

**The Second Chapter
of the
*Pramanavarttika***

**Handout for the Fall 2014 Term
for the Advanced Buddhist Philosophy Course in
English**

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Introduction

The following handout for the IBD Buddhist philosophy course on the second chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika* contains translations of two texts:

1. The second chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika* (Tib.: *tshad ma rnam 'grel*, Engl.: *Commentary on [Dignaga's Compendium of] Pramana*)
2. The second chapter of Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the *Pramanavarttika*, called *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation, a Detailed Explanation of the Verse Lines of the Pramanavarttika* (Tib.: *tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byes pa rnam bshad thar lam gsal byed*) – usually referred to as *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* (Tib.: *thar lam gsal byed*)

Gyaltsab Je's *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* is interspersed with the *Pramanavarttika*, for the commentary provides detailed expositions on the meaning of the verses of the root text.

Furthermore, since both texts are difficult to comprehend on their own, they are also interspersed with additional explanations by contemporary masters such as Geshe Yeshe Thabgyal, Geshe Palden Drakpa, Geshe Wangchen, Geshe Gyatso, Geshe Tsering Norbu, and others.

As the name of the text implies, Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika* is a commentary on Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana* (Skt: *Pramana-samuccaya*, Tib.: *tshad ma kun btus*). The six chapters of Dignaga's *Compendium* are written in verse and constitute one of the most important works on *Pramana*. Here the Sanskrit term *Pramana* translates as “logic” or “epistemology”, although it literally means “valid cognizer”. This is explained in more detail below.

Dignaga

Dignaga (ca. 450-540 CE) was a proponent of the Chittamatra school Following Reasoning and one of Vasubandhu's four great disciples, each of whom surpassed their teacher in a particular field of Buddhist study. Dignaga was more learned than Vasubandhu in *Pramana*².

Dignaga was born into a Brahmin family in Simhavaktra, near Kanchi in South India. At a young age, he became very proficient in the sacred Brahmin scriptures and the worldly sciences. However, he eventually lost interest in the spiritual system of the Brahmins, developed renunciation for the suffering nature of cyclic existence, and took ordination from a Buddhist teacher called Nagadatta (Tib.: *glang po byin*) of the Vatsiputriya system, a sub-school of the Buddhist Vaibhashika School. Nagadatta named him Dignaga (Tib.: *phyogs kyi glang po*) and gave him extensive teachings on the three baskets according to the Vatsiputriya system.

Followers of the Vatsiputriya system assert a type of self that is inexpressible as something substantially or imputedly existent, or as being the same or different from the five aggregates. Dignaga was instructed by his teacher to meditate on the inexpressible self. In an attempt to find and comprehend the inexpressible self, Dignaga is said to have kindled fires in the four directions, stripped off his clothes, and meditated day and night. When he reported back to his teacher that he was unable to find such a self, his teacher took this as an indirect criticism and sent him to study elsewhere.

Dignaga went to stay at Nalanda Monastery where he became a disciple of Vasubandhu. He studied and mastered the entire body of sutras and treatises of the Hinayana and Mahayana, and became a great tantric practitioner, receiving instructions from Manjushri himself. He also developed great skills in debate and on numerous occasions defended the monastery against learned non-Buddhist scholars who challenged the

² The other three disciples were (1) Shtiramati who was more learned than Vasubandhu in *Abhidharma*, (2) Gunaprabha who was more learned in the *Vinaya*, and (3) Arya Vimuktisena who was more learned in the *Prajnaparamita*.

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monks in debate. Dignaga became particularly renowned for having defeated the great Brahmin scholar, Sudurjaya, who – as a result of losing the debate – converted to Buddhism together with his disciples.

At the time, it was customary for a scholar who lost a debate to adopt, along with his disciples, the spiritual system of the victor.

Dignaga eventually left Nalanda in order to lead a contemplative life in the forests of Orissa. There he resolved to compose what became his most famous work, the ***Compendium of Pramana***, as a compilation of his many previous writings on *Pramana*, which, according to his own description, were fragmentary works. It is said that he wrote the first verse of the ***Compendium***, comprising the homage and promise to compose the text, on a rock at his cave hermitage:

*To the one who has become a valid cognizer, to that which wishes to benefit migrators,
To the "teacher", the "sugata", the "protector", I prostrate.*

*In order to establish valid cognizers, I will herewith create a single compendium of my various
fragmentary writings*

When he wrote those words many auspicious signs occurred, such as light blazing forth, the earth trembling, loud thunder rolling in the sky, and so forth. A Brahmin ascetic called Krishnamuni observed these signs and through his clairvoyance understood that they were the results of Dignaga's writing. Driven by envy, he went to Dignaga's cave while the latter was away on alms-rounds and erased the words. When Dignaga returned, he wrote the verse again, and again Krishnamuni came to erase it. The third time Dignaga left an additional note that read, "Please do not erase this verse just for fun because with this verse I am pursuing a great aim. Also, there is no point in erasing it out of envy since it is in my mind from where it cannot be removed. But if you disagree with these words, you should show yourself, and we will debate." When the auspicious signs occurred a third time, Krishnamuni went again to Dignaga's cave. But upon reading the note he refrained from erasing the verse and waited for Dignaga's return. The two debated and Krishnamuni was defeated three times. When Dignaga asked him to adopt the Buddha Dharma as a result of his defeat, the Brahmin ascetic grew furious and emanated magical flames that burned Dignaga's clothes and possessions.

Distraught and discouraged by the Brahmin's reaction, Dignaga felt that if he could not help the highly intelligent Brahmin, how could he be of benefit to all sentient beings by composing the ***Compendium of Pramana***? He threw the chalk with which he had written the verse up in the air, thinking, "As soon as the chalk touches the ground, I will give up my aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings and instead strive to become self-liberated". But the chalk did not fall back to the ground and when he looked up, he saw Manjushri in the sky, holding the chalk. Manjushri asked Dignaga not to give up his mind of enlightenment, and promised to protect him until he attained the state of a Buddha. He also asked him to compose the ***Compendium*** and prophesied that in the future this commentary would become an eye for migrating beings.

Encouraged by these words, Dignaga composed the ***Compendium of Pramana***, which, along with Dharmakirti's ***Pramanavarttika***, has remained ever since the subject of study, contemplation, and meditation – at first widely in India, and then for centuries in Tibet, Mongolia, and the Himalayan regions.

After completing the text, Dignaga travelled around South India and greatly furthered the spread of Buddhism. One of his main disciples was Ishvarasena (Tib.: *dbang phyung sde*) who composed a commentary on the ***Compendium of Pramana*** and later became one of Dharmakirti's teachers.

Dharmakirti

Dharmakirti (ca. 600-660 CE) was also a follower of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning. He was born to a Brahmin family in Tirumalai in the kingdom of Chudamani of Tamil Nadu. Until the age of eighteen he trained in the Brahminical tradition and became very well-versed in non-Buddhist philosophy. Then, upon reading a Buddhist text, he developed faith in the Buddha Dharma and started to dress in the style of a Buddhist layperson. This angered the Brahmins and he was expelled from his community.

Dharmakirti went to Nalanda monastery where he received ordination and extensive teachings from Dharmapala (Tib.: *chos skyong*). Then he requested Ishvarasena – who was a direct disciple of Dignaga – to teach him the ***Compendium of Pramana***. Ishvarasena taught him the text three times. After the first time,

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Dharmakirti's understanding of the *Compendium* had become equal to that of Ishvarasena; after the second time, it had become equal to Dignaga's; and after the third time Dharmakirti was able to recognize that some of Ishvarasena's assertions were not in accordance with Dignaga's views. After Dharmakirti revealed those mistaken assertions to Ishvarasena, the latter was delighted by his student's intelligence and granted him permission to compose a commentary on the *Compendium of Pramana* in order to refute those assertions.

Dharmakirti was also initiated into the Buddhist tantras, became a highly accomplished practitioner, and had a direct vision of Heruka.

In order to deepen his understanding of non-Buddhist philosophy, Dharmakirti then went to work as the servant of a renowned non-Buddhist scholar, pretending not to be a Buddhist. He served him and his family for several years, learning all the secret points of that philosophical system. Later he challenged and defeated the renowned scholar in debate, converting him and his disciples to Buddhism.

Thereafter, Dharmakirti travelled across India converting many people to Buddhism. Eventually he arrived at the gates of the residence of king Utpullapusa, who had heard of Dharmakirti's great fame and invited him to stay in his kingdom. Dharmakirti accepted and while staying there composed the *Seven Treatises on Pramana* (Tib.: *tshad ma sde bdun*) – one of which is the *Pramanavarttika* – as well as an auto-commentary on the first chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*. However, most contemporary scholars were unable to grasp the meaning of the treatises. The few who understood the meaning, moved by envy, claimed that they were incorrect and tied them with a string to the tail of a dog. Dharmakirti's response was that the dog would run through the different villages and cities, and in that manner spread the treatises. He also added a verse to the beginning of the *Pramanavarttika* (after the verse of homage and the promise to compose the text) that reads:

Most living beings are attached to the mundane and not endowed with the dexterity of wisdom.

Not only are they not interested in excellent teachings, they are hateful owing to the defilement of envy.

This is why the thought that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others does not occur.³

However, since I have generated great effort familiarizing [my] mind with excellent teachings, I am happy [to compose the treatise].

Sometime later Dharmakirti taught the *Pramanavarttika* to two of his main disciples, Devendrabodhi (Tib.: *lha dbang blo*) and Shakyabodhi (Tib.: *sha'kya blo*). Afterwards, he asked Devendrabodhi to compose a commentary on the text. However, displeased with the first draft Dharmakirti washed it away with water; displeased with the second draft he burned it. He finally accepted the third draft but criticized it, remarking that although the explicit meaning of the text was conveyed, the deeper implicit meaning was not. Thinking that no one would be able to properly comprehend his text, Dharmakirti added the following line to the end of the *Pramanavarttika*:

Just as a river into the ocean, [the meaning of this treatise] will dissolve into my body and disappear.

Towards the end of his life Dharmakirti founded a school and a temple at Kalinga, where he passed away.

Both Dignaga and Dharmakirti strongly affected the course not only of Buddhist philosophy, but of Indian philosophy in general. Their expositions on language, negation, direct perception, etc. were highly influential among both Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophers, but their greatest impact derived from their analysis of inferential reasoning.

Dignaga and Dharmakirti are often described as Buddhist logicians, for they formulated a system of logic and epistemology that was based on a new form of deductive reasoning. Yet this does not mean that they were chiefly interested in the formal properties of reasoning. Instead, they regarded logic as a useful tool that

³ In the first class (October 1, 2014), Geshe Kelsang Wangmo explains the difficulties this line presents for translation and suggests other renderings. See, p. 21 of Class Notes - download from ibd-buddhist.blogspot.com.

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enables Buddhist practitioners to eliminate their misperceptions, replace them with correct apprehensions of reality and eventually attain liberation and Buddhahood.

The debate format that is still very popular among Tibetan Buddhist students of debate is based largely on Dignaga and Dharmakirti's works. Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika*, in particular, provides Tibetan Buddhist philosophers with a standard vocabulary that is used as a framework for analysis of the various Buddhist scriptures. It also represents the epistemological foundation of the curriculum in many Tibetan monastic institutions.

Gyaltsab Je

Gyaltsab Darma Rinchen (1364–1432) was born in Tsang province of central Tibet. He was ordained as a monk at the age of ten and given the name Darma Rinchen (*dar ma rin chen*). Gyaltsab Je studied at the Sakya Monastery, the Kadam monastery of Sangpu (*gsang phu*), and the Kagyu monastery Tsetang (*rtse thang* – which later converted to the Geluk tradition). Like Lama Tsongkhapa, he was also a student of the renowned Sakya Master Rendawa Zhoenu Lodroe (*red mda' ba gzhon nu blo gros*).

After extensive study of the Prajnaparamita, Pramana, Vinaya, and so forth Gyaltsab Je became an accomplished and eloquent scholar of the Sakya tradition, famed for his intellect and knowledge. While visiting different monasteries in Central Tibet, he met Lama Tsongkhapa. He had heard of Lama Tsongkhapa's fame and went to attend one of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings at Ratrong Monastery. As Gyaltsab Je listened to Lama Tsongkhapa, he was astounded by the clarity and profundity of his teaching, and generated great faith. From that time on, Gyaltsab Je was completely devoted to Lama Tsongkhapa and became one of his main disciples. He received extensive teachings from Lama Tsongkhapa and took copious notes. Being a prolific writer he composed numerous commentaries (such as the *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation*). He also supervised the construction of Ganden Monastery.

Before Lama Tsongkhapa passed away, he appointed Gyaltsab Je as the first 'throne holder' of the Ganden (or Gelug) tradition.

The Seven Treatises on Pramana

As mentioned above, Dharmakirti composed seven commentaries on the *Compendium of Pramana*, referred to as the *Seven Treatises on Pramana* (Tib.: *tshad ma sde bdun*). These seven texts can be categorized into:

- i. Three treatises that are like a body and
- ii. Four treatises that are like branches.

The three treatises that are like a body are:

- a) *Pramanavarttika* (Tib.: *tshad ma rnam 'grel*, Engl.: *Commentary on [Dignaga's Compendium of] Pramana*)
- b) *Pramanaviniscaya* (Tib.: *tshad ma rnam nges*, Engl.: *Ascertainment of Pramana*)
- c) *Nyayabindu* (Tib.: *rigs thigs*, Engl.: *Drops of Reasoning*)

The four treatises that are like branches are:

- a) *Hetubindu* (Tib.: *gtan tshigs thig pa*, Engl.: *Drops of Logic*)
- b) *Sambandhapariksha* (Tib.: *'brel ba brtag pa*, Engl.: *Investigating Relations*)
- c) *Samtanantarassiddhi* (Tib.: *rgyud gzhan grub pa*, Engl.: *Proof of Other [Mental] Continua*)
- d) *Vadanyaya* (Tib.: *rtsod pa'i rigs pa*, Engl.: *Reasoning of Debate*)

The three *treatises that are like a body* are general elaborations on the *Compendium of Pramana* on logic and epistemology. The first is the most extensive, the second is slightly shorter, and the third is the shortest. These three are *treatises that are like a body* because they each teach the eight 'pivotal points of logic' (Tib.: *rtog ge'i tshig don rgyad*).

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The eight 'pivotal points of logic' are:

1. Correct inferential cognizers (Tib.: *rjes dpag yang dag*)
2. False inferential cognizers (Tib.: *rjes dpag ltar snang*)
3. Correct direct perceivers (Tib.: *mngon sum yang dag*)
4. False direct perceivers (Tib.: *mngon sum ltar snang*)
5. Correct proof statements (Tib.: *sgrub ngag yang dag*)
6. False proof statements (Tib.: *sgrub ngag ltar snang*)
7. Correct refutations (Tib.: *sun 'byin yang dag*)
8. False refutations (Tib.: *sun 'byin ltar snang*)

Each of the three texts teaches the eight 'pivotal points of logic' by *primarily* teaching the four correct pivotal points, while teaching the four false pivotal points in an *ancillary* fashion.

The last four texts are *treatises that are like branches* because they do not teach all eight 'pivotal points of logic' but only some of them, and because they are just supplements to the first, third, or fourth chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*. The *Hetubindu* (on correct reasons) and *Sambandhapariksha* (on the relationship between correct reasons and predicates) are supplements to the first chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*, while the *Vadanyaya* (on the issue of other minds) is a supplement to the third and the *Samtanantarasiddhi* (on debate techniques etc.) is a supplement to the fourth chapter.

The eight pivotal points of logic

Among the four 'correct pivotal points of logic', (1) correct inferential cognizers and (3) correct direct perceivers are considered to be the tools that facilitate our own understanding; they function mainly for our own benefit, for they enable us to accomplish our personal short- and long-term goals by replacing harmful misperceptions with well-founded recognition of reality.

(1) *Correct* inferential cognizers and inferential cognizers are equivalent. Inferential cognizers are conceptual consciousnesses that realize their main objects in dependence on correct reasons. These types of consciousness are essential for Buddhist practice because they facilitate the realization of essential concepts, such as the suffering nature of cyclic existence, impermanence, selflessness, etc. which need to be apprehended in order to gradually eliminate the numerous misperceptions that are responsible for our problems and difficulties. However, most of these essential concepts are slightly hidden phenomena and cannot be perceived initially without relying on logical reasoning. Logical reasoning, in turn, relies on logically correct syllogisms. An example of such a syllogism is:

Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is impermanent, because it is a product of its own causes and conditions. Like the last moment of a candle flame, for instance.

A correct syllogism has four parts: a (i) subject, (ii) predicate, (iii) correct reason, and (iv) example. In the case of the syllogism cited above, "physical body" is the subject, "impermanent" the predicate, "being a product of its own causes and conditions" the correct reason, and "the last moment of the candle flame" the example. Furthermore, the composite of the two, the subject (physical body) and the predicate (impermanent), constitutes the *object that is to be established* (Tib.: *bsgrub bya*). Hence, "the physical body is impermanent" is the above syllogism's *object that is to be established*.

After having realized the different aspects of the syllogism – e.g. that *the physical body is a product of its own causes and conditions*, that *whatever is a product of its own causes and conditions is necessarily impermanent*, and so forth, a practitioner eventually generates an inferential cognizer realizing the *object that is to be established*, i.e. realizing that the physical body is impermanent. Since such realization arises in dependence on a correct reason (being a product of its own causes and conditions) inferential cognizers are described as conceptual consciousnesses that realize their main objects (e.g. that the physical body is impermanent) in dependence on correct reasons.

(3) *Correct* direct perceivers and direct perceivers are also equivalent. Direct perceivers refer to correct sense or mental consciousnesses that perceive their main object directly without relying on a generic image.

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Examples of direct perceivers are sense direct perceivers, such as an eye consciousness apprehending a table, an ear consciousness apprehending a song, a nose consciousness apprehending the smell of perfume, and so forth. These sense consciousnesses realize phenomena that are obvious or manifest (i.e. not hidden), such as shapes, colors, sounds, etc. Other examples of direct perceiver are self-knowers (which are explained below), clairvoyant awarenesses, and yogic direct perceivers. Yogic direct perceivers are mental direct perceivers that directly realize their main objects (e.g. impermanence, selflessness etc.) in dependence on prolonged and extensive meditation.

Direct perceivers are essential to Buddhist practice. Although hidden phenomena are realized for the first time by inferential cognizers, such a realization is not sufficient for practitioners aspiring to transform their mind and attain liberation or Buddhahood. Such a realization is not sufficient because inferential cognizers are conceptual consciousnesses that do not realize their objects directly but through a generic image.

For instance, an inferential cognizer realizing selflessness does not realize selflessness directly but through the generic image of selflessness. Hence, a practitioner who has cultivated an inferential cognizer realizing selflessness continues to familiarize with the conceptual consciousness realizing selflessness until, after prolonged and intense meditation, that consciousness transforms into a yogic direct perceiver realizing selflessness, which is strong enough to serve as an effective antidote to the misperception of the self and to other afflictions.

Ordinary direct perceivers, such as sense direct perceivers, are also significant in Buddhist practice, for they enable practitioners to listen to teachings, read the scriptures, etc. They also facilitate inferential cognition of a hidden phenomenon. For instance, a practitioner who generated the inferential cognizer realizing that the physical body is impermanent in dependence on the above syllogism (*Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is impermanent, because it is the product of its own causes and conditions*) must have realized, prior to generating such an inferential cognizer, that *the physical body is the product of its own causes and conditions*. But unlike the *physical body being impermanent*, the *physical body being a product of its own causes and conditions* is not a hidden phenomenon, for it can be realized for the first time by an eye consciousness.

(5) Correct proof statements and (7) correct refutations are considered to be the tools that facilitate others' understanding, which is why they are mainly for the benefit of others. After having attained realizations ourselves by means of inferential cognizers and direct perceivers, we need to assist others in attaining the same realizations by refuting their wrong views with correct refutations, and by generating realizations in their mental continuums through proof statements.

(5) Correct proof statements are verbal statements that express a correct syllogism. An example of a proof statement is, "Whatever is a product of its own causes and conditions is necessarily impermanent. Like the last moment of a candle flame, for instance. Likewise, the physical body is also a product of its own causes and conditions." Here these words state that just as the last moment of a candle flame is impermanent because it is a product of its own causes and conditions, likewise the physical body is impermanent because it is a product of its own causes and conditions.

Therefore, the words of the proof statement express the following syllogism:

Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is impermanent, because it is a product of its own causes and conditions. Like the last moment of a candle flame, for instance.

In dependence on hearing that proof statement, a person who has not yet realized that the physical body is impermanent is able to cultivate an inferential cognizer realizing that the physical body is impermanent.

(7) Correct refutations refer to correct consequences. Like a syllogism, a consequence is a form of logical statement which one cites to help another person first to recognize and then to let go of a wrong view. A consequence is stated in such a way as to reveal the absurdity of that person's wrong view; it turns his own assertions against him, so that he is unable to give a correct response without contradicting what he asserted.

For instance, to a person who holds that (a) the physical body is permanent, that (b) the physical body is a product of its own causes and conditions, and that (c) whatever is a product of its own causes and conditions is necessarily impermanent, the following consequence is cited:

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Regarding the subject, the physical body, it follows that it is not a product of its own causes and condition because it is permanent.

In this case, the person accepts that *the physical body is permanent*, which is why he cannot claim that the **reason is not established** (i.e. he cannot claim that it is not correct that the physical body is permanent) Since he accepts the forward and counter-pervasions (i.e. that whatever is *permanent is necessarily not a product of its own causes and conditions*, and whatever is *a product of its own causes and conditions is necessarily not permanent*) he cannot claim that there is **no pervasion**. Lastly he cannot even accept that the physical body is not a product of its own causes and conditions, for that would contradict his original assertion that *the physical body is a product of its own causes and conditions*. He is thus left speechless.

The person comes to realize that his views are contradictory, which enables him to reassess his beliefs until he is convinced of the fact that the physical body is impermanent. After he has reached this conviction, one cites a proof statement expressing a syllogism that establishes that the physical body is impermanent. As mentioned above, in dependence on that syllogism the person is able to eventually generate an inferential cognizer *realizing* that the physical body is impermanent.

Regarding the four 'false pivotal points of logic', (2) false inferential cognizers refer to conceptual consciousnesses that are not actual inferential cognizers because they do not realize their objects. An example of a false inferential cognizer is a correctly assuming consciousness perceiving that the physical body is impermanent, which did not arise in dependence on a syllogism. Another example is a correctly assuming consciousness perceiving that the physical body is impermanent, which arose in dependence on a wrong syllogism. A wrong syllogism is a logically incorrect syllogism and therefore does not lead to an inferential cognizer realizing the syllogism's *object that is to be established*. For instance, the following syllogism: *Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is impermanent, because it exists*, is a wrong syllogism since there is 'no pervasion'. There is 'no pervasion' because whatever exists is not necessarily impermanent. Whatever exists is not necessarily impermanent because there are phenomena that are permanent.

Another example of a wrong syllogism is: *Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is permanent because it is unchangeable*. This is a wrong syllogism because the reason is not an attribute of the subject, i.e. the physical body is not unchangeable. Such a wrong syllogism may give rise to a wrong conceptual consciousness perceiving the physical body to be permanent, which is also a false inferential cognizer.

(4) False direct perceivers refer to conceptual consciousnesses or wrong non-conceptual awarenesses. Since false direct perceivers are either conceptual or wrong consciousnesses they are not actual direct perceivers. Examples include a conceptual consciousness realizing selflessness, an eye consciousness perceiving a blue snow mountain, and a memory consciousness remembering a table.

(6) False proof statements are statements that express a wrong syllogism. This means that wrong proof statements express a logically incorrect syllogism in dependence on which one cannot generate an inferential cognizer realizing the syllogism's *object that is to be established*. An example of a false proof statement is: "Whatever is unchangeable is necessarily permanent. Like the absence of an elephant on the table, for instance. The physical body is also unchangeable." This statement is a false proof statement because it expresses the following wrong syllogism: *Regarding the subject, the physical body, it is permanent because it is unchangeable. Like the absence of an elephant on the table, for instance.*

(8) Wrong consequences are consequences that do not reveal the absurdities of a person's wrong view, so that the person is unable to become aware of his contradictory assertions. An example of a wrong consequence is:

Regarding the subject, the physical body, it follows that it is not a product of its own causes and conditions because it is permanent.

addressed to a person who holds that (a) the physical body is permanent, that (b) the physical body is a product of its own causes and conditions, but who does not hold that (c) whatever is a product of its own causes and conditions is necessarily impermanent.

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It is important to identify and understand these false ‘pivotal points of logic’, for practitioners may confuse them with their correct counterparts.

The *Pramanavarttika*

Among the *Seven Treatises of Pramana*, the most popular one is the *Pramanavarttika*, which in Tibet, Mongolia, and the Himalaya region in particular, has been more widely studied than Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana*.

The *Pramanavarttika* is written in verse and has four chapters:

1. The chapter on inference for one's own benefit (Skt.: *Svarthanumana*, Tib.: *rang don rjes dpag gi le'u*)
2. The chapter on the establishment of a valid cognizer (Skt.: *Pramanasiddhi*, Tib.: *tshad ma grub pa'i le'u*)
3. The chapter on direct perception (Skt.: *Pratyaksha*, Tib.: *mngon sum le'u*)
4. The chapter on inference for others' benefit (Skt.: *Prarthanumana*, Tib.: *gzhan don rjes dpag gi le'u*)

The chapter on inference for one's own benefit

Unlike the last three chapters of the *Pramanavarttika*, the first does not actually elaborate on any of the verses or chapters of Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana*, but serves as an introductory chapter to the text. It sets forth inferential cognizers (both the correct and false inferential cognizers, among the eight ‘pivotal points of logic’) because, as Dharmakirti explains in his auto-commentary on the first chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*:

Thorough discernment of that which is factual and that which is not depends on inferential cognizers.

Therefore, study and contemplation of the first chapter aids practitioners in cultivating inferential cognizers in their mental continuum, which in turn facilitates their comprehension of the last three chapters.

However, instead of explaining the inferential cognizers themselves, the first chapter expounds on that which mainly gives rise to inferential cognizers, i.e. correct syllogisms, and presents their general structure, categories, definitions, and so forth.

The chapter on the establishment of a valid cognizer

The second chapter of the *Pramanavarttika* is the most important one. It comments only on the first two lines of Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana*, which constitute the homage to Buddha Shakyamuni. Elaborating on the two lines of homage, the second chapter presents liberation, Buddhahood, and the paths that lead to these two states. Dharmakirti presents liberation, Buddhahood, and the paths that lead there by way of establishing that the Buddha is a ‘valid cognizer’. However, this does not mean that the Buddha is literally a valid cognizer, because valid cognizers are consciousnesses while the Buddha is not a consciousness but a person. Instead, it means that the Buddha is a ‘valid cognizer being’. The Buddha is a ‘valid cognizer being’ because, through his own power (without depending on another teacher), he unerringly and effortlessly teaches those seeking release whatever they need to know to reach their goal.

As part of establishing that the Buddha is a ‘valid cognizer being’, the second chapter also sets forth past and future lives, the four noble truths, and so forth.

Some scholars explain that the reason why Dharmakirti composed the second chapter is that at the time, numerous critics expressed their disapproval of Dignaga's works on Pramana. As mentioned above, Pramana literally means ‘valid cognizer’. Valid cognizers are awarenesses that are newly non-deceptive, i.e. that newly realize their main objects. There are two types of valid cognizers: (a) direct valid cognizers (i.e. valid cognizers that are direct perceivers) and (b) inferential valid cognizers (i.e. valid cognizers that are inferential cognizers).

One of the main objectives of the Pramana literature is to teach practitioners the means of cultivating correct apprehension of the essential concepts of the Buddha Dharma. Such apprehension depends primarily on realizing phenomena that are currently hidden to us and which we can realize initially only with inferential

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cognizers. Inferential cognizers in turn depend on correct syllogisms and thus on logical reasoning. Since the Pramana literature elucidates such logical reasoning and the way to utilize it as a tool to comprehend impermanence, selflessness, and so forth, commentaries on Pramana are usually referred to as commentaries on “logic” or “epistemology”, and the study of Pramana is referred to as the study of “logic” or “epistemology”.

However, many Indian scholars were unable to recognize the value of Dignaga’s work. Some claimed that teachings on Pramana (i.e. logic or epistemology) were not based on the teachings of the Buddha. Others alleged that the main purpose of the Pramana literature was to defeat an opponent in debate and that it was of no use to those aspiring to attain liberation or Buddhahood.

Therefore, Dharmakirti taught the second chapter of the *Pramanavarttika* to counteract these assertions by demonstrating the significance of the Pramana literature with respect to studying, contemplating, and meditating on past and future lives, the four noble truths, liberation, Buddhahood, and so forth.

Please note that even though in general, the *Pramanavarttika* is based on the point of view of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning, the second chapter is from the perspective of the Sautrantika School.

The chapter on direct perception and the chapter on inference for others’ benefit

The last two chapters of the *Pramanavarttika* comment on the actual body of Dignaga’s *Compendium of Pramana*, i.e. the six chapters of the text. Among the eight ‘pivotal points of logic’, the third chapter presents correct and false direct perceivers, and the fourth chapter, correct and false proof statements as well as correct and false refutations.

Elucidation of the Path to Liberation

Dharmakirti’s verses are very terse and their meaning often difficult to access. Therefore, students of the *Pramanavarttika* mostly rely on one or more of its commentaries.

One of these commentaries is Gyaltsab Je’s *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* (which is written in prose). It is one of the foremost Tibetan commentaries on the *Pramanavarttika* still studied, debated, and meditated on in most Gelugpa monastic institutions; it is thus part of a living and vibrant philosophical tradition. Contemporary masters regularly refer to it (and Dharmakirti’s root text) when explaining past and future lives, the four noble truths, liberation, Buddhahood, and so forth.

Gyaltsab Je composed the *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* based on the Indian commentaries on the *Pramanavarttika*. However, unlike most Indian commentators, Gyaltsab Je provides extremely detailed outlines, as is customary in many Tibetan treatises. The *Elucidation* structures Dharmakirti’s root text by way of dividing it into numerous textual sections, with each section having a different heading. The advantage of such a systematic format is that the text becomes more accessible and easier to comprehend.

Furthermore, not only does Gyaltsab Je offer comprehensive explanations of the meaning of Dharmakirti’s verses, he also provides lengthy discussions, thought-provoking analysis, and invaluable summaries.

In the *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation*, he begins the presentation of the second chapter by prostrating to the revered Gurus. Thereafter, he cites the “second heading”, which is the main heading of the second chapter. This heading is referred to as the “second heading”, for it is the second of three headings cited at the beginning of the *Elucidation*. These three are really the subheadings of an earlier heading, which together with yet another heading constitute the basic headings of the four chapters of the *Pramanavarttika*. The two basic headings are:

- (1) The means for oneself to ascertain liberation and the paths that lead there
- (2) Having ascertained these, the means of assisting others [to ascertain liberation and the paths that lead there]

Of these two, the second is the main heading of the fourth chapter, while the first (as mentioned above) is the one that has three sub-headings:

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- (1.1) The means of ascertaining hidden phenomena
- (1.2) An explanation of the objects of ascertainment – liberation, omniscience, and the paths that lead there
- (1.3) The means of ascertaining obvious/manifest phenomena

Among the three subheadings, the first is the main heading of the first chapter, the second is the main heading of the second chapter, and the third is the main heading of the third chapter.

After citing the main heading of the second chapter, Gyaltsab Je gives a short introduction to the second chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*, in which he briefly explains the meaning of the two lines of homage of Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana* and the reason for establishing that the Buddha is a 'valid cognizer being'. Thereafter he starts his elucidation of the verses in Dharmakirti's second chapter.

Questions for studying the *Introduction*

- Who composed the *Compendium of Pramana* and how many chapters does it have?
- Who composed the *Pramanavarttika* and how many chapters does it have?
- Who composed the *Elucidation of the Path of Liberation*?
- Which of these three commentaries are written in verse and which are written in prose?
- On which text does the *Pramanavarttika* primarily comment?
- On which text does the *Elucidation of the Path of Liberation* primarily comment?
- Which philosophical tenet school does Dignaga follow?
- Which philosophical tenet school does Dharmakirti follow?
- Which philosophical tenet school does Gyaltsab Je follow?
- Among the *Seven Treatises of the Pramana*, which are the three treatises that are like a body, and which four treatises are like branches?
- Which of the three *treatises that are like a body* is the longest and which one is the shortest?
- How are Dignaga and Dharmakirti significant from the point of view of logic or epistemology?
- Why are the first three treatises *like a body*, and the last four *like branches*?
- What are the eight 'pivotal points of logic'? Think of an example for each of the eight.
- Which of the eight 'pivotal points of logic' are mainly for one's own benefit, and which are mainly for the benefit of others?
- Why are the four correct 'pivotal points of logic' important for Buddhist practice?
- Why are the four false 'pivotal points of logic' explained?
- What does an inferential cognizer depend upon in order to realize its main object?
- What is main subject matter of the first chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*?
- What is main subject matter of the second chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*?
- What is main subject matter of the third chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*?
- What is main subject matter of the fourth chapter of the *Pramanavarttika*?
- Why did Dharmakirti compose the second chapter?
- Why is the topic of logic or epistemology called "Pramana", i.e. "valid cognizer"?
- How is the *Elucidation of the Path of Liberation* different from most Indian commentaries?

