid of conception”). His addition of ‘non-erroneous’ (*abhṛanta*) is found for

the first time in *Pramāṇaviniścaya* 252b.3: “Perception is [that cognition which is] devoid of conceptual construction and non-erroneous” (*pratyakṣa kalpanā-poḍham abhrāntam*). Dharmakīrti’s addition of ‘non-erroneous’ in fact corresponds to the Nyāya definition of perception as inerrant (*avyabhicārin*) and can also be found in Asaṅga’s use of *abhrānta* to exclude from perception erroneous cognitions such as the illusory circle of a firebrand (*alātacakramāyā*), mirages (*marīcikā*), and phantoms (*divyudāsa*): “Perception is [that cognition which] in itself [is] clear and non-erroneous. . . . ‘Non-erroneous’ is used for [the purpose of] excluding [erroneous cognitions] such as the illusory circle of a firebrand, a mirage, a phantom” (*pratyakṣam svasatprakāśābhrānto’rthaḥ / . . . abhrāntagrahaṇam alātacakramāyāmarīcikādivyudāsārthm iti* / (in Nathmal Tatia, ed., *Abhidharmasamuccaya-bhāṣyam* [Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976], p. 152).

- 13 – *Pramāṇasamuccaya*vṛtti ad *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.4: *rdas kyi rang gi mtshad nyid la ni ma yin no zhes kyang ji ltar gsungs she na, der don du mas bskyed pa’i phyir / rang don spyi yi spyod yul can / de rdas du mas bskyed par bya ba’i phyir na rang gi skye mched la sphyi’i spyod yul can zhes brjod kyi, tha dad pa la tha mi dad par rtogs pa las ni ma yin no* (text and translation, slightly adjusted for consistency, in M. Hattori, *Dignāga, On Perception: Being the Pratyakṣapariccheda of Dignāga’s Pramāṇasamuccaya from the Sanskrit Fragments and the Tibetan Versions* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968], pp. 26–27, 178).
- 14 – Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, ed. Karl Schuhmann, rev. ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), translated by Frank Kersten as *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983), vol. 1, p. 105.
- 15 – Ibid.
- 16 – Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. xi.
- 17 – “Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise,” Presidential address delivered at the Eastern Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association, December 2006 in Washington DC, p. 11. Dreyfus uses the example of master-level chess, specifically lightning chess, where players are capable of playing a game in two minutes. The suggestion is that at the speed it takes to play a game in under two minutes players must necessarily rely “entirely on perception and not at all on analysis and comparison of alternatives” (p. 8). The master chess player’s knowledge is not analytic but embodied. The main target of Dreyfus’ criticism is the conceptualism John McDowell develops in his *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). In rejecting the possibility of nonconceptual cognitive states, and in advancing an intellectualist view (best

captured by Merleau-Ponty's observation that for the intellectualist "judgment is everywhere pure sensation is not, which is to say everywhere"), McDowell, like Sellars, joins Kant by endorsing what Dreyfus calls "the Myth of the Mental" (p. 7).

18 – Ibid., p. 12.

19 – This ambiguity was first noted by Hubert Dreyfus while exploring the different interpretations of the meaning of Husserl's perceptual noema (the intentional correlate of perceptual consciousness). See "Husserl's Perceptual Noema," in H. Dreyfus, ed., *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), p. 98. The two dominant interpretations are those of Dagfin Føllesdal and Aron Gurwitsch: the first proposes a Fregean model of the noema as a concept, while the latter argues that the noema best fits the Gestalt theory description of a percept. See Føllesdal, "Husserl's Notion of Noema," in Dreyfus, *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*, pp. 73–80, and Gurwitsch, "Husserl's Theory of the Intentionality of Consciousness," in *ibid.*, pp. 59–72. For a recent review of the (continuing) debate on the meaning of Husserl's noema, see Dan Zahavi, "Husserl's Noema and the Internalism-Externalism Debate," *Inquiry* 47 (2004): 42–66.

20 – Husserl/Kersten, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 1:128.

21 – *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis: Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungs-manuskripten (1918–1926)*, ed. Margot Fleischer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 11, translated by Anthony J. Steinbock as *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), p. 43.

22 – It seems Husserl quite clearly distinguishes between the data of the inherent noetic content or *hyle* (the *qualia* of experience, e.g. redness, hardness) and the data of the noematic content (the thing perceived *as perceived*): "Corresponding in every case to the multiplicity of Data pertaining to the really inherent noetic content, there is a multiplicity of Data, demonstrable in actual pure intuition, in a correlative "noematic content." This noema, or perceptual sense (*Sinn*) is nothing but the *perceived as perceived* (Husserl/Kersten, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 1:214).

23 – A case for the epistemic relevance of nonconceptual noematic content has been made recently by Michael Shim, who argues that Husserl's noema, contrary to Føllesdal's Fregean interpretation, also admits, besides internal representational content, noemata of the perceptual sort that are nonconceptual. If indeed, as Shim suggests, Husserl allows for the noematic nonconceptual content to be perceived, then solving the problem of the veridicality and reliability of perceptual cognitions demands not simply an abandonment of the natural attitude but also an effecting of the epoché. Without the phenomenological reduction, conceptualization easily reduces the contents of perception to a

theoretically coherent system of beliefs about experience, thus forcing a conclusion that coherentists, for instance, share with Naiyāyikas: “the content of experience is conceptual.” See Michael Shim, “The Duality of Non-conceptual Content in Husserl’s Phenomenology of Perception,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 4 (2) (2005): 209–229.

- 24 – Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980), p. 104. Note that Rorty understands the doctrine of Naturally Given to encompass both the Cartesian and Behaviorist accounts of the ‘perceptually given.’
- 25 – John Drummond, “Phenomenology and the Foundationalism Debate,” *Reason Papers* 16 (Fall 1991): 45.
- 26 – Ibid., p. 49.
- 27 – Ibid.
- 28 – *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya ad Abhidharmakośa* VI, 4: *anyadharmāpohe’pi bud-dhayā tat paramārthasat / tadyatha rūpam / tatra hi paramāṇuṣe bhinne vastuni rasārthānapi ca dharmānapohya budhayā rūpasya svabhāvabuddhirbhaktyeva / evaṃ vedanādayo’pi dṛṣṭvyāḥ / etat paramārthan bhāvāt paramārthasatyam iti / yathā lokotareṇa jñānena gṛhyate tat pṛṣṭhalabdhenā vā laukikena tatha paramārthasatyam / ... pūrvācāryḥ / (Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu, ed. P. Pradhan, rev. by A. Halder [Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975], p. 334).*
- 29 – Note that for someone like Dharmakīrti the ‘phenomena’ under discussion are not simply internal noematic content, but infinitesimal particles that can, in principle, be perceptually apprehended. See *Pramāṇavārttika* III, 194. Arguably, at the (sub)atomic level of swarming infinitesimal particles the internal/external distinction no longer applies.
- 30 – Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti ad Pramāṇavārttika* III, 171cd–172: *ato viśeṣa eva / sa evārthas tasya vyāvṛttayo ‘pare / tat kāryakāraṇaṃ coktaṃ tat svalakṣaṇam iṣyate // tattyāgāptiphāḥ sarvāḥ puruṣāṇāṃ pravṛttayaḥ / yad arthakriyākāri tat eva vastv iti uktaṃ / sa ca viśeṣa eva / (text in Ram Chandra Pandeya, ed., The Pramāṇavārttikam of Ācārya Dharmakīrti: With the Commentaries Svopajñavṛtti of the Author and Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti of Manorathanandin [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989], p. 258. Cf. Dunne, Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy, p. 84 n. 49. See also Georges Dreyfus, Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997], p. 67 and p. 479 n. 35).*
- 31 – See Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti’s Philosophy*, pp. 83 ff.
- 32 – Ibid., p. 82.
- 33 – See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya ad Abhidharmakośa* I, 1cd: “[They are called] dharmas because they ‘bear’ particulars” (*svalakṣaṇasdhāraṇād dharmāḥ*).

- Cf. Collette Cox, *Disputed Dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence* (Tokyo: International Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1995), p. 12.
- 34 – *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* VI, 14cd, p. 341: *kāyaṃ svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyāṃ parīkṣate / vedanāṃ cittaṃ dharmāś ca / svabhāva evaiṣaṃ svalakṣaṇam /*.
- 35 – Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 238.
- 36 – *Ibid.*, p. 250.
- 37 – See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya ad Abhidharmakośa* II, 22ab.
- 38 – Dan Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 22.
- 39 – *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 40 – For the sake of consistency and also because consciousness and perceptual awareness are not interchangeable for the Buddhists, I translate *vijñāna* as “consciousness” and *vijñapti* as “awareness.”
- 41 – Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*, p. 26.
- 42 – Dharmakīrti distinguishes between four types of perceptual appearances (*pratyakṣābhāsa*); three of these pertain to conceptual cognitions and one to non-conceptual factors pertaining to perturbations at the basis (*āśrayopaplava*) (the basis here refers to the sensory systems). See *Pramāṇavārttika* III, 288.
- 43 – *Pramāṇaviniścaya* I, 34: *hetubhāvād ṛte na anyā grāhyāta nāma kācana. tatra buddhir yadākāra tasyās tadgrāhyam ucyate*. Cf. Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, p. 84. Whether or not Dharmakīrti retains the causal model of perception in the case of internal objects is disputable. See Georges Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, p. 336, and Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*, p. 84, for a discussion of this issue.
- 44 – *Tattvasaṃgraha* 2958: *ucyate—vastusaṃvādaḥ prāmāṇyamabhidhīyate / tasya cārthakriyābhyāsajñānādanyanna lakṣaṇam // arthakriyāvabhāsaṃ ca jñānaṃ saṃvedyate sphuṭam*.
- 45 – J. N. Mohanty, *Classical Indian Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), p. 149.
- 46 – *Ibid.*
- 47 – See T. Tillemans, *Materials for the Study of Āryadeva, Dharmapāla and Candrakīrti* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studies, 1990).
- 48 – T. Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” in Dreyfus and McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prasaṅgika Distinction*, p. 98.
- 49 – *Ibid.*
- 50 – The quote is from Kamalaśīla's *Sarvadharmaniḥsvabhāvasiddhi* (text and translation in Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” pp. 116–117 n. 13).

- 51 – See, for example, *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti ad Pramāṇavārttika* 1.35., and *Hetubindu* 26, 12–13.
- 52 – For a discussion of this issue see Georges Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, p. 69.
- 53 – See Śāntarakṣita’s *Madhyamakālamkāravṛtti*, as quoted in Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” p. 99.
- 54 – Georges Dreyfus, “Can the Fool Lead the Blind? Perception and the Given in Dharmakīrti’s Thought,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24 (3) (1996): 224.
- 55 – See *Pramāṇasamuccaya* I, 1, and *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti ad cit: mngon sum dang ni rjes su dpag, tsad ma’o mtsan nyid gnyis gzhal bya, de la rab sbyor phyir tsad ma, gzhan ni yod pa ma yin no* (text and translation, slightly altered, in Hattori, *Dignāga, on Perception*, pp. 24, 176). In this passage, I follow the suggestions of Radhika Herzberger and Vittorio van Bijlert that translating *hi* in *na hi svasāmānyalakṣaṇabhyām* as ‘for’ or ‘because’ and not as ‘only’ (as Hattori does) avoids the unwarranted consequence, untenable, I think, considering Dignāga’s doctrine of *apoha*, that there is a complete and unbridgeable gap between the perceptual and the conceptual. See Herzberger, *Bhartrhari and the Buddhists: An Essay in the Development of Fifth and Sixth Century Indian Thought* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986), p. 14, and V. van Bijlert, *Epistemology and Spiritual Authority* (Wien: Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, 1989), p. 15.
- 56 – M. Chadha, “Perceptual Cognition: A Nyāya-Kantian Approach,” *Philosophy East and West* 51 (2) (April 2001): 205. Chadha’s main argument is that the Kantian model of perception provides a satisfactory reason for why the intuition of a late Naiyāyika like Gaṅgeśa that seeing is best understood as “seeing a particular as a property-instance” should, in fact, be extended to all instances of perceptual cognition.
- 57 – See Mark Siderits, “Perceiving Particulars: A Buddhist Defense,” *Philosophy East and West* 50 (3) (July 2004): 368–372.
- 58 – Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” p. 103.
- 59 – *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.
- 60 – Self-awareness, as Tillemans rightly notes, is crucial to the Buddhist Pramāṇa theorists, but is strongly rejected by Mādhyamika philosophers such as Candrakīrti.
- 61 – See W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Introduction by Richard Rorty and a Study Guide by Robert Brandom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 121–122, as quoted in Tillemans, “Metaphysics for Mādhyamikas,” p. 120 n. 25.
- 62 – Matilal, *Perception*, p. 321.
- 63 – Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized,” reprinted in Hilary Kornblith, ed., *Natural-*

izing *Epistemology*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 74. Note that in his response to his critics, Quine had subsequently reformulated some of his earlier views by allowing epistemology to play its traditional normative functions in addressing questions of value and moral judgment (see, esp., *The Web of Belief* [New York: Random House, 1978] and *Theories and Things* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981]).

- 64 – For a discussion of the philosophical implications of current research in color constancy see Evan Thompson, *Color Vision: Study in Cognitive Science and the Philosophy of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 97–98.
- 65 – See, for example, J. K. O'Regan, Solving the “Real” Mysteries of Visual Perception: The World as an Outside Memory,” *Canadian Journal of Psychology* 46 (3) (1992): 484–485.
- 66 – See, for example, S. J. Blackmore, S. J. Brelstaff, G. Nelson, and T. Troscianko, “Is the Richness of Our Visual World an Illusion? Transsaccadic Memory for Complex Scenes,” *Perception* 24 (9) (1995): 1075–1076.
- 67 – Cf. Mark Rowlands, “Two Dogmas of Consciousness,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 9 (5–6) (2002): 172.
- 68 – Mark Siderits, “Madhyamaka on Naturalized Epistemology” (unpublished ms. for International Seminar on Concepts of Knowledge East and West, Calcutta, January 9, 1995).
- 69 – A somewhat similar view is expressed by Sara McClintock when she writes that “even though Buddhist Pramāṇa theorists understand perception . . . as a kind of direct and full-blown encounter with the real . . . there are good grounds for caution in referring to the contents of perception as the given, since perceptual awareness alone seems unable to ground or justify basic beliefs” (“The Role of the ‘Given’ in the Classification of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas,” in Dreyfus and McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prasaṅgika Distinction*, p. 129).
- 70 – See G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 284–290. More recently, Lakoff and Johnson have argued that these basic cognitive images or ‘image schemas,’ which are reflective of our “phenomenological embodiment,” are the means by which we apprehend the world nonconceptually through the body. As the means by which we orient ourselves in the environment and act out our purposeful actions, our apprehension of what is phenomenally given in any situation “depends on our embodied understanding of the situation” (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* [New York: Basic Books, 1999], pp. 36, 102).
- 71 – Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 250.

72 – *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā ad Tattvasaṃgraha* 1253–1255: *yato netam mānasī bhrāntiḥ kramavarttinī darśanāni ghaṭayantī samupajāyate, kiṃ tarhi? Sakṛdekaivendriyajā cakrākārā bhrāntiḥ sāmagriviśeṣabalādutpadyate*. The arising of a conscious cognitive event depends, according to the Abhidharma view on perception, on the presence of the object, the sensory organ, and attention. For instance, in order to cognize a form (*rūpavijñāna*, i.e., have the cognition of a form), four factors are necessary: the visual sense, the visible object, ambient light (*āloka*) (in the case of visual objects), and consciousness (*manaskāra*) (in the sense of mental activity).

73 – See *Tattvasaṃgraha* 1253–1255 and *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā ad cit.*