

## *Jaina Scriptures and Philosophy: An Essential Contribution to the History of Philosophy in Jainism*

---

MARIE-HÉLÈNE GORISSE

Ghent University, Belgium (mhgorisse@gmail.com)

ed. Peter Flügel and Olle Qvarnström, *Jaina Scriptures and Philosophy*, London: Routledge Advances in Jain Studies, 2015, pp. 258 +xii

*This paper is a review of the nine chapters more directly concerned with philosophy of the volume Jaina Scriptures and Philosophy. Edited in 2015 by Peter Flügel and Olle Qvarnström, this interdisciplinary volume in philosophy, philology, linguistics, literary studies and history is presented as an essential contribution to the study of Jaina philosophy inasmuch as it offers a collection of cutting-edge analyses on the emergence and development of philosophical concepts such as the Self and its epistemic faculties, with a focus on early Jaina canonical literature and commentaries thereof.*

Key words: Jainism; soteriology; karma; self; non-violence; perspectivism; omniscience; realism

Jainism is a path of salvation in which metaphysical, ethical and epistemological considerations go hand in hand. It is at the same time an influential religion, one of the oldest surviving of the world, with a strongly recognizable identity since the teaching of the spiritual leader Mahāvīra (599-527/510 BCE); and a systematic philosophy whose thinkers contributed to the development of South Asian philosophies. First, Jaina metaphysics is an atomist and dualist conception of the world in which the nature of the self, the nature of karmic matter,<sup>1</sup> as well as their principles of association, are taught. Second, Jaina ethics consists of practices focused on non-violence, non-absolutism and non-attachment. These practices aim to disentangle the self and karmic matter until the individual reaches omniscience and liberation. Third, Jaina epistemology features a perspectivism, according to which the knowable is a complex object that no one-sided perspective can fully describe. From this, Jaina thinkers are especially renowned for presenting lists of types of parameters relevant in evaluating knowledge statements.

The 2015 volume, *Jaina Scriptures and Philosophy* edited by Peter Flügel (SOAS, London) and Olle Qvarnström (Lund University), is the fourth book of the *Routledge Advances in Jaina Studies* series edited by Peter Flügel and consists of the proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Jaina studies workshop held at SOAS (London) in March 2009. It is an essential contribution to the study of Jaina philosophy inasmuch as it offers a collection of cutting-edge analyses on the emergence and development of philosophical concepts, with a focus on early Jaina canonical literature along its commentaries. The history of the development of philosophical notions is precious to shape our understanding of later, more systematic, philosophical treatises. In the case of Jaina philosophy, this study especially shows (i) that early epistemological considerations manifest a religious and doctrinal perspective, in the sense that the dominant concern is not the investigation into the nature and function of the means to gain new knowledge, but that it is most importantly the teaching of correct faith and correct knowledge, and the prescription of correct (monastic) behavior in order to get rid of karmic matter (chapters 8 and 9); (ii) that philosophical considerations are not restricted to theoretical treatises, but that there is a significant role of texts from other bodies of knowledge, like the literary corpus (chapters 1, 2, and 10); (iii) that the historical proximity with other

traditions also contributed to shape the theories, as in the case of the conception of the self in Ājīvikism (chapters 1, 5, and 9); and (iv) that there is no one official Jaina theory on a given issue, but a tradition of distinct conceptions, as it is manifest for the theories of the seven-fold modal description (chapter 11). This interdisciplinary volume in philosophy, philology, linguistics, literary studies and history of Jainism is a contribution to these lines of analysis over three main sections, namely “scriptures,” “karman and ethics,” and “aspects of philosophy.”

First, the “aspects of philosophy” section of the volume opens with a chapter by Jayandra Soni (Philipps University of Marburg) titled “aspects of philosophy in the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*.” This chapter investigates the uses of “*jñāna*” and of “*darśana*”—consciously left un-translated by the author (I would suggest “cognition” and “world view” as a departure point) in the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, the *Scripture in Six parts*, which is the oldest (2<sup>nd</sup> century) Digambara detailed text on karman. Soni’s main argument seems to be that in order to make sense of the philosophical theoretical developments of this text, one has to keep in mind that this is first of all a treatise on karman. For example, “world view” and “cognition” are not primarily distinguished because the first is an indeterminate epistemic stance, while the latter is determinate, as they are traditionally distinguished in later systematic treatises on types of cognition (*pramāṇa*). But they are primarily distinguished on account of the fact that different types of karmic matter—as defined in religious doctrinal texts—obstruct them. Unfortunately, Soni does not give more details.

Building on a similar dynamic, the next chapter, “Sensuous Cognition—*pratyakṣa* or *parokṣa*?” Jinabhadra’s Reading of the *Nandīsūtra*” by Anne Clavel (University of Aix-en-Provence and Lyon), is a thorough investigation of the evolution of the classification of the types of cognition in Jaina epistemology. There are many classifications of the types of cognition in Jainism. In the canonical period, five types are recognized, namely ordinary cognition (*matī*), testimony (*śruta*), cosmic knowledge (*avadhī*), mental knowledge (*manahparyāya*), and absolute knowledge (*kevala*). After the canonical period, attempts are made to incorporate Naiyāyika conceptions, which represent the inter-doctrinal reference theory for epistemological considerations, especially the distinction between direct and indirect cognition; as well as the classification into perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), analogy (*upamāna*), and authoritative discourse (*śabda*). Within this background, Clavel’s chapter offers an innovative solution to the following traditional tension: in Jainism, the direct (*pratyakṣa*) types of cognition are cosmic, mental and absolute cognitions, which involve nothing but the activity of the self; while sensuous cognition, with perception (also called *pratyakṣa*) as its representative, is indirect inasmuch as, besides the activity of the self, it also involves that of the senses. Clavel first investigates the position of the *Sthānāṅgasūtra*, *Canonical Chapters*, and of the *Tattvārthasūtra*, *Treatise on what there is*,<sup>2</sup> in which sensuous cognition belongs to the indirect category. Then, she indicates that this conception coexists with the view developed in the *Anuyogadvāra*, *Introduction to the Types of Analysis*, according to which both sensuous and direct types of cognition are posited under the “*pratyakṣa*” category. Finally, she presents the conception of the *Nandīsūtra*, the *Auspicious*, in which this state of hesitancy is also present, since both classifications are endorsed, along with the solution to this apparent inconsistency in Jinabhadra’s *Vīśeṣāvāśyakabhāṣya*, *Commentary to the Fundamental [Treatise] on Duties*, 6<sup>th</sup> c. In this commentary, Jinabhadra makes use of the recognized Jaina perspectivism to state that from the conventional point of view of other faculties, sensuous cognition is direct, since it does not involve another faculty than the one focused on; while from the ultimate point of view of the self, sensuous cognition is indirect, since besides the activity of the self, it also involves the activity of one sense.

Second, next to the attempts to harmonize canonical and later systematic epistemology, as well as contributions of other traditions with Jaina ones, the present volume also highlights the significance for philosophical analysis of texts from other bodies of knowledge. This is especially manifest in the presentation by Herman Tieken (Leiden University) of the *Uttarajjāyā*, *The Final Lesson*. This Prakrit work is the first of the four *Mūlasūtra*, the four *Root Manuals* of the Jaina Śvetāmbara<sup>3</sup> canon. It was probably written in the first centuries of the common era, although Tieken does not indicate nor discuss its dating.

The *Uttarajjhāyā* is a compilation containing multiple types of material, such as edifying stories, descriptions of ritual practice, expositions of Jaina doctrine or chant-like poetry. The aim of Tieken's chapter is to propose a rationale behind the apparent un-ordered arrangement of the chapters of this work. His main argument is that the whole text is ordered to describe the four steps in the path to liberation, namely: the obtainment of a human condition, which is the first condition, because only human beings can realize liberation; the acquisition of correct knowledge; the fervor to follow rules of behavior prescribed by those who have correct knowledge, and which will prevent the influx of new karman; and the performance of austerities, which will conduce to the purgation of old karman. With such an ordering proposition, Tieken touches on an important specificity of Indian traditions, which is to consider the different types of philosophical investigation foremost as means to progress in the path to salvation. The *Uttarajjhāyā* is one of the most important canonical works of Jainism, it features philosophical considerations on the nature of the self at their unsystematic stage. It is furthermore one of the oldest and most detailed source available to scholars to understand how what is now called "Jainism" distinguished itself from other paths of salvation, especially (i) from Brahmanism—by reinterpreting sacrificial rites in terms of inner fight; (ii) from the doctrine of Pārśva—an older ascetic order that become assimilated to Jainism; and (iii) from Ājīvikism—a long-extinct determinist vision of the world, from which Jains borrowed conceptions such as the theory of the colors of the self. Tieken's present chapter will help scholars to find their way in this important and complex multidisciplinary treatise.

Furthermore, an especially tight relationship between philosophy and literature is illustrated by the chapter titled "Vasudeva the philosopher. Soul<sup>4</sup> and body in Saṅghadāsa's *Vasudevahiṇḍī*," in which Anna Aurelia Esposito (Würzburg University) presents her translation of a philosophical section of the *Vasudevahiṇḍī*, *The Roaming of Vasudeva*, written by Saṅghadāsa between 450 and the 6<sup>th</sup> century. This work is part of a tradition of story-telling which transmits moral and religious teaching. The section Esposito focuses on is a discussion on the existence of the self (*āyā*), where Jains refute the materialist thesis according to which consciousness arises as a mere fermentation produced by the combination of the five elements, without the need to postulate the existence of the self as a separate entity. She draws parallels with similar refutations to be found in other narrative works, namely in the story of Paesi told in the canonical subsidiary limb *Rāyapaseṇiya*, *A book of King's Questions*, written before 350–450; and in Haribhadra's 8<sup>th</sup> century *Samarāicakabhā*, the *Story of Samarāicca*. This narrative tradition is significant for Jaina philosophers, not only as a tool for a more effective transmission, but also inasmuch as they consider that the different disciplines of knowledge form a coherent whole.<sup>5</sup>

Another example of this fluidity between philosophy and literature in Jainism is presented in the chapter, "A Rare Manuscript of the *Bhagavatī Ārādhana*," authored by Prem Suman Jain (Shukhadia University, Udaipur and Bahubali Prakrit Vidyapith, Hassan). In this chapter, Jain offers a comprehensive review of the manuscripts, editions, Hindi translations, and commentaries of the *Bhagavatī Ārādhana*, *Divine Worship*. Composed in Sanskrit by Śivarāya in the second century of the common era, this work offers a description of philosophico-religious doctrines, like the three jewels of Jainism, namely correct faith, correct knowledge and correct behavior, and of ascetic practices, with a focus on voluntary death.<sup>6</sup> This work is especially noteworthy because of its influence in the constitution of the *Kathakośas*, *Compendiums of Stories*, a genre of the Jaina narratives dedicated to the edification of laity.<sup>7</sup>

Third, the present volume points out the influence of other traditions in the development of Jaina philosophy. Already addressed in the presentations of Clavel and of Tieken, the influence of other traditions is found again in the chapter that Olle Qvarnström dedicated to a study of "The *Nīyatidvātriṃśikā* ascribed to Siddhasena Divākara". The *Nīyatidvātriṃśikā*, *The Thirty-Two on [the world-view that advocates] Predestination*, written probably in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, is part of a broader work, the *Dvātriṃśikā*, *The Thirty-Two*, which is one of the earliest Jaina doxography. Qvarnström first shows that it is very unlikely that the thirty-two books that constitute it are authored by a single person, Siddhasena Divākara. Instead, his hypothesis is that this compilation, as a series of accounts from the Jaina community to the Jaina community of other world-views, was more probably a multi-authored work of edition. Then,

Qvarnström presents one input of the Jaina practice of doxography, which is to give us contrasting perspectives on a given tradition. This is especially useful in the case of disappeared traditions, such as the one of the Ājīvikas. As a case-study, Qvarnström shows how the *Nīyatīdvātrīṃśīkā* gives us new insights on the Ājīvika doctrine. More precisely, according to the Ājīvikas the self undergoes a predetermined series of birth until it reaches liberation. This process is settled and will run its course independently of the good, respectively bad, behavior of the embodied self. Thanks to the *Nīyatīdvātrīṃśīkā*, we learn that Ājīvikas also held a doctrine of two ways, conventional and ultimate, to relate to the world. In this conception, only the ultimate perspective is determinist. Furthermore, the study of such a doxography suggests deep links between the Jains and the Ājīvikas, since this stance is close to that of the Jain Kundakunda when he claims that from the absolute perspective, the infinite modifications of substance are fixed in sequential order.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the present volume emphasizes the plurality of Jaina conceptions, especially in its final chapter, “Do Attempts to Formalize the *syādvāda* Make Sense?”, authored by Piotr Balcerowicz (University of Warsaw). In this 67-page study, Balcerowicz aims to clarify the renowned Jaina theory of the seven-fold modal description (*syādvāda*), which is one component of the theory of “multiplexity” of reality (*anekāntavāda*), the “most interesting Jaina contribution to Indian philosophy” (181). Trying to make sense of the fact that a substance is at the same time persistent and subject to modification within a single coherent metaphysical system, Jaina philosophers—who are realists—claim that human epistemic faculties are such that we subsume diversity under unity, otherwise nothing would be intelligible nor communicable, and that from this we resolve the fundamental complexity of the object of knowledge. Then, they develop theories to specify the main favored types of epistemic attention and of contexts of assertion that are active during the performance of a knowledge statement. The theory of the seven-fold modal description offers a framework in which it is possible to speak about the complex reality by means of non-ambiguous representations of meaning, thanks to a particle which indicates the set of parameters focused on. Balcerowicz investigation of this theory can be divided into four main parts, beginning with a history of the ontological and epistemological conceptions that contributed to shape the theory of the seven-fold modal description. Then, he suggests a classification and comparison of the main attempts to provide formal representations of this theory in modern scholarship. In this second part, he makes it clear that formal representations, whose added value is to bring to light and clarify selected presuppositions of the formalized theory, risk inventing presuppositions and that this problem of creating presuppositions affects the majority of attempts to formalize the Jaina theory of the seven-fold modal description. Balcerowicz especially takes a paper of Jonardon Ganeri, “Jaina logic as the philosophical basis of pluralism”<sup>9</sup> as a case-study. This leads to the third part of this chapter, namely an archeology of the theory of the seven-fold modal description, in which the historical presuppositions of this theory are made explicit. Here as in the other parts of this chapter, the descriptive part is detailed, well-informed, and informative. This, in turn, allows the author to open the last part, in which he offers his own formal representation of this theory. Thanks to this formal representation, Balcerowicz shows that “the purpose of formalization attempts and formal models should be a lucid presentation through which one could more clearly see the limitations of a particular interpretation” (225). Especially in this case, it makes it evident that, first, the theory under consideration is concerned not with logical relations, but with our usage of natural languages; second, that there is no one official theory, but a whole tradition of distinct conceptions.

In conclusion, the volume *Jaina Scriptures and Philosophy* is an essential contribution to the study of Jaina philosophy. It offers a collection of pioneer analyses on the history of philosophy, which underline the fact that early epistemological considerations manifest a religious and doctrinal perspective, that borrowings from other traditions also contributed to shape Jaina theories, that on a given philosophical issue there is no one official conception, but a galaxy of distinct conceptions, and that there is a significant role for philosophy of texts from other bodies of knowledge. This last observation is especially implemented in the interdisciplinary character of this volume in philosophy, philology, linguistics, literary

studies and history of Jainism. It is also thoroughly in line with the work of the scholar to whom the volume is dedicated, namely Willem B. Bollée (Heidelberg), a “doyen of Jaina Studies for more than sixty years” (2) who worked on their canonical literature, on their literary tradition, as well as on their philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

**Marie-Hélène Gorisse** works on Jaina epistemology. After a PhD at Lille University, a post-doctoral fellowship at Ghent University and a Gonda fellowship at the *International Institute for Asian Studies* in Leiden, she teaches Indian philosophy and Sanskrit literature as a Senior Teaching Fellow at the London School of Oriental and African Studies in London and as a Guest Professor at Ghent University.

- 
- 1 The renowned doctrine of “karman,” foremost in South Asian ethics, gives an account on the way our previous acts determine who we are at present and who we will be. The specificity of Jainism is to conceive karman, the determining consequences of one’s acts, as a concrete substance, the “karmic matter.” This karmic matter then sticks to the self and obstructs its potency.
  - 2 The *Treatise on What There Is*, written by Umāsvāti between 150 CE and 350 CE, is a systematization of canonical literature considered as the first work of classical Jainism and often presented as its essence. It is a comprehensive aphoristic presentation of Jaina ethics, epistemology and metaphysics.
  - 3 There are many sub-traditions within Jainism. The majority of them emerged as a reform at a time at which laxity had settled in, in such a way that the divisions can mainly be accounted for in terms of practices and that Jainism presents a rare doctrinal unity. The main division is between the Śvetāmbara, “the white-clad ones,” tradition and the Digambara, “the sky-clad ones,” tradition, whose exclusively male monastic community practices nudity.
  - 4 In this review, I have preferred the expression “self,” rather than “soul,” to refer to the notion investigated in the different traditions of South Asian philosophies.
  - 5 Jaina philosophers consider that the different disciplines of knowledge form a coherent whole to such an extent that in philosophical debates, they structurally refer to passages from different types of corpuses.
  - 6 Voluntary death (*sallekhanā*) is a vow taken by an ascetic or householder when normal life according to religion is not possible due to old-age, incurable disease, etc. Only after subjugation of all passions and abandonment of all worldly attachments, can this voluntary facing of death be performed, by observance of austerities, gradually abstaining from food and water, and by simultaneous meditation on the real nature of the self until it departs from the physical body. The underlying principle of it is to master a complete equanimity that will prevent the influx of new karman and conduce to the purgation of old ones.
  - 7 The texts of this tradition are edifying stories from the Indian folklore rewritten by Jains to illustrate the tenets and practice of Jainism.
  - 8 “Kundakunda” is a name that stands for the collective authorship of a Prakrit textual tradition to which belong the *Niyamasāra*, the *Essence of Restraints*, written between the third and the fifth centuries. Kundakunda represents a rare strand in Jainism that advocates the centrality of inward experience and reorients religious practices in order to focus upon the self.
  - 9 Jonardon Ganeri, “Jaina Logic as the Philosophical Basis of Pluralism,” *History and Philosophy of Logic* 23, (2002): 267–81.
  - 10 See Willem B. Bollée, *The Nijjuttis on the Seniors of the Śvetāmbara Siddhānta: Āyāraṅga, Sūyagada, Dasaveyāliya and Uttarajjhāyā* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995). See also Willem B. Bollée, *The Story of Paesi. Soul and Body in Ancient India* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002) and Willem B. Bollée, *Tales of Atonement* (Mumbai: Hindi Granth Karyalaya, 2009).