Authority in Early Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka

Kevin Vose

Abstract  This paper examines the role of pramāṇa in Jayānanda’s commentary to Candrākīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra. As the only extant Indian commentary on any of Candrākīrti’s works (available only in Tibetan translation), written in the twelfth century when Candrākīrti’s interpretation of Madhyamaka first became widely valued, Jayānanda’s Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā is crucial to our understanding of early Prāsaṅgika thought. In the portions of his text examined here, Jayānanda offers a pointed critique of both svatantra inferences and the broader Buddhist epistemological movement. In developing this critique, he cites at length Candrākīrti’s Prasannapadā treatment of svatantra, and so comes to comment on the locus classicus for the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction. For Jayānanda, svatantra inferences are emblematic of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti epistemological tradition, which asserts an unwarranted validity to human cognition. As such, Nāgārjuna’s philosophy admits neither svatantra inference, nor pramāṇa (as “valid cognition”) more generally. Instead, Jayānanda argues for Nāgārjuna’s “authority” (pramāṇa) as our prime means for knowing reality. Jayānanda’s account of authority offers a helpful counterbalance to the current trend of portraying Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka as a form of skepticism.

Keywords  Jayānanda · Candrākīrti · Prāsaṅgika · Pramāṇa · Authority · Skepticism

Buddhism is frequently portrayed as a “rational religion,” eminently concerned with critical investigation of reality, rather than with a faithful acceptance of central beliefs. From early Buddhist scriptures in which the Buddha himself urges his
followers not to accept the validity of his teachings out of deference to his authority, but to critically examine them as one might refine gold ore to the present Dalai Lama’s use of this trope, we have good reason for placing rationality among the central values of the tradition. Among the difficulties of evaluating Buddhism’s rationality, however, is the breadth of concepts packed into the term “reason.” Seeking the pinnacle of reasoned Buddhism, one might turn to those harbingers of rationality, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and choose to equate “reason” with “inference” (anumāna), as developed in the epistemological tradition. Or, one might note the centrality of “reasoning” (yukti) in the Madhyamaka tradition, presented in Tibet as the highest school of Buddhist philosophy: while some Mādhyaṃyamikas criticize the use of formal inference (dubbed by Candrakīrti svatantra inference), reasoning is widely endorsed.

Yet in both of these traditions, each seemingly good examples of Buddhism’s rationality, authority—often conceived of as reason’s foil—plays a significant role. Dignāga and Dharmakīrti both endorsed the Buddha’s singularly authoritative status; investigations into the role of authority in Buddhist traditions has, following hundreds of years of Tibetan scholarship on the issue, focused on the “Pramāṇasidddhi” chapter of Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika, a lengthy commentary on Dignāga’s verse of praise to the Buddha at the opening of his Pramāṇasamuccaya. Indeed, Dignāga’s claim that the Buddha is pramāṇabhūta, “one who has become valid cognition,” forms the context for Dharmakīrti’s very characterization of pramāṇa; this creates a central tension between reason and authority in the Buddhist epistemological tradition, suggesting that the Buddha’s authority may form for his followers a source of knowledge, on par with perception (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāna). In broadening the scope of scholarship on the role of authority in Buddhism, Ruegg and Silk have each pointed to important examples in Madhyamaka treatises, most notably in Candrakīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra, where Nāgārjuna is referred to as an “authoritative person” (in Tibetan translation, tshad mar gyur pa’i skyes bu, likely translating pramāṇabhūtapuruṣa).

2 For a concise discussion of the relevant passages, see Ruegg (1994, pp. 304–306). A basic tension is that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti conceive of pramāṇa as a form of consciousness, neither as a person nor as a means of knowledge, which is standard in non-Buddhist Indian accounts of pramāṇa. In standard Buddhistology, the Buddha is a person, albeit a miraculous one, and so would not fit into Dignāga’s or Dharmakīrti’s technical accounts. Considering the Buddha as a source or means of knowledge would seem to be the most straightforward solution: the Buddha’s words would be capable of generating valid cognitions in the minds of others. As will be discussed below, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti each make something like this move in considering “testimony” (āpta) to be a kind of inference. Ruegg (1994, pp. 315) suggests that Dignāga intended pramāṇabhūtā in the sense of “like a valid cognition,” in which case Dignāga’s two-fold pramāṇa would be maintained, with the Buddha merely being likened to a valid cognition rather than claimed to be a kind or source of valid cognition. As Franco (1997, pp. 16–17) shows, it seems clear that Dharmakīrti’s text gives the sense of “who has become a valid cognition,” emphasizing the Buddha’s attainment of validity, in contradistinction to non-Buddhist, brahmanical claims for the permanent authority of the Vedas. However, Ruegg (ibid) points out that some post-Dharmakīrti commentators considered –bhūta to have the sense of “like.”
3 Ruegg (1994, pp. 303–304) and Silk (2002, pp. 122–123). Silk’s study goes well beyond the epistemological and Madhyamaka traditions, examining Buddhist usage in many genres.
Ruegg has written cogently on the difficulties of translating *pramāṇa* as “authority” in the Buddhist epistemological tradition, noting that an individual becomes trustworthy in the first place due to a direct realization of the nature of reality; in contrast to the value given ‘direct’ knowledge, “authority” conveys a sense of mediacy, of relying on another for one’s knowledge.⁴ Such a reading preserves the ideals of Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s epistemologies, in which direct perception is the preeminent form of knowledge, while the words of others are accorded second-class validity, at best. Mādhyamika authors similarly value Nāgārjuna’s direct cognizance of emptiness when calling him *pramāṇa*: after referring to “the treatise composed by the authoritative person,” Candrākīrti states “Ārya Nāgārjuna . . . realized the profound nature of phenomena,”⁵ while Jayānanda, commenting on this passage, explains “Since Ācārya Nāgārjuna directly saw reality, we can know the intention of scripture by way of the treatise he composed.”⁶ We might then conclude that for Candrākīrti and Jayānanda, as for Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, “authority” is derivative, that the quality that makes Nāgārjuna authoritative—firsthand knowledge of reality—must be regarded as primary.⁷

Suspicion concerning the harmony between these two traditions’ approaches to reason and authority is raised, though, when we consider the tensions between Candrākīrti’s and Dignāga’s philosophical projects. It has long been recognized that Candrākīrti’s *Prasannapadā* comments on the opening stanza of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, Nāgārjuna’s famous denial of production from the four alternatives (*catuskoti*), criticized Bhāviveka’s Mādhyamaka adaptation of Dignāga’s inference.⁸ Debate continues as to just what it was about inference that Candrākīrti found objectionable, a debate that turns on identifying what Candrākīrti meant by *svatantara-anumāna*.⁹ Did Candrākīrti deny a kind of inference that ascribes too strong a status to the state of affairs that it attempts to prove or one that places undue credence in the logical process itself? What form of inference did he accept (what kind of *anumāna* is not *svatantara*)?

---


⁵ La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamaka-vatāra*, 75.14–75.20: bstan bcos tshad mar gyur pa’i skyes bus byas shing lung phyin ci ma log par chad pa mthong bo las lung gi dgongs pa nges pas ni [/VI.3:] ji ltar de yis chos zab chos rtogs pa // lung dang gzhain yang rigs pas yin pas na // de ltar ’phags pa klu sgrub gzhung lug las // ji ltar gnas pa’i lugs bzhiin brjod par bya /.

⁶ Jayānanda, *Madhyamakāvatāratikā*, 112b.2: slob don klu sgrub zhaps kyi de kho na nyid dngos su gzig pa yin pas des mzdaz pa’i bstan bcos kyi sgo nas lung gi dgongs pa shes pa yin no.

⁷ Ruegg (1994, pp. 306–307) and Silk (2002, pp. 127–128) each examine Sthiramati’s comment that Nāgārjuna has been made into a *pramāṇa* (perhaps “authorized”) by the Buddha, owing to the Buddha’s “prophecies” concerning Nāgārjuna (discussed below). Sthiramati’s comment perhaps served as a precedent for Candrākīrti. Buescher (2007, vii–viii, n. 2) gives Sthiramati’s rough dates as 510–570, affirming Frauwallner’s notion that he was “an elder contemporary of Dharmapāla”; Candrākīrti refers to Dharmapāla at *Madhyamaka-vatāra*, 407.15.

⁸ La Vallée Poussin, *Prasannapadā*, 12.8–39.4 discusses production from the four alternatives, with “production from self” (*svata utpannā*, as Mādhyamikas called the Sāmkhya doctrine of *satkāryavādā*) treated at 13.4–36.2 and containing most of Candrākīrti’s critique of Bhāviveka’s use of inference. Ruegg (2002, pp. 17–76) translates the section. The classic study of the *catuskoti* is Ruegg (1977).

Becoming increasingly clear are Candrakīrti’s objections to Dignāga’s broader valid cognition enterprise. After discussing Nāgārjuna’s four alternatives, the Prasannapadā engages in a lengthy discussion of dependent arising, citing a range of sūtras, then turns to a critique of the very possibility of valid cognition, disparaging accounts of pramāṇa and perception that closely mirror Dignāga’s own.10 Candrakīrti’s evaluation of valid cognition concludes with an avowal of a fourfold pramāṇa—which adds “scripture” (āgama) and “analogy” (upamāna) to perception and inference—as means of “knowing things of the world.”11 Of course, propounding four pramāṇas is known primarily from non-Buddhist sources, most prominently, the Nyāyasūtra; however, Franco’s work on the Spitzer manuscript, which he dates to the third century, suggests that some Buddhists—likely of the Sarvāstivāda perspective—also accepted four pramāṇas.12 As is well known, Nāgārjuna critiqued a fourfold conception of pramāṇa at length in his Vigrahavyāvartanī, although his comments would seem to hold equally well against a twofold conception.13 Candrakīrti’s critique of Dignāga’s pramāṇa, coupled with his ‘worldly’ acceptance of a fourfold presentation, raise a number of questions: Should we read this as a return to an earlier Buddhist notion of fourfold pramāṇa,

10 La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 39.6–55.10 treats dependent arising (pratītyasamutpāda), supplying ample sūtra quotations and a discussion of the distinction between sūtras of provisional meaning (neyārtha) and definitive meaning (nītārtha). Candrakīrti’s broad critique of pramāṇa at Prasannapadā, 55.11–73.13 is the focus of Siderits (1981) and Arnold (2005a: chapters six and seven) and has been translated in Ruegg (2002, pp. 17–135) (which translates Prasannapadā 12.8–75.13, the entirety of Candrakīrti’s remarks on Mūlamadhyamakakārikā I.1) and Arnold (2005b). This work makes it abundantly clear that Candrakīrti views Dignāga’s epistemology as his target in this section of the Prasannapadā, although the point remains that he does not refer to Dignāga by name (having mentioned him by name at Madhyamakāvatāra 407.14), after repeatedly referring to Bhāviveka by name earlier in his comments.

11 La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 75.9: tad evam pramāṇacatusṭayāḥ lokasyārthādhihīgamā vyavasthāpyate //.

12 Franco (2003, pp. 25) notes that the manuscript contains an argument (possibly extending ten folios) for past and future existence, leading him to conclude that we have a telltale sign of the Sarvāstivāda perspective. Franco (2010, especially pp. 126–127) details the manuscript’s discussion of inference and analogy (aupamya in this text) and suggests that presentations of perception and scripture (Franco: “verbal testimony”) bookended this discussion. Franco (p. 126, n. 12) acknowledges that a discussion of scripture might not have been included and (p. 127) that analogy might be presented by this text as a kind of inference, although he thinks (p. 135) the latter possibility to have been an opponent’s position. I thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper who suggested the relevance of Franco’s work on the Spitzer manuscript to the present investigation.

13 See, most recently, Westerhoff (2010). Franco (2004) shows that Nāgārjuna’s critique—formed around the question of how pramāṇas themselves are established—was not original to him, but was found in the Spitzer manuscript and so was perhaps standard in Abhidharma (and other) presentations of pramāṇa. Unfortunately, we do not have the Spitzer manuscript’s answer to the dilemma; Franco (2004, pp. 204–205) shows that the Spitzer points out the infinite regress ensuing if one pramāṇa is said to establish another and the circularity ensuing if the pramāṇas are thought to mutually establish, and then considers the possibility of self-establishment. There the relevant fragment ends, and so we are unable to judge whether the manuscript adopts a position like Nāgārjuna’s, that there is, in fact, no way to establish the pramāṇas.
having rejected Dignāga’s account? Does Candrakīrti adopt a Nyāya presentation of pramāṇa? Does the qualification “worldly knowledge,” along with Nāgārjuna’s critique, denigrate the significance of all four pramāṇas? Finally, how would a Buddhist philosopher argue for “scripture” as a source of knowledge without admitting the validity of Brahminical or Jaina scriptures?

Less examined than the first chapter of the Prasannapadā is Candrakīrti’s survey of the same ground in his Madhyamakāvatāra and autocommentary, in which he cites and restates Nāgārjuna’s famous opening stanza and provides a brief discussion of argumentative method. The Madhyamakāvatāra offers a comparatively straightforward examination, one lacking the nuanced discussions of the prasaṅga and svatantra methods found in the Prasannapadā, which must be seen as representing Candrakīrti’s more mature and developed presentation. However, recognizing that the Madhyamakāvatāra’s analysis of argumentation is bookended by deliberations on “authority” in stanzas VI.2–3 and VI.30, the less-developed account might improve our understanding of Candrakīrti’s stance on pramāṇa and, more generally, the role of authority in his well-reasoned Buddhist tradition.

An additional benefit of including the Madhyamakāvatāra in our deliberations is recourse to Jayānanda’s lengthy twelfth-century commentary. Jayānanda’s commentary, as van der Kuijp pointed out, was composed at a great distance from his native Kashmir, in the Tangut kingdom, very likely after his sojourn in Central Tibet during the middle of the twelfth century. Outside of the anonymous eighteen-folio Lakṣaṇaṭīka, brief comments on portions of four of Candrakīrti’s works that has recently resurfaced, Jayānanda’s is the only Indian commentary on any of Candrakīrti’s works. Given the centuries between Candrakīrti and Jayānanda, we cannot regard the commentary as presenting Candrakīrti’s “true thought.” However, given Jayānanda’s instrumental role in reviving Candrakīrti’s views after centuries of neglect and in propagating these views in Tibet, where they were

---

14 Judging from the mythological examples used in the Spitzer manuscript, none of which stems from particularly Buddhist myth, Franco (2010, p. 130) deems the fourfold account of pramāṇa to be borrowed “from a Brahminical source.” By Candrakīrti’s time, it is fair to say that a technical Nyāya presentation had developed that could be distinguished from the earlier Buddhist borrowing.

15 Candrakīrti quotes Matyamadhyamakakārikā I.1 in the preamble to Madhyamakāvatāra VI.8 (La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 81.7–8), gives his own half-stanza restatement of it in Madhyamakāvatāra VI.8ab (La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 82.1–2), and then discusses argumentative technique in his examination of self-production in Madhyamakāvatāra VI.8cd–VI.13 (La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 82.3–87.14).

16 The relative chronology of composition is clear, as the Prasannapadā repeatedly cites the Madhyamakāvatāra, including (relevant to this discussion) stanza VI.8cd at La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 13.7–13.8.


18 See van der Kuijp (1993); for a tentative chronology of Jayānanda’s travels, see Vose (2009, pp. 53–55).

19 Concerning the composition of the Lakṣaṇaṭīka, Yonezawa (2001, p. 27) writes: “it is very likely that the Tibetan scribe, called Dharmakīrti or snur/gnur Dharma grags, wrote down the texts for the sake of his understanding under the supervision of Abhayākara Gupta.” Abhayākara Gupta and sNur Dḥḷhar ma grags produced the Tibetan translation of Nāgārjuna’s Śūnyatāsaptati, along with Candrakīrti’s commentary on it.
quickly formed into “Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka,” Jayānanda’s text offers us rare insight into how one of Candrākīrti’s very few Indian supporters understood and presented his philosophy at the very time it gained widespread currency.  

Further, when commenting on Candrākīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra discussion of argumentative technique, Jayānanda quotes much of the relevant passages from the Prasannapadā. Jayānanda’s quotations differ markedly from Pa tshab nyi ma grags’s Tibetan translation of the Prasannapadā found in the canonical collections and so suggests at minimum that Jayānanda’s transmission of Candrākīrti’s works in Tibet and among the Tangut represents a textual strand separate from that propagated by Pa tshab. The colophon to Pa tshab’s translation of the Prasannapadā notes that he utilized two different Sanskrit manuscripts of the text, completing his initial translation with Mahāsumati on the basis of a Kashmiri manuscript, while later revising his translation in Lhasa’s Ramoche Temple with Kanakavarma with recourse to a manuscript from “eastern Aparānta” (nyi ’og shar phyogs). It could well be that Jayānanda worked with a Prasannapadā manuscript distinct from either of Pa tshab’s exemplars when he incorporated these passages into his massive commentary on the Madhyamakāvatāra in Tangut lands. At the very least, the Tibetan translation of his work, which he and his Tibetan collaborator Kun dga’ grags provided, evinces notions disparate from Pa tshab’s on how particular Sanskrit locutions should be rendered in Tibetan. Thus, Jayānanda’s quotations offer insights into the textual history of this section of the Prasannapadā.

Jayānanda’s own discussion parallels Prasannapadā I.1, as he offers a substantial discussion of svatantra inference as compared to prasaṅga reasoning when commenting on Madhyamakāvatāra VI.8, both incorporating Candrākīrti’s fully developed treatment in the Prasannapadā and discussing several of the issues he does not quote directly, before turning to a broader consideration of valid cognition in his comments on stanza VI.13 that bears resemblance to the Prasannapadā critique of Dignāga’s pramāṇa theory. These follow an account of Nāgārjuna’s authority that takes Madhyamakāvatāra VI.3 as its departure but ranges far beyond Candrākīrti’s deliberations. Throughout, Jayānanda draws a broad correlation between the Mādhyamika’s use of prasaṅgas (and disavowal of svatantras) and a thoroughgoing rejection of the pramāṇa enterprise as developed by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

---

20 Jayānanda’s role in the eleventh and twelfth century resurgence of Candrākīrti and the formation of Prāsaṅgika are treated in Vose (2009).

21 In his comments to Madhyamakāvatāra VI.9a, Jayānanda quotes two passages from the Prasannapadā, corresponding to La Vallée Poussin’s edition, 13.4–25.5 and 34.13–36.2 (and to the Tibetan translation, sde dge edition, 5a.6–8a.7 and 11b.1–6). These quotes are found in Jayānanda’s text, sde dge edition, 120b.7–123a.7 and 123a.7–123b.5. These two passages correspond closely to points i and iv in Yotsuya’s (1999, xii) structuring of “Candrākīrti’s wider critique of svatantra-reasoning”: “i. Candrākīrti justifies Buddhapaṇīta’s position” and “iv. The faults which Candrākīrti finds in Bhāvaviveka’s inference do not apply to his own inferential statement.”

22 For the identification of nyi ’og shar phyogs as “eastern Aparānta,” see Ruegg (2000, p. 45, n. 90).

23 Throughout Jayānanda’s Madhyamakāvatārakārikā we can find abundant evidence that his transmission of the Madhyamakāvatāra is distinct from Pa tshab’s transmission of this text, as well.

24 Jayānanda and Kun dga’ grags do not seem to be guilty of paraphrasing the Prasannapadā passages, as they provide very detailed renderings.

25 La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra VI.8cd–13 treat the denial of “production from self.”
In turn, he reads Candrakīrti as embodying a return to a different kind of pramāṇa: rather than seeking valid means of cognition, Jayānanda advocates the authority of Nāgārjuna as the sole means by which one can come to understand emptiness. Despite disavowing formal epistemology, Jayānanda’s argument for Nāgārjuna’s authority borrows heavily from Dharmakīrti’s arguments (and those of his commentators) for the Buddha’s authoritative status. Jayānanda’s prasaṅga method, then, forges a Madhyamaka that dismisses some of the central features of the Dharmakīrtian tradition and recasts those that support a traditionalist return to a founder’s mandate. This version of Candrakīrti—hostile to Buddhist epistemology, promoting authority in its stead—served as a central feature of the early Prāsaṅgika movement.26

Svatantra v. Prasaṅga

The bulk of Jayananda’s quotation of the Prasannapada concerns the distinctions Candrakīrti draws between Bhāviveka’s faulty use of inference, which Candrakīrti terms svatantra, and Buddhapālita’s (and Nāgārjuna’s) use of prasaṅgas and an unproblematic kind of inference. Candrakīrti argues that Buddhapālita’s prasaṅga statement points out the self-contradiction implicit in the Śāṃkhya doctrine of ‘production from self,’ which, he claims, ought to obviate any need for svatantra inference: an inference would not offer any additional argumentative purchase against a recalcitrant opponent than would a prasaṅga.27

Rather than accept svatantra inference and prasaṅga reasoning as equal means of argumentation, Candrakīrti attacks Bhāviveka’s use of svatantra, chiding, “It is not reasonable for Mādhyamikas themselves to compose svatantra inferences due to not asserting other positions.”28 The “other positions” alludes to the context of this argument, Nāgārjuna’s denial of production from the four alternatives (catuskoti); as Candrakīrti’s discussion of argumentative technique (and Bhāviveka’s before him) revolves around Buddhapālita’s prasaṅga against the first alternative, ‘production from self,’ we must understand “other positions” as the other three alternatives, all of which Nāgārjuna rejected. Of course, svatantra means more than asserting one of the four alternatives: Candrakīrti broadly associates svatantra inference with inference supporting any thesis, stating that Bhāviveka’s argument against ‘production from self,’ “the inner sense spheres are not produced from self,” constitutes a svatantra thesis.29 This suggests that what Candrakīrti disavows is an inference attempting to establish a thesis one holds, even if it is a ‘negative’ thesis—the denial of a state of affairs—rather than a ‘positive’ thesis that, say, ‘things are produced from other.’

26 Rather than considering Prāsaṅgika to begin with Candrakīrti, I trace its inception to the first widespread acclaim given to Candrakīrti’s major works, this in eleventh- and twelfth-century India and Tibet; see Vose (2009: chapter one). Jayānanda, then, is among the earliest Prāsaṅgikas.


28 La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapada, 16.2: na ca mādhyamikasya svatantram anumānaṁ kartum yuktam pakṣāntaraṁbhūpyaṁgaṁbhāvāṁ. MacDonald (2003, p. 154) reads the same.

29 La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapada, 16.11–16.12: yadda caivaṁ svaṁtṛnānumānaṁbhūpyaṁ mādhyamikasya tadā kuto na adhyātmikāṁ āyatanāṁ svatā utpānṇāṁ svaṁtṛpratijñā. MacDonald 2003: 159 reads the same.
Emphasizing this reading of svatantrya, in place of Candrakīrti’s “svatantrya anumāna” in this passage, Jayānanda’s quotation reads, “inferences that are established for oneself” (“svatantrya-siddha-anumāna”), making it clear that, at the very least, Jayānanda understood a sva[tantra inference as one supporting a thesis held by oneself.30 Candrakīrti’s discussion of the problems Bhāviveka encounters by asserting a negative thesis focus on the difficulties of providing a convincing argument to Sāmkhya; Bhāviveka’s inference would only occasion a Sāmkhya rebuttal.31 Asserting or not asserting one’s own thesis proves to be the central distinction between argumentative forms Candrakīrti rejects and those that he accepts for Mādhyamika use.

Having supported Buddhāpālita’s prasānga statement and pointed out some difficulties in Bhāviveka’s inference, Candrakīrti explains that if one insists upon an inference (and Bhāviveka did), Buddhāpālita’s statements can be understood as a kind of inference, as they contain a probandum, reason, and example accepted by the opponent.32 While in this passage Candrakīrti stops short of calling Buddhāpālita’s statement “an inference,” later in his discussion (in a passage not quoted by Jayānanda) he endorses the practice of “refutation by way of an inference just accepted by the opponent; only this is indicated by our inferences.”33 An ‘opponent-accepted’ inference functions much like a prasānga, which similarly lacks any thesis of one’s own or even the acceptance of a counter-thesis adduced by way of the “reversal of the consequence” (prasāngaviparīta).34 Since a prasānga points out unacceptable outflows of an opponent’s position, utilizing only the commitments of the opponent, “stating a prasānga results in merely refuting another’s thesis; thus, the meaning [derived from] reversing the prasānga does not apply [to the Mādhyamika].”35 Both prasāngas and inferences adduce and exemplify logical entailments; these practices do not become problematic (in Candrakīrti’s opinion) as long as the terms forming the entailment consist of the commitments of the Mādhyamika’s opponent (in this case, the Sāmkhya). An argument utilizing the other’s commitments would stand in contradistinction to the objectionable kind of

[30] Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvīratārika, 121b.3: rang gi rgyud kyis grub pa’i rjes su dpag pa, in place of Pa tshab’s (6a.4) rang gi rgyud kyi rjes su dpag pa for the Sanskrit (16.11) svatantrya[anumāna]. It is possible that Jayānanda introduces his own gloss into the compound, rather than offering a direct translation of the Sanskrit. However, if it is a gloss, it would be unique in this lengthy quotation, which otherwise seeks to represent Candrakīrti’s text quite faithfully.

[31] La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 16.11–18.4; translated in Ruegg (2002, pp. 29–30).


[33] La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 34.10–34.11: svaprasiddhena evaṇumānena virudhyata iti / etवan mātram asmad anumānair udbhāvyata iti. The context dictates that svapra- in svaprasiddhena refers to the opponent; to avoid confusion, my translation supplies “by the opponent” rather than using the more literal “by oneself.” Just prior to this passage, Candrakīrti introduces Mūlamadhyamakakārikā III.2 by stating that the opponent’s position is “invalidated by inference just acknowledged by himself”; La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 34.6–34.7: tatrasiddhena evāṇumānena nirākriyate/.

[34] This is the thrust of La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 23.3–24.6; translated in Ruegg (2002, pp. 38–40).

[35] This statement continues with Candrakīrti’s assessment that “Just so, for the most part the Master [Nāgārjuna] refuted others’ positions by stating consequences”; La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 24.5–24.7: para[pratijñapratisedhahṛtaphalalatvā prasāngapādanasya nāsti prasāngaviparītārthāpattih / tathā cācāryo bhūyasā prasān[agapattimukhena[iva parapakṣaṃ nirākarotiṣma/.

 Springer
inference—svatantra inference—in which one’s argument would express a thesis, reason, and example accepted in “one’s own (svai) [mental] continuum (tantra).”

In the final passage that Jayānanda quotes from the Prasannapadā, Candrakīrti would have it that invalidating non-Madhyamaka positions by way of those positions’ own commitments mirrors “worldly” practice. Referring to a kind of legal proceeding, he notes that one party will not accept victory or defeat based on the opponent’s words but will accept a verdict reached through one’s own words; alternatively, a ruling from a judge held as authoritative (prāmāṇika) by both parties can determine the case.36 We have seen that Candrakīrti denies the possibility of an inference utilizing a thesis that could be established for both parties to a debate and endorses logical forms that take their terms from the opponent’s commitments. Here, Candrakīrti further contrasts inference—the terms of which can only be established for one side—and authority, which can be held in common.37 In making this claim, he refers to and rejects one of Dignāga’s criteria for a valid proof statement, that it “express what is certain for both.”38 Candrakīrti’s rejection of Dignāga’s criterion suggests that “svatantra inference” is shorthand for the kind of inference delineated by Dignāga. Candrakīrti contrasts Dignāga’s form of inference with the “worldly” procedure of utilizing commonly held authority (scriptures) or scriptures and positions held by the non-Mādhyamika. Intriguingly, Jayānanda ends his quotation with Candrakīrti’s declaration that Buddhas, too, adopt this worldly procedure, assisting others by using logic established for those they are assisting. We can deduce that for Buddhas, as for Mādhyamikas, no position is established, no thesis is held.

Turning to Jayānanda’s distinction between svatantra inference and prasaṅga reasoning, we see his own set of concerns, which—while he surely sees himself as in concert with Candrakīrti’s own thinking—move the discussion beyond Candrakīrti’s deliberations. Jayānanda helpfully prefaces his quotations from the Prasannapadā with a discussion of argumentative technique, first defending his use of prasaṅga reasoning then showing the problems with svatantra inference. He succinctly defines prasaṅga as “that which points out what to the proponent is unacceptable by way of what that proponent asserts.”39 Having noted that Candrakīrti’s arguments take the form of prasaṅga, Jayānanda distinguishes prasaṅga from svatantra reasoning by comparing each to the standards of valid cognition widely accepted by Buddhists of his day. He considers the objection that for a prasaṅga to have any utility, it must be supported by valid cognition:

One might say: “If a prasaṅga is stated as a reason, it will either be established by valid cognition (tshad mas grub pa) or not established. In the first

36 La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 34.13–35.3; translated in Ruegg (2002, pp. 66–67).
37 In debate, the Mādhyamika attempts to convince the opponent through prasaṅga reasoning or inference accepted by the opponent, not by the Mādhyamika. Then, in “inference for one’s own sake” (svārthānumāna), Candrakīrti (La Vallée Poussin, Prasannapadā, 35.9) states that what is established for oneself is germane, not what is established for both parties.
38 In Dignāga’s Pramāṇasamuccaya as cited in Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika (Svārthānumāna chapter), we read (Gnoli 1960, 153.19) ubhayaviniścitavāt.
39 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratīkā, 120a.5: thal ’gyur gyi mtshan nyid ni gzhan gyis khas blangs pa ’i sgo nas gzhan la mi ’dod pa ston pa gang yin pa ste / Jayānanda gives this definition after noting that Madhyamakāvatāra VI.19 is a prasaṅga.
case, since it is established for both [debaters] how can you say that [only] the proponent asserts it? In the second case [if it is not established by valid cognition], since it is not appropriate for the proponent to assert, how can you say that the proponent asserts it?’”

This hypothetical challenge assumes the necessity of valid cognition: either a prasaṅga operates as valid cognition or it is not validly established and so the position that it expresses is not suitable for anyone to hold. Further, the challenger here claims that a validly established prasaṅga will function as an inference; if it is validly established, it will fulfill Dignāga’s dictum that an inference be established for both parties to a debate. This would run counter to Candrakīrti’s injunctions that a Mādhyamika disprove a proponent’s position solely on the ground of that position and his claim that common establishment is impossible when a Mādhyamika debates a non-Mādhyamika.

Jayānanda’s response makes clear instead that prasaṅgas are utilized because of the impossibility of common establishment and, perhaps taking the matter a step further than Candrakīrti, as a rejection of the valid cognition enterprise. He writes:

That whatever is established by valid cognition is established for both [debaters] is not known by us. When the proponent states a proof, although the stated reason may be established by valid cognition for oneself, how is it known if it is established by valid cognition for the other [the opponent]? For the particulars of another’s mind are not referents of direct perception or inference. And how is it known if [the reason] is established by valid cognition even for oneself? For it could be deceptive due to being held for a long time by mistaken reasoning. Therefore, proponent and opponent assert the nature of things through the force of what they assert to be valid cognition. Thus, it is reasonable that the proponent’s position is debunked by way of what the proponent asserts.41

Jayānanda’s rejection of common establishment points out that anyone stating a reason can never know if that reason will be established for the debating opponent. This complaint that we cannot know the workings of another’s mind would not seem to hold much purchase against those committed to formal inference. Of course we cannot know for certain how a stated reason will be received; if the debating opponent rejects the validity of the reason, establishing that reason would be the next logical step. However, Jayānanda has something more in mind: he claims here that one can never know if one’s own reason is validly established. Certainly,

40 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratkā, 120a.6–7: ‘ga’ zhiṅ na re gal te thal ’gyur gtan tshigs su ’dod na tshad mas grub pa yin nam / ’on te ma grub pa yin / de la gal te phyogs dang po ltar na de’i tshe gnyis ka la grub pa yin pas gzhan gyis khas blangs pa zhes ci ltar brjod / phyogs gnyis pa ltar gzhan gyis khas len par mi ’os pa yin pas gzhan gyis khas blangs pa zhes ji ltar brjod ce na / / . This passage and the following, giving Jayānanda’s answer to this hypothetical objection, were translated in Ruegg (2000, p. 157).

41 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratkā, 120a.7–120b.2: tshad mas grub pa gang yin pa de gnyis ka la grub pa yin no zhes pa de nyid kho bos mi shes te / ’di ltar rgol bas sgrab byed bkod pa’i dus na gtan tshigs ’god pa de la tshad mas grub pa yin grang / gzhan la tshad mas grub par des ci ltar shes te / gzhan gyi sems kyi khyad par mngon sum dang / rjes su dpag pa’i yul ma yin pa’i phyir ro / / rang nyid la yang tshad mas grub par ci ltar shes te / ’khrul pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis dus ring po nas bzang ba’i phyir slu ba ’drid pas so / / de phyir rgol ba dang / phyir rgol ba dag gis tshad ma nyid du khas blangs pa’i stobs kyis dngos po rnam la kyang bzhin khas len pa yin no /.
Mādhyamikas dispute the validity of the reasons adduced by all other philosophical schools for the positions they hold. The fact that members of those competing schools surely believe in the validity of their own positions and reasons (despite their falsehood, according to Madhyamaka) may be what Jayānanda here insinuates. But can one trust Madhyamaka reasoning? Jayānanda’s comment suggests that the standards of validity set forth in the epistemological tradition are simply too high to be met. He intends—as will become clear below—to reject the possibility of valid cognition in the world, even for Mādhyamikas; the only validity he will accept is the rarified perspective of the ārya.

In the absence of certainty, debaters simply assert that their respective, competing positions are validly established: one’s own logic supports one’s own position. Given both the commitments each debater will have and our inability to know the workings of the opponent’s mind, prasaṅga reasoning becomes the only recourse; one can form convincing arguments only by utilizing what the opponent states.

Turning to the features that distinguish prasaṅga reasoning from svatantra inference, Jayānanda writes,

Furthermore, as for the position of svatantra reasons (rang rgyud kyi gtan tshigs), if the entailment between the reason and the probandum is established by valid cognition, then there would be a svatantra proof (rang rgyud sgrub byed). However, no entailment is established, the valid cognition that establishes the entailment being direct perception or inference. The entailment is not established by direct perception: one realizes [the entailment] between fire and smoke in the kitchen by direct perception and non-observation (anupalabdhi, mi dmigs pa)—when the one is present, the other arises and when the one is absent, the other does not arise; however, this is not the case in all places. [The entailment] is not [established] by inference either because its sphere is limited. Inference’s sphere is not all things because only when the probandum and its related reason exist is the consciousness of impermanence and so forth produced, not in all places and times. Therefore, the world establishes entailments by way of mere assertions, not by valid cognition. Thus, how can you say that it is not reasonable to debunk the proponent’s position with prasaṅga reasons (thal ’gyur gyi gtan tshigs)?”42

42 Jayānanda, Madhyamakaṭvāratāṭka. 120b.3–6: gẑan yang rang rgyud kyi gtan tshigs kyi phyogs la gal te gtan tshigs dang / bsgrub par bya ba daq la tshad mas khyab pa grub na de’i tshe rang rgyud sgrub byed du ’gyur ba yin la / ’on khyang khyab pa ma grub ste / ’di ltar khyab pa sgrub par byed pa’i tshad ma ni mngon sum mam rjes sa dpag pa yin no / de la re ’zhig mngon sum gyis khyab pa mi ’grub ste / ’di ltar tshang bang du mngon sum dang mi dmigs pa dag gis me dang da ba dag la / ’di yod na ’di ’byung la / ’di med na ’di mi ’byung ba rtogs kyi / yul thams cad la yod pa ni ma yin no / rjes su dpag pas kyang ma yin te / de yang yul nges pa can yin pas so /’di ltar rjes su dpag pa’i yul ni thams cad ma yin te / gang gi phyir gang na bsgrub par bya ba dang ’brel ba’i [sde dge edition: ’grel pa’i] rtags yod pa de kho na mi rtag pa la sogs pa shes pa skye bar ’gyur ba yin gyi / yul dang dus thams cad ma yin no / des na ’jig rten pas khas blangs pa tsam gyi sgo nas khyab pa grub pa yin gyi tshad mas ni ma yin pas thal ’gyur gyi gtan tshigs kyis gẑan gyi phyogs sun ’byin pa ci ltar mi rigs she’o /. This passage is translated in Ruegg, Three Studies, pp. 158–159. Ruegg interprets the passage in a different light, reading the sentence translated here, “However, no entailment is established, …” as “However, [in a prasaṅga where no svatantra element is adduced,] no vyāpī is established [by a pramāṇa belonging to both parties].…” I understand Jayānanda at this point to analyze the claims of a svatantra inference, showing that it cannot meet the stringent requirements of validity, rather than to describe the structure of a prasaṅga.
The crucial issue in evaluating svatantra inference is the entailment between the reason and probandum. While a prasaṅga embodies a logical entailment, the distinction here is how the entailment is reached. As he did with prasaṅga reasoning, Jayānanda considers the possibility that svatantra inference could be supported by valid cognition, serially considering perception and inference. Perception fails to establish a logical entailment because one observes a state of affairs (or fails to perceive a state of affairs, in the case of anupalabdhi) in one place, not “in all places.” One’s senses are limited. One could well ask why this observation of the co-presence of smoke and fire, albeit limited to the kitchen, cannot be utilized in other settings. Jayānanda would seem to deny the universal applicability of any one perception; consistent with his previous arguments, we might read him here as saying that we can never be certain that two elements perceived as co-present in one setting will always be found together in every setting.

Inference, likewise, cannot establish a valid entailment because inferences, like all else, arise dependently. A particular inference arises from the presence of a probandum and a supporting reason, yielding knowledge of particular circumstances. The scope of inference is limited by the factors from which it arises (it does not arise “in all places and times”) and, like perception, produces a limited knowledge and not knowledge of “all things.” These limitations rule out, in Jayānanda’s mind, inference as a tool for establishing universally valid entailments. His analysis of prasaṅga reasoning has already pointed out that claims and the validity of reasons adduced in support of those claims are just assertions, lacking certitude. To this, his dismissal of svatantra inference adds that the logical entailment between a reason and the claim that it supports itself is “mere assertion.” The only recourse is to operate in terms of assertion: one states prasaṅga s that utilize the proponent’s assertions in order to draw from those assertions conclusions that the proponent cannot accept.

Svatantra inference must be rejected, then, due to the impossibility of establishing entailments with valid cognition. Prasaṅga reasoning works because it operates on the level of assertion: neither the common establishment of reason and subject nor the valid logical entailment between reason and probandum is required. Having considered both prasaṅga and svatantra against the foil of valid cognition—having shown prasaṅga to operate without the procedures of valid cognition and svatantra to be futile because it is based upon an unachievable validity—Jayānanda’s analysis clearly sanctions the use of prasaṅga reasoning because of the impossibility of valid cognition. Prasaṅga does not oppose just one kind of

---

43 Arnold’s (2005a, chapter six) reading of Candrakīrti as critiquing any argument that sets out to prove emptiness/dependent arising on the grounds that such an argument is merely an example of dependent arising offers another possibility for how we interpret Jayānanda’s critique of inference. In this case, the fairly standard translation, “autonomous inference” would make sense for svatantra-anumāṇa, as Jayānanda would be claiming that those who use svatantra inference conceive of it as acting “autonomously,” rather than arising dependently.

44 By stating that inference’s “sphere is limited” (yul nges pa can), Jayānanda perhaps offers a play on a central notion of the pramāṇa tradition, that valid cognition produces “certainty” (niścita, nges pa). We will examine his rejection of “certainty” in detail below.
inference while leaving the bulk of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti epistemological tradition intact; rather, prasaṅga rejects the entirety of the epistemological enterprise.

**On Valid Cognition**

Jayānanda’s comments on the related stanzas of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*’s arguments against ‘production from self’ spell out a denial of the *pramāṇa* project altogether, a denial that travels ground similar to the latter portion of Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā* comments on the opening stanza of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*. Following his remarks on *Madhyamakāvatāra* VI.13, Jayānanda begins an excursus on valid cognition that briefly critiques the fourfold model of *pramāṇa* found in Nyāya (and certain early Buddhist) sources before considering the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti twofold model in some detail. Drawing on Nāgārjuna’s *Vigrahavyāvartanī* arguments, Jayānanda challenges the notion that “valid cognitions (*pramāṇa*) establish objects of cognition (*prameya*),” asking which of the four valid cognitions—perception, inference, scripture, or testimony—would then establish valid cognition. Any of the four that might serve to establish a valid cognition would, being a putative example of a valid cognition, require a further valid cognition to establish it. This infinite regress leads Jayānanda to reject the fourfold model of *pramāṇa*.

Only when discussing the twofold model of *pramāṇa* does Jayānanda come to evaluate the notion of “intrinsic validity” (*svatah prāmāṇya*), a doctrine that would end the infinite regress of establishment by holding that some valid cognitions are innately valid and require no further cognition to warrant them. He provides an account of which valid cognitions—subtypes of perception and inference—Buddhists claim to be intrinsically valid and which they claim to be validated by a further cognition, an account that does not seem to be drawn from any one Buddhist scholar’s reckoning. Jayānanda has the Buddhist epistemologist hold that inference is intrinsically valid, as is perception in which the fulfillment of a purpose appears (*don gyi bya ba snang ba*), such as the experience of fire burning. Perception in which the establisher of the fulfillment of a purpose appears (*don gyi bya ba sgrub par byed pa snang ba*), such as the perception of a distant fire (which would “establish” such purposes as heating and cooking), is intrinsically valid when produced in a trained mental continuum (*goms pa dang bcas pa’i rgyud*) but is extrinsically valid (*gzhan las nges pa*) when produced in an untrained mental continuum (*ma goms pa’i rgyud*), as for the untrained, the doubt accompanying the initial perception (is that distant glow a fire or not? will it warm me up?) will be cleared away when the fire’s effect is later experienced. This does not lead to infinite

---

45 See note 12.

46 Jayānanda, *Madhyamakāvatāra* 128a.1–7. However we interpret Candrakīrti’s claim in *Prasannapadā*, 73.6–75.13 to adopt the fourfold model of *pramāṇa*, it is clear here that Jayānanda rejects this model and sees Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti to reject it as well. As discussed below, though, Jayānanda makes a lengthy argument in support of “scriptural valid cognition” (*āgama-pramāṇa*), one of the two forms of *pramāṇa* accepted in the fourfold model and denied by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti (and most Buddhists).

47 For a discussion of various Indian and early Tibetan views on this issue, see Krasser (2003, pp. 161–184).
regress, Jayānanda has the Buddhist epistemologist claim, as the validating perception will be one in which the fulfillment of a purpose appears (the experience of fire burning), itself intrinsically valid.\footnote{Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratīkā, 128b.1–7. Jayānanda’s account bears some resemblance to Dharmottara’s position on intrinsic/extrinsic validity and, intriguingly, to rNgoṅ Lotsāwa’s position (although both Dharmottara and rNgoṅ provide a much more sophisticated discussion of extrinsically valid perception). For these latter two, see Krasser (2003, pp. 162–163, 166).}

Jayānanda responds that no cognition is intrinsically valid and, therefore, that the search for a grounding validity is futile. His reasoning signals that he must understand his opponent here as a Mādhyamika epistemologist, as he notes,

You do not assert that a consciousness of an observed fulfilled purpose is just true. Thus, a consciousness of the fulfillment of a purpose exists as just having the nature of untruth and so doubts of truth and untruth even concerning a consciousness of the fulfillment of a purpose [which, for the Buddhist epistemologist, would end the infinite regress of extrinsically valid cognitions] are not reversed. Thus, it follows that if another valid cognition assesses [the previous valid cognition, then the process of validation] is endless. Thus, your claim that some valid cognitions are intrinsic while others are extrinsic is not reasonable. Therefore, valid cognition is not established.\footnote{Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratīkā, 130b.1–3: dmigs pa’i don gyi bya ba shes pa bden pa nyid du khyod kis mi ’dod la / des na don gyi bya ba’i shes pa mi bden pa’i rang bsin can nyid du yod pas don gyi bya ba’i shes pa la yang bden pa dang mi bden pa’i the tshom dag ldog pa ma yin pas tshad ma gzhkan tshol na thug pa med par thal bar ’gyur ba yin no / des na ’ga’ zhig rang las tshad ma yin na / ’ga’ zhig gzhkan las tshad ma yin no zhes brjod pa de rigs pa ma yin no / des na tshad ma ma grub pa’i phyir ro / 50 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratīkā, 128b.7–129b.1.}

Jayānanda’s Madhyamaka principles do not admit any prima facie valid cognitions; the truth of things will always be subject to investigation and, from these comments, assumed false until otherwise proven. The process of assessing the validity of a cognition would then become an infinite regress: without an intrinsically valid cognition, further validation will always be required. The conclusion, as Jayānanda would have it, is that there is simply no final way of determining a cognition to be valid.

In the process of arguing against any claims of intrinsic validity, Jayānanda further challenges the Buddhist epistemologist’s defining feature of real objects, noting that the fulfillment of a purpose appears also in dreams, where it does not correspond to a real object. In drawing out the epistemologist’s qualification of reality to show that something that should not qualify as real actually might, he clearly intends to reject the differentiation itself. He has the epistemologist provide five criteria that distinguish real appearances of fulfilled purposes from those seen in a dream, the most interesting of which is that real fulfilled purposes appear in common (mthun pa’i snang ba) to multiple people, whereas dream-fulfillment appears only to the dreamer.\footnote{Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratīkā, 128b.7–129b.1.} Jayānanda rejects this distinction, claiming that it gives undue credence to the waking perspective. He writes, “If you say ‘Due to not being observed by the waking, dream entities are deceptive,’ then it would follow that the fulfillment of a purpose [perceived] in the waking state also just does not exist because dreamers do not
observe the waking fulfillment of a purpose." In challenging the Buddhist epistemologist’s hallmark of the real, Jayānanda evokes a familiar Madhyamaka analogy, suggesting that there is no good reason to weight the reality of waking perceptions over dream visions. The implication seems clear: just as the waking discounts the reality of things seen in dreams, so too awakened Buddhas know the falsehood of things claimed in the world to be real.

Jayānanda’s dismissal of valid cognition, along with real objects, would seem to be self-defeating. How could he validly know that there are no valid cognitions? And, much to the point of the broader context of his argument, how can he validly know that things are not produced? He considers the objection that the certainty (niścita, nges pa) that “things are not produced from self” must itself be produced by a valid cognition: knowing (adhigama, khong du chud pa) an object of cognition (prameya, gzhal bya) depends on valid cognition. If Jayānanda claims to be certain that self-production is false, he must have arrived at that certainty through a valid means; the objection presses the necessity of valid cognition for any real knowledge. Rather than challenge this necessity, Jayānanda cedes the very notion of certainty along with valid cognition. He writes, “If there were uncertainty, then there would be certainty, its antidote, in dependence on it; but when for us there is no uncertainty, how can there be certainty to contradict it? . . . When we do not assert certainty, we make no assertion of valid cognition for the sake of establishing it.”

Jayānanda would seem here to admit a kind of skepticism, in which his rejection of the opponent’s position of self-production itself may not be certain. Is he then forced to acknowledge that even Nāgārjuna’s declaration that things are not produced from self, from other, from both self and other, or without cause lacks certainty? Might there be production from one or more of these alternatives? Was there really a point to Nāgārjuna’s, Candrakīrti’s, and his own arguments rejecting these possibilities? Jayānanda’s answer ties together this discussion of valid cognition with his previous remarks on the prasaṅga method:

[Nāgārjuna’s stanza] is a certain statement for the world, through reasoning established for them; it is not for āryas. How could we say that reasoning exists or does not exist for āryas? How could there be the proliferations of reasoning or non-reasoning for those āryas who say nothing at all ultimately?

[Opponent:] If āryas do not state reasoning, how do they induce realization of the ultimate in the world?

51 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭkā, 129b.2–3: gal te sad pa’i gnas skabs kyi skyes bu rnams kyi smigs pas rmi lam gyi dngos po de brdzun pa yin zer na / de’i tshe sad pa’i gnas skabs kyi don gyi bya ba yang rmi lam gyi gnas skabs na yod pa’i skyes bu rnams kyi smig pa’i phyir sad pa’i gnas skabs kyi don gyi bya ba yang med pa nyid du thal bar ‘gyur ro /.

52 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭkā, 126b.3–5.

53 In considering this objection, Jayānanda cites Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 1.1ab; Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭkā, 127a.3.
Aryas do not state reasoning established for themselves; asserting whatever reasoning that is established in the world for the sake of others’ realization, they induce realization in the world through just that.55

Having claimed that valid cognition fails to generate certainty, Jayānanda here tells us that certainty is induced in the world, for the world, by means of reasoning established in the world. Our practices of perception and inference will not produce knowledge, but āryas can induce “realization of the ultimate” through a reasoning process that is acceptable to us. The world can become certain of Nāgārjuna’s denial of production through his reasoning process and those of other āryas (including Candrakīrti?). While Jayānanda may adopt a skeptical stance concerning our understanding of an ārya’s own reasoning process (“How could we say that reasoning exists or does not exist for āryas?”), a more likely interpretation—given his subsequent statements—is that no reasoning at all is established for āryas.

The teaching technique of āryas, then, bears a strong resemblance to Jayānanda’s portrayal of the prasaṅga method. The Madhyamika argues by way of prasaṅgas, utilizing the opponent’s assertions and the entailments the opponent asserts (reasoning that is established for the opponent), while denying that any argument could be commonly established between the two parties. Āryas utilize “whatever reasoning that is established in the world,” as they know that in reality all things lack establishment. Jayānanda very likely sees this resemblance drawn in Candrakīrti’s work: recall that Candrakīrti, in the final passage Jayānanda quoted from the Prasannapadā, rejects Dignāga’s dictum that a proof be established for both proponent and opponent, immediately juxtaposing this with the Buddhas’ procedure of leading others to the Buddhist view by way of reasoning established only for those others. Jayānanda reads Candrakīrti’s rejection of the common establishment that svatantra inference is predicated on as stemming from a great divide between the perspective of a realized Madhyamika and any opposing view. Rather than adopting a skeptical position, Jayānanda would have it that Nāgārjuna’s understanding of emptiness, the way things really are, is singularly true and precludes the possibility of common establishment. Āryas know emptiness and induce others to realize it; ultimately, they say nothing at all.

On Authority

Jayānanda’s linking of prasaṅga reasoning and the ārya perspective is consistent with a broader argument he weaves throughout his discussion of the early portions of Madhyamakāvārtā chapter six. As noted above, Candrakīrti opens this chapter with an appeal to Nāgārjuna’s authority, referring to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā as “the treatise composed by the authoritative person (pramāṇabhūtapuruṣa)” and

55 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvārtāṭikā, 127a.4–6: ‘jig rten pa rnams la rang nyid la grub pa’i rigs pas rnegs pa’i ngag yin gyi ’phags pa rnams la ni ma yin no // ci ’phags pa rnams la rigs pa yod dam med do zhes gang gis brjod / don dam par ’phags pa rnams ni ci yang mi gsung bar ’gyur ba de la gang gis rigs pa dang mi rigs par ’gyur ba’i spros pa ga la yod / gal te ’phags pa rnams rigs pa mi gsung na / don dam pa gang gis ’jig rten pa rnams la rtogs par byed ce na / ’phags pa rnams ni rang nyid la grub pa’i rigs pa gsung bar mi mdzad kyi / ’on kyang ’jig rten pa la sgrub pa’i rigs pa gang yin pa de gzhan la rtogs pa’i don du khas blangs nas de nyid kyis ’jig rten pa rnams la rtogs par byed pa yin te /.
stating that Nāgārjuna has “realized the profound [emptiness] of phenomena.” 56 Jayānanda, paraphrasing Candrakīrti, writes, “It is difficult for those like ourselves to ascertain the meaning of scripture. However, since the master Nāgārjuna saw reality (de kho na nyid) directly, we can know the thought of scripture by way of the treatise he composed.” 57 So begins a theme that Jayānanda threads through some forty folios of his commentary: the contrast between Nāgārjuna as pramāṇa, or “authority,” and the processes that the Buddhist epistemological tradition advances as pramāṇa, or “valid cognition.”

Jayānanda supports his and Candrakīrti’s endorsement of Nāgārjuna with a substantial discussion of scriptural authority that begins, oddly, with an allusion to Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika I.218–219 and autocommentary, in which Dharmakīrti argues that “the words of a reliable person” (āptavākyā/āptavādā) cannot serve in a strong sense as a means of valid cognition because of the difficulties in determining just who is reliable. If the standards for reliability are the absence of faults and the presence of virtues, Dharmakīrti reasons, then those of us who lack the ability to perceive others’ mental qualities cannot identify a genuinely reliable person; we might try to infer virtue or fault from a person’s actions but, Dharmakīrti reminds us, a person can act at variance with one’s underlying mental state. 58 Jayānanda digests much of Dharmakīrti’s discussion (without attribution) and summarizes, “We cannot ascertain that [a scripture] was composed by a reliable person. Why? Because we cannot know another’s mind.” 59 While this acknowledgment would seem to undermine Jayānanda’s claim for Nāgārjuna’s authority, it

---

56 The latter statement is found in stanza VI.3: La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 75.17–20: ji ltar de yischos zab chotsrōgs pa // lung dang gzhan yang rigspas yin pas na // de ltar ‘phags pa klu sgrub gzhunglugs*las // ji ltar gnas pa’i lugs bzhin brjod par bya // *The La Vallée Poussin edition reads gzhung lug; the sde dge edition has the correct reading.

57 Jayaṅanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭikā, 112a.1–2: kho bo dang ‘dra ba rnam gyi lngug gi dngos pa nges par dka’ ba yin gyi / ‘on kyang slob dpon klu sgrub zhas kyiis de kho na nyid dngos su gzigs pa yin pas des mdzad pa’i bstan bcos kyi sgo nas lung gi dngos pa shes pa yin no zhes pa’i tha tshigs go /.

is likely that Jayānanda understands Dharmakīrti’s argument as applying to non-Buddhist claims to reliable persons, as he follows this discussion with a denial that the authority of scripture could stem from it being authorless.\textsuperscript{60}

How should we understand the authority of scripture if we do not simply appeal to the speaker’s or author’s reliability? Jayānanda suggests that the criteria by which words are considered authoritative in the world should be applied also to scripture: “in the world, words that are coherent, have a suitable method, state the welfare of beings, and are non-deceptive (\textit{avisamvāda}) are asserted to be authoritative.”\textsuperscript{61} The first three of these “worldly” characteristics are none other than Dharmakīrti’s qualifications (given in \textit{Pramāṇavārttika} I.214) that a scripture must possess to be a source of inferential knowledge, while the fourth is a further condition of such scriptures (discussed in \textit{Pramāṇavārttika} I.215), determined by those scriptures not being invalidated by perception and the two kinds of inference—non-scriptural and scriptural inference (as well as, more generally, constituting the hallmark of Dharmakīrtian valid cognition).\textsuperscript{62} Indeed, Jayānanda eventually quotes these two stanzas, while his explanation of these qualifications draws heavily on Dharmanāyikas, among others (\textit{naiyāyikādavayāḥ}).

\textsuperscript{60} Jayānanda, \textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 113a.6–113b.5. Dunne (2004, p. 243, n. 29) points out that Manorathandin identifies the position that a reliable person is one with good qualities as that of Naiyāyikas, among others (\textit{naiyāyikādadāvayāḥ}).

\textsuperscript{61} Jayānanda, \textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 113b.5–6: ci ītār ‘jīg rten pa’i tshig tshad ma vin pa de bzhin du lung yang tshad ma vin te / ‘di ītār ‘jīg rten na’ brel pa dang rjes su mthun pa’i thobs dang ldan pa dang / skyes bu’i don rjod par byed pa dang / mi slu ba’i tshig ni tshad mar ‘dod pa yin no /.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Pramāṇavārttika} I.214–215; Gnoli (1960, 108.7–8); sambaddha-anagunā-upāyaṃ puruṣa-artha-abhidhāyaṃ / parīkṣā-adhikṣaṃ ṣvāyaṃ ato anadikṣaṃ parityikṣaṇa / and 108.18–19: pratyakṣena anumāṇena divvidhena apy abādhakam / drṣṭa-adrṣṭa-arthavay asyā aviṣamvādaṃ tad-arthavayoh // English translation in Dunne (2004, pp. 361–362): “A statement that is a worthy subject of examination is one that is coherent (\textit{sambaddha}), offers a suitable method, and cites some human aim. Other statements are not worthy subjects of examination.” and p. 362: “Its trustworthiness consists of not being contradicted by perceptual awareness and two kinds of inference with regard to both the observable (\textit{drṣṭa}) and unobservable (\textit{adrṣṭa}) things (\textit{artha}) that are the objects (\textit{artha}) of those instrumental cognitions.”

\textsuperscript{63} Jayānanda, \textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 115a.4–5 quotes \textit{Pramāṇavārttika} I.214–215, while 113b.6–114a.2 explains “coherence,” “suitable method,” and “human aim.” The discussion of “non-deceptive” spans 114a.2–115a.2, drawing on Dharmakīrti’s explanation of perceptible objects and objects known by the two kinds of inference, inference not dependent on scripture (\textit{anāgamāpekṣānāmaṇā}) and inference dependent on scripture (\textit{āgamāpekṣānāmaṇā}), for which see Gnoli (1960, pp. 108.9–109.4) and Dunne (2004, pp. 362–363).

\textsuperscript{64} Jayānanda, \textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 114b.4–5 quotes Śākyabuddhi, \textit{Pramāṇavārttikatīkā}, 245a.1–2 (quoted and translated in Dunne 2004, p. 363, n. 9) then concludes “If such inference [that is, inference dependent on scripture, which Jayānanda also calls ‘inference that engages through the force of scripture’ (\textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 114b.4: lung gi stobs kyis ‘jig pa’i rjes su dpag po) does not invalidate thoroughly hidden entities, they are non-deceptive” (\textit{Madhyamakāvatāratīkā}, 114b.5–6; de lta bu’i rjes su dpag pa shin tu lkog tu gyur pa’i dngos po la gnod pa med na mi slu ba ste /).
It might appear that, in addition to weakening his claim for Nāgārjuna’s authority by citing Dharmakīrti’s mistrustful account of the very notion of a “reliable person,” Jayānanda has now contradicted his rejection of Dharmakīrtian epistemology, given that he seemingly has adopted Dharmakīrti’s preference for the empirical forms of valid cognition, “valid cognitions that operate through the force of fact,” utilizing scriptural inference as a kind of epistemic last resort. Before examining this problem, we must consider a further piece of Dharmakīrti’s discussion of scriptural inference (along with some of Śākyabuddhi’s explanation), which Jayānanda utilizes in order to re-introduce the notion of reliable persons as a means to determine a scripture’s validity.  

Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika I.216–217 and autocommentary present an alternative account of scriptural inference, pointing out that because a credible person’s speech is non-deceptive it can be considered inference: because we can verify that what the Buddha said concerning the “prime matter” (pradhānārtha) of the four noble truths is non-deceptive, we can utilize his teachings to gain inferential knowledge of other matters.  

Śākyabuddhi understands these “other matters” to be “thoroughly hidden phenomena”; just as we determine a reliable person’s words to be non-deceptive concerning matters that we can know through perception or inference, so we can trust that reliable person’s words concerning “thoroughly hidden” matters that we have no other way to know.

Jayānanda, then, summarizes or quotes a substantial portion of Dharmakīrti’s elucidation of scriptural authority, albeit out of order (discussing Pramāṇavārttika I.218–219 prior to I.214–217). Dharmakīrti’s somewhat begrudging admission of scriptural inference in stanzas 214–217 and subsequent rejection of the “reliable person” in stanzas 218–219 suggests a discomfort with accepting scripture’s utility into an otherwise empiricist epistemology. Indeed, Tillemans points out that Dharmakīrti holds scriptural inference in strong suspicion: in his autocommentary to Pramāṇavārttika I.217, Dharmakīrti notes that scriptural inference is “not at all a flawless inference,” while elsewhere (the autocommentary to I.318) he points out that scripture does not produce “certainty” (niścaya) and so is not counted as a source of valid cognition. We have noted that Jayānanda perhaps sees no

---

65 Jayānanda “re-introduces” reliable persons only because he began this discussion with Pramāṇavārttika I.218–219, in which Dharmakīrti critiques the notion, and then discusses Pramāṇavārttika I.216–217, in which Dharmakīrti gives some credence to reliable persons. The net effect in Jayānanda, then, is much the opposite of the sense one gets from Dharmakīrti: where Dharmakīrti introduces the notion of reliable persons and then states the problems with “knowledge” so conceived, Jayānanda aims the problems of reliability at non-Buddhists, then uses Dharmakīrti’s more forceful account to support Nāgārjuna’s reliability.


67 Śākyabuddhi, Pramāṇavārttikākaṭkā, 245a.7–245b.1: ci ltar ngsng sum dang rjes su dpag pa mi slu pa’i don yongs su gcud par nus pa la nyes pa zad pa’i tshig mi slu ba de ltar shin tu ldog tu gsr pa yang yin te / nyes pa zad pa’i tshig nyan yin pa’i phyor ro // des bas na don la mi slu ba nyes pa zad pa’i tshig gi mtnshan nyan can gyi rtags las byung pa’i blo ni rjes su dpag pa nyan du slob dpon gyis brjod do //.

contradiction between Dharmakīrti’s acceptance of scriptural inference and his rejection of reliable persons, as he seems to read stanzas 218–219 as a rejection of non-Buddhist claims to reliability. Still, it is difficult to see how he could fail to notice the problems attendant on the rejection of some would-be “reliable persons” and the acceptance of others; surely this cannot be a case of simply accepting the authority of persons who say what we like. Does Jayānanda, then, share Dharmakīrti’s misgivings about accepting scriptural inference? Does he follow Dharmakīrti in preferring empirical forms of knowledge? And, in a more basic sense, why does he appeal to Dharmakīrti’s authority at all when we have already seen him dismiss the standards of Dharmakīrtian validity?

Rather than claiming a second-class status for scriptural inference, Jayānanda offers a strong interpretation of personal testimony. In Jayānanda’s hands both of Dharmakīrti’s arguments for the reliability of the Buddha’s teaching become claims for Nāgārjuna’s authority. Following his quotation of Śākyabuddhi’s account of analyzing scriptures by means of perception and inference, Jayānanda writes,

Any scripture having a thoroughly pure referent is non-deceptive and thus, following the world, is an authority (pramāṇa) because the world asserts that only words with thoroughly pure referents are authoritative. By asserting scripture to be authoritative in that way, we ascertain the prophecies [concerning] ārya Nāgārjuna to be true; thus, it is reasonable to ascertain reality by way of seeing the non-erroneous explanations of scripture [in] the treatise composed by him.69

The main thrust, for Jayānanda, of Dharmakīrti’s procedure of “purifying” scripture is to establish that the sūtras that Candrakīrti cites containing prophecies of Nāgārjuna are authoritative; the prophecies are true. 70 Since they are true, we can accept Candrakīrti’s claims that Nāgārjuna is an “authoritative person” and that we can realize emptiness in dependence on his writings.

Then, Jayānanda punctuates his unattributed quote of Śākyabuddhi’s explanation of Dharmakīrti’s alternate method of determining scriptural credibility—that we can judge a reliable person’s words to be non-deceptive concerning perceptible and inferable matters and so can induce their validity concerning “thoroughly hidden” matters—by noting, “[A reliable person’s words] are, in that way, an aspect of

69 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvataratikā, 115a.2–3: de ltar lung gang la yul yongs su dag pa yod pa de ni mi slu ba yin pas ’jig rten pa ’i rjes su ’brangs nas tshad ma yin te / ’jig rten pas yul yongs su dag pa ’i tshig kho na tshad mar ’dod pas so // de ltar lung tshad mar khas blangs pas ’phags pa klu sgrub zhab s lung bstan pa bden pa nyid du nges pas des mdzad pa ’i bstan bcos lung phyin ci ma log par ’chad pa mthong ba ’i sgo nas de kho na nyid nges pa ni rigs pa nyid yin no /. The last part of this passage alludes to Candrakīrti’s comment immediately prior to stanza VI.3 (La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvataśtra, 75.14–16): bstan bcos tshad mar gyur pa ’i skyes bus byas shing lung phyin ci ma log par ’chad pa mthong ba las lung gi dgongs pa nges pas ni /. Thus, the final sentence could be rendered “it is reasonable to ascertain reality by way of seeing the non-erroneous explanations of scripture [and] the treatise composed by him.” However, in a parallel passage, Jayānanda’s text later (115b.6) reads des gsungs pa ’i lung ’chad pa phyin ci ma log pa ’i bstan bcos kyi sgo nas de kho na nyid nges par rigs pa yin no /, supporting the translation “[A reliable person’s words] are, in that way, an aspect of...

70 At La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvataśtra, 76, Candrakīrti cites prophecies found in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and the Dvādaśasahasramahāmeghasūtra concerning “Nāga.”
worldly valid cognition.” They can recall that Jayānanda introduced Dharmakīrti’s criteria for determining which scriptures can be sources for a scriptural inference by stating that these criteria are worldly standards and, just above, we saw Jayānanda state that the authority of “pure” scriptures “follows the world.” At every turn, Jayānanda frames Dharmakīrti’s words as the standpoint of “the world.” These important signals alert us to how Jayānanda uses Dharmakīrti’s account of scripture: Jayānanda recasts arguments that were intended to evaluate scriptural inference against the technical characteristics of formal inference as instead representing the way of the world. As the world accepts words deemed authoritative on a given topic, Nāgārjuna’s treatises ought to be accepted as authoritative when it comes to emptiness. Rather than allegiance to the Buddhist epistemological project, Jayānanda uses the Dharmakīrtian tradition to validate Nāgārjuna’s singular authority in “the world.”

Immediately after Jayānanda’s statement that a reliable person’s words are “an aspect of worldly valid cognition,” he further undermines Buddhist epistemological commitments by accepting a category of valid cognition denied by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti:

This realization in dependence on a particular [passage] of an accurate scripture is non-deceptive, just like for example the realization of objects to be realized by perception or inference. The realization of a thoroughly hidden object is likewise dependent on a particular [passage] of an accurate scripture. Through this reasoning, a scriptural valid cognition (lung tshad ma) of a thoroughly hidden object [arises].

This “formal argument” (prayoga), like several other passages discussed here, is lifted directly from Śākyabuddhi, except for the final sentence: Śākyabuddhi concludes, “This is a nature reason (svabhāvaḥetu).” His point here is to fit the reason used in a scriptural inference into one of the three classes of reasons, concluding that the process of “realizing a thoroughly hidden object” in dependence on scripture is a case of utilizing a “nature reason,” by which he means that the particular passage of the scripture that illuminates a thoroughly hidden object is of the same nature as the passages of that scripture that one can determine through perception and inference to be non-deceptive. Jayānanda, however, strikes “nature reason” from his unattributed quotation (he also fails to introduce it as a “formal argument”) and instead concludes that the process is a case of “scriptural valid cognition,” a category of valid cognition

---

71 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvātāratikā, 115a.6: ‘jig rten pa’i tshad ma’i rnam pa de lta bu yin te /.
72 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvātāratikā, 115a.6–7: ‘di ltar gang ci ltar bstan pa’i lung gi khyad par la brten nas rtogs pa de ni mi slu ba yin te / dper na mngon sum dang rjes su dpag pas rtogs par bya ba’i don rtogs pa bzhih no // shin tu lkog tu gyur pa’i don la yang ci ltar bstan pa’i lung gi khyad par la brten pa’i rtogs pa yin no zhes pa’i rigs pas shin tu lkog tu gyur pa’i don la lung tshad ma yin no / / I translate ci ltar bstan pa’i lung as “accurate scripture” rather than a more literal “scripture so indicated” because “accurate” is clearly the sense intended by Śākyabuddhi’s ji skad du bshad pa (in ji skad du bshad pa’i lung; see the following note), which refers to his procedure of verifying scriptural passages by means of perception and inference; once so verified, these scriptures can be said to be “accurate.”
73 Śākyabuddhi, Pramāṇavārttikatattvā, 245b.6–7: sbhor ba yang gang dang gang ji skad du bshad pa’i lung gi khyad par la brten pa’i rtogs pa de dang de ni mi slu ba can yin te / dper na mngon sum dang rjes su dpag pas go bar bya’i don ma lus par rtogs pa lta bu’o // shin tu lkog tu gyur pa’i don rtogs pa yang ji skad du bshad pa’i lung gi khyad par la brten pa yin no zhes bya ba ni rang bzhih gyi gtan tshigs so /.
explicitly rejected by Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and all Buddhists following them. Rather than soften the validity of scriptural inference by downplaying its ability to induce certainty, and so fall in line with Dharmakīrti and Śākyabuddhi, Jayānanda gives scriptural valid cognition a category all its own and, in so doing, shows just how far his project deviates from that of Buddhist epistemologists.

We have seen that Jayānanda’s argument differs from Dharmakīrti’s account of scriptural inference in two major ways: Jayānanda utilizes Dharmakīrti’s arguments to support Nāgārjuna’s authority and turns Dharmakīrti’s account into a case of scriptural valid cognition. One final piece of Jayānanda’s appropriation of Dharmakīrti is necessary to see how these two dovetail. Jayānanda recasts Dharmakīrti’s autocommentary to Pramāṇavārttika I.217—in which Dharmakīrti explains that because the Buddha’s teaching on the four noble truths (“the prime matter”) [pradhānārtha]) can be verified by perception and inference, we can accept his authority concerning thoroughly hidden phenomena—to extend an argument we examined above:

By establishing [those] scriptures to be just authoritative in that way, the prophecies [concerning] Arya Nāgārjuna are ascertained to be just true; thus, it is reasonable to ascertain reality by way of his treatise, which [contains] non-erroneous scriptural explanations spoken by him. Further, having the characteristic of not being invalidated by perception and inference, [his treatise] is non-deceptive concerning emptiness, the prime matter; thus, [it] is non-deceptive also in regard to other thoroughly hidden objects, and therefore is just an authoritative scripture (lung tshad ma). The first part of this passage repeats Jayānanda’s previous claim that Dharmakīrti’s method of “purifying” scripture allows one to accept Nāgārjuna’s authority on emptiness. Here, Jayānanda follows this by offering the same inductive process that Dharmakīrti advocates in regard to the Buddha’s teaching, but now in support of Nāgārjuna: Nāgārjuna’s empirically verifiable teachings on emptiness enable us to accept what he says concerning the “thoroughly hidden.”

---

74 This refers to Dharmakīrti’s and Śākyabuddhi’s explanations of “purifying” scriptures by way of perception, ordinary inference, and scripturally based inference. As noted above, the scriptures in question here are the sūtras Candrakīrti cites containing prophecies about “Nāga.”

75 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭkā, 115b.5–7: de luar lung tshad ma nyid du grub pas ’phags pa klu sgrub zhabs lung bstan pa bden pa nyid du nges pas des gsungs pa’i lung ’chad pa phyin ci ma log pa’i bstan bcos kyi sgo nas de kho na nyid nges par rigs pa yin no // yang na gtsos bo’i don stong pa nyid la mgon sum dang rjes su dpag pa mgnod pa’i mtsan nyid can mi slu bas shin tu lkg tu gyur pa gzhans la yang mi slu ba’i phyir lung tshad ma nyid yin no //.

76 Emptiness here takes the place of the four noble truths in Dharmakīrti’s argument: Nāgārjuna’s teachings on emptiness, like the Buddha’s teachings on the four noble truths, are empirically verifiable and so support the trustworthiness of his treatises’ claims concerning thoroughly hidden phenomena. Tillemans (1999a, pp. 30–32) pointed out that Dharmapāla interprets a stanza (XII.280) in Āryadeva’s Catuhśataka similarly, although in Āryadeva, it is the Buddha’s trustworthiness that is confirmed by his teachings on emptiness. Tillemans further points out (p. 35, n. 17) that Candrakīrti, in his commentary on this stanza, notes that emptiness serves as “an example (deśṭaṇta)” of the Buddha’s authority, although Candrakīrti does not follow Dharmapāla in connecting this directly with the Buddha’s trustworthiness on the thoroughly hidden. It could be that Āryadeva’s stanza, through Candrakīrti’s commentary, served along with Dharmakīrti’s argument as a source for Jayānanda’s presentation. Jayānanda is still unique, though, in using this inductive pattern to argue for Nāgārjuna’s authority.
like the Buddha’s sūtras, “authoritative scripture” (lung tshad ma). This, of course, is the same term that we saw Jayānanda apply to the “realization of a thoroughly hidden object” on the basis of a scriptural passage, scriptural valid cognition, constituting a category of valid cognition not accepted by Buddhist epistemologists.\(^{77}\) Here, I render the term “authoritative scripture” as (for Jayānanda) Nāgārjuna’s treatise is a source of “scriptural valid cognition,” just as much as valid sūtras are.\(^{78}\) But the common valence is clear: Jayānanda accepts scriptural valid cognition as a worldly category of knowledge and (Dharmakīrti’s misgivings notwithstanding) accepts scriptural authority—the Buddha’s and Nāgārjuna’s—as sources of that knowledge.

This reading of Jayānanda’s appropriation of Dharmakīrti’s “scriptural inference” to argue for a worldly version of scriptural valid cognition, one that legitimates Nāgārjuna’s authority, requires two further clarifications. Jayānanda could face the conundrum that he claimed that Nāgārjuna’s teachings on emptiness served as a verifiable reason for his reliability and yet at the same time he claims that Nāgārjuna’s treatise is our means of knowing emptiness. One might charge him with a circular argument, in which we are asked to accept Nāgārjuna’s authority on emptiness as a precondition for realizing emptiness, upon which we would be in a position to evaluate his authority. As I see it, the best solution is to read Jayānanda as saying that emptiness, while not a thoroughly hidden phenomenon, is a very difficult thing to realize; scripture represents the sole authority concerning the thoroughly hidden and also proves crucial with this difficult topic.\(^{79}\) Additionally, Jayānanda is not saying that Nāgārjuna’s treatise is sufficient for realizing emptiness. We noted above (see note 77) that he adopts the classic paradigm of “hearing, thinking, and meditating”; scriptural valid cognition produces only the first, “the wisdom arising from hearing.”

A second needed clarification concerns the role of Dharmakīrtian empirical valid cognition in Jayānanda’s arguments. We saw that Jayānanda adopts Dharmakīrti’s
procedure for determining trustworthy scriptures: one investigates the scripture’s claims by means of “the two valid cognitions that operate through the force of fact” (dnogs po’i stobs kyis ’jug pa’i tshad ma), perception and non-scriptural inference, and then by means of “inference dependent on scripture.” Even if we place scripture alongside perception and inference as categories of “worldly” valid cognition, it might seem that the verification procedure defers to empirical, “factual” forms of knowledge.

Jayānanda would seem to make the opposite claim. In his brief text, the Tarkamudgara, he takes to task several of the key features of Dharmakīrtian valid cognition, arguing against several possible definitions of pramāṇa.80 Jayānanda introduces these (in his view) untenable definitions by noting, “Logicians following Dharmakīrti propound that reality is realized through valid cognitions that operate through the force of fact.”81 This would seem to be Jayānanda’s chief complaint against Buddhist epistemologists: “reality” (tattva, de [kho na] nyid) is not to be realized by means of empirically based valid cognitions. The thrust of his arguments for scriptural authority is to establish that “it is reasonable to ascertain (niścaya, nges pa) reality by way of Nāgārjuna’s treatise.” Recall Dharmakīrti’s point that scriptural inference does not produce certainty (niścaya, nges pa) and so cannot be counted as true valid cognition. Recall also Jayānanda’s claim that perception and inference fail to produce certainty. Jayānanda would seem to say that scriptural authority is our only source of certainty concerning the nature of reality. His claims constitute an inversion of Dharmakīrti’s preference for “factual” valid cognition. Once we accept Nāgārjuna as “scripture,” we see that scriptural valid cognition is the basis for realizing emptiness.

Conclusion: Authority, Validity, Certainty

We are now in a position to reconcile Jayānanda’s critique of both twofold and fourfold presentations of pramāṇa—along with his repudiation of the svatantra form of inference that would be supported by pramāṇa—with his adaptation of “scripture,” a component of the fourfold model, in “the world.” At every turn, Jayānanda marked the arguments he lifted from Dharmakīrti and Śākyabuddhi as “worldly,” much as Candrakīrti adopted four pramāṇas as ways of “knowing things of the world.”82 Doubtlessly referring to this passage, Jayānanda summarizes his own critique of the epistemological enterprise:

80 Jayānanda, Tarkamudgarakārikā, 374b.4: blo gang bcad don thob byed pa // tshad ma yin zhes kha cig smra // la la ma rtogs don gsal ’dod // gzhan dag bden pa’i don rtogs smra // (“Some say that an awareness that reaches an identified object is valid cognition. Some assert that [valid cognition] reveals a [previously] unknown object. Others say [valid cognition] knows a true object.”).

81 Jayānanda, Tarkamudgarakārikā, 374b.3–4: yul dngos stobs kyis zhugs pa yi // tshad mas de nyid rtogs so zhes // chos kyi grags pa’i rjes ’brang ba’i // rtog ge ba mams smra bar byed // (“Some say that an awareness that reaches an identified object is valid cognition. Some assert that [valid cognition] reveals a [previously] unknown object. Others say [valid cognition] knows a true object.”).

82 See note 11.
Thus, since valid cognition is not established, how could treatises’ definitions of the valid cognitions be correctly clarified? Thus, [Candrakīrti’s] claim that the logicians’ statements of definitions [of valid cognition] are pointless is reasonable because the conventions, “valid cognition” and “object of valid cognition” are established in just the world. This very master [Candrakīrti] made clear that the conventions, “valid cognition” and “not valid cognition” are in just the world.”

Jayānanda presents his (and Candrakīrti’s) “worldly” system of valid cognitions as an alternative to “the logicians’ definitions,” both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Rather than classifying scripture as a (rather weak) form of inference, a la Dharmakīrti, Jayānanda places it on par with perception, inference, and analogy as forms of knowledge accepted and acceptable in the world.

This suggests we might introduce a tried and true Madhyamaka interpretive scheme and claim that Jayānanda sees the four forms of valid cognition to operate conventionally, while he denies their ultimate existence. This, however, does not quite do justice to Jayānanda’s critique of perception and inference, the purported “factual” forms of valid cognition that fail to reach reality, nor to his advocacy for Nāgārjuna’s authority as the key to realizing emptiness. We must note also that despite his claim to oppose “logicians’ definitions,” Jayānanda leans heavily on technical discussions of “scripture,” arguing against non-Buddhist accounts and then adapting Buddhist epistemologists’ portrayals. Thus, identifying a worldly account of knowledge as one that opposes all technical presentations of epistemology does not entirely capture Jayānanda’s usage. Instead, we get a strong sense of “the world’s” limitations, a clear-cut delineation between the world and reality. Scripture comes to rank as the pre-eminent form of worldly knowledge because it is the primary means of getting out of that world.

Candrakīrti, similarly, demarcates two spheres of expertise, noting, “Anyone who is not knowledgeable in a particular subject is seen to be not an authority (pramāṇa) on that [subject], for example, those who are not knowledgeable in examining precious gems and so forth.”

83 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvātārāttikā, 131a.3–5: des na tshad ma ma grub pas tshad ma rnam la bstan bcos kyi mtshan nyid yang dag par gsal bar ci ltar byed / des na rtog ge’i mtshan nyid brjod pa don med pa yin no zhes brjod pa de rigs pa yin te / tshad ma dang gzhal bya’i tha snyad ’jig rten pa nyid las grub pa’i phyir ro / / tshad ma dang tshad ma ma yin pa’i tha snyad ’jig rten pa nyid las yin no zhes slob dpon rang nyid kyis gsal bar mdzad par gyur pa yin no /.

84 La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvātāra, 112.11–13: gang la gang gi yul can gyi mi shes pa yod pa de ni de la tshad ma nyid ma yin par mthong ste / dper na nor bu rin po che la sogs pa brtag pa la de mi shes pa rnam lta bu’o /.

85 La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvātāra, 111.18–20: de kho na nyid bsam pa la ’phags pa rnam kho na tshad ma yin gyi ’phags pa ma yin pa dag ni ma yin no /.
of reality.”86 Perception, inference, scripture, and analogy may be valid forms of worldly knowledge; however, emptiness represents an entirely distinct sphere, one in which only āryas—the source of scripture—have domain.

In keeping with his creative appropriation of the Dharmakīrtian tradition, Jayānanda (in explaining Madhyamakāvatāra stanza VI.30, which concludes “It is not reasonable for foolishness to be authoritative”) elucidates, “Whoever becomes just non-deceptive becomes just authoritative; non-deceptive also means having the quality of thoroughly knowing entities just as they are.”87 In supporting the authority of āryas, Jayānanda adopts the central qualification of Dharmakīrtian validity, non-deceptive, to “define” authority. However, “non-deceptive” for Jayānanda can only be descriptive of the advanced realization of reality; it is not a characteristic of worldly knowledge. This far more stringent interpretation of pramāṇa makes clear that while scripture may be one of four means of worldly knowledge, only āryas like Nāgārjuna, “who directly saw reality,” have validity concerning emptiness and so Nāgārjuna’s treatise holds singular authority in this world.88

The sharp divide between the world and reality challenges a skepticist reading of Candrakīrti, at least the Candrakīrti presented by Jayānanda.89 On the one hand, Jayānanda’s critique of “certainty” (which mirrors Candrakīrti’s own) suggests the impossibility of true knowledge in the world. On the other hand, Jayānanda uses terms like “certainty” and “ascertainment” (both translations of niścaya/ANGES PA in different contexts), knowledge, and realization, all in reference to emptiness. We ascertain, become certain of, reality through Nāgārjuna’s texts. Jayānanda, then, does not argue for the position that we can never be certain that all things are empty, nor the position that there is no particular way in which emptiness can be known. For Jayānanda, emptiness is certain and it is known through Nāgārjuna’s teachings, which lead us out of the world of uncertainty. The pressing question for Jayānanda is not how we can become certain of emptiness but is, instead, who might become certain of emptiness?

We have seen that Dharmakīrti devalued scriptural inference due to its inability to generate certainty. Tillemans further pointed out that Dharmakīrti recognized that for a scripture to produce inferential knowledge, one first has to accept

86 La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 112.20–113.1: de kho na nyid kyi skabs su ’jig rten rnam pa thams cad du tshad ma ma yin zhing / de kho na nyid kyi skabs su ’jig rten gyi gnod pa yang ma yin no /.
87 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratkā, 151a.6–7: mi slu ba nyid yin par ’gyur na tshad ma nyid du ’gyur ba yin la / mi slu ba nyid kyang dngos po ji ila ba bzhin du gnas pa yongs su shes pa’i rgya mtshan can yin la / Jayānanda’s appropriation of the Dharmakīrtian terminology “non-deceptive” (avisamvāda) and “unmistaken” (abhrēnta) is discussed further in Vose (2009, pp. 74–76), which includes a discussion of the two senses of pramāṇa (“authority” and “validity”) in this passage.
88 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāratkā, 112b.2: slob dpon klu sgrub zbys kis de kho na nyid dngos su gzigs pa yin pas des mdzad pa’i bstan bcos kyi sgo nas lung gi gdongs pa shes pa yin no ‘zhes pa’i tha tshig go /.
89 For a nuanced argument for reading Madhyamaka—based on the writings of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, and Tsong kha pa—as a form of skepticism, see Garfield (2002, pp. 3–23). Arnold (2005a, pp. 121–142) likewise provides a fine discussion of how skepticism might illuminate Madhyamaka claims, as part of his reading of Candrakīrti as presenting a transcendental argument.
(abhupagama) the validity of that scripture. While Jayānanda has proven a creative appropriator of Dharmakīrtian arguments, this basic point must hold: Jayānanda’s scriptural valid cognition presupposes acceptance of Nāgārjuna’s authority. Recalling that Jayānanda founds his claims for Nāgārjuna’s status on sūtra prophecies, it could well be that he imagines his audience to be Buddhists of all stripes—those who accept the authority of the Buddha’s sūtras should also accept the authority of Nāgārjuna. However, following his own endorsement of Nāgārjuna as an “authoritative person,” Candrākīrti recommends that Nāgārjuna’s emptiness be taught to those “whose eyes moisten” and “whose hair stands on end” upon hearing the word. Candrākīrti counsels that Nāgārjuna’s treatise “is to be taught only to those who have planted the seeds of emptiness in their [mental] continua by means of previous contemplation”; Jayānanda interpolates “the treatise is to be taught to those whose [mental] continua have the causes of surpassing faith in emptiness.”

While much about Tangut Buddhism remains unknown, it is safe to say that at least while in Tibet Jayānanda operated in a Madhyamaka milieu. Jayānanda’s scriptural valid cognition, then, would seem to be a function of and for Mādhyamikas.

While Mādhyamikas surely need no convincing of Nāgārjuna’s authoritative status, Jayānanda’s reliance on Dharmakīrti’s and Śākyabuddhi’s arguments to make his case for scriptural authority suggests further that he writes for Mādhyamikas well familiar with the Dharmakīrtian epistemological tradition. Jayānanda’s argument claims, in the face of the centuries-old union of Madhyamaka and formal epistemology, that the pre-eminent source of knowledge is not perception or inference, but Nāgārjuna’s authority. Having seen that for Jayānanda svatantra characterizes the chief features of the epistemological tradition, we can surmise that his pejorative “Śvātantrika” encompasses those Mādhyamikas who place a strong premium on the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti edifice. His Candrākīrti-inspired reading, not yet labeled Prāsaṅgika, attempts to redress this trend; it is a conservative restoration of Nāgārjuna’s stature as pramāṇa.

Tillemans astutely suggests that those who mistake Dharmakīrti’s scriptural inference for an “objective” form of inference risk a kind of fundamentalism, in which Buddhist scripture takes on a probative force compelling assent to characteristically Buddhist teachings in the same way that the presence of smoke compels us to deduce fire. Jayānanda may go even a step further, not mistaking scriptural

90 Tillemans (1999b, pp. 43–44).
91 These statements are found in La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, stanza VI.4, 78.2–78.5: so so skye bo’i dus na’ang stong pa nyid thos nas // nang du rab tu dga’ ba yang dang yang du ’byung // rab tu dga’ ba las byung mchi mas mig brlan zhi ng// las kyi ba spu ldang bar gyur pa gang yin pa //. This stanza is quoted in the Subhāśītasaṅggraha (Bendall 1903, pp. 387): prthagjanate ’pi niśamya śūnyatam pramodam antar labhate mahr muhuh / prasādajāśrāvanīpātalocanah tanāruhotphullatunāsa ca jāyate //.
92 La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 77.7–77.8: ...bstan bcos de yang sngar goms pas rgyud la stong pa nyid kyi sa bon bzhag pa rams kho na la bstan par bya...; Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatārāṭkā, 116a.2: sngar goms pas rgyud la stong pa nyid kyi sa bon stong pa nyid la lhaṅ pa rams pa ’i rgyu gang gi rgyud la yod pa de nyid la bstan bcos bstan par bya ba yin te /.
93 Jayānanda uses the expression dbu ma rang rgyud pa at Madhyamakāvatārāṭkā, 281a.6 and 281b.6.
94 Tillemans (1999b, pp. 46–47).
inference for objective inference, but claiming that scripture supersedes objective forms of knowledge. Does Jayānanda’s conservative claim for scripture’s preeminent authority and his concomitant devaluation of perception and inference belie a similar dogmatism, circumscribing reasoned argument? Are we asked to accept Nāgārjuna’s authority uncritically and to develop “surpassing faith in emptiness”? Jayānanda’s response must be a qualified “no.” He and Candrakīrti see Nāgārjuna’s repudiation of “self-production” as taking “the perspective of reasoning.”95 We saw that Jayānanda glossed “the wisdom arising from hearing” as “certainty produced from scriptural valid cognition.”96 While “hearing” Nāgārjuna’s treatise can produce certainty, still required are “thinking” and “meditating”; Jayānanda tells us that “the wisdom arising from thinking” is produced from reasoning.97 While we are indeed told that it is “reasonable” to accept Nāgārjuna’s authoritative status, we are also told to proceed by reflecting on and utilizing the (prasaṅga) reasoning found in his texts. Jayānanda develops an uniquely Madhyamaka model of scriptural authority that goes hand in hand with Candrakīrti’s prasaṅga logic, opposing both svatantra inference and the Buddhist epistemological tradition. Jayānanda’s arguments, then, espouse a traditional account of Buddhist training, now in a Madhyamaka context, in which Nāgārjuna serves as the gateway.

Bibliography


95 rigs pa’i dbang du byas nas /; La Vallée Poussin, Madhyamakāvatāra, 82.18–19 and Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭkā, 120a.2.

96 See note 77.

97 Jayānanda, Madhyamakāvatāraṭṭkā, 5a.5–6: thos pa las byung ba’i shes sab ni yid ches pa lung tshad ma nyid las skies pa’i nges pa yin no / / bsams pa la byung ba ni rig pas nges par brtags pa las skyes pa yin no / / bsgrons pa las byung ba ni ting nge ’dzin las skyes pa yin no /. We can note that Jayānanda does not identify the wisdom arising from thinking with inference, nor does he identify the wisdom arising from meditating with yogic perception.

Springer


