

# Making the Case for Jaina Contributions to Critical Thinking Education\*

ANAND JAYPRAKASH VAIDYA

San Jose State University, California, USA (anand.vaidya@sjsu.edu)

*The central goal of the cross-cultural critical thinking movement is to change the dominant model of critical thinking pedagogy that is used in the US, UK, and those countries that follow this model. At present the model is centered on an Anglo-American and Euro-Centric model of critical thinking that actively and blatantly ignores contributions to logic and critical thinking education from non-Western sources; more importantly, the model implicitly sends the message to students of critical thinking that critical thinking is a valuable set of skills that derives from what is taken to be Western culture. Cross-cultural critical thinking, by contrast, is centered on a globally inclusive model of critical thinking that presents contributions to critical thinking from a variety of different cultures and traditions. This alternative model aims in part to convey the message that critical thinking is part of the human condition and that understanding it within the human condition is essential to the proper deployment of it in a pluralistic society where there is disagreement over matters of ultimate value. In this paper I offer a presentation and defense of a set of contributions deriving from the Jaina tradition of philosophy that could be presented in a globally sensitive critical thinking course. The central concepts I present and interpret are: non-one-sidedness (anekāntavāda), the theory of epistemic standpoints (nayavāda), intellectual non-violence (intellectual ahimsā), and the theory of seven-fold predication (saptabhāṅgī). In each case I focus on the relevance that the concept has for critical thinking education at the introductory level.*

Key words: cross-cultural critical thinking; intellectual virtue; Jainism; *intellectual ahimsā*; *nayavāda*; *anekāntavāda*; *saptabhāṅgī*; Harvey Siegel; Jason Baehr; Duncan Pritchard; Michael Lynch; John Cort; Jeffery Long

## 1 Moving Forward on the Project of Cross-Cultural Critical Thinking

Contemporary education policies often promote science, mathematics, engineering, and technology over the humanities as the central goal of higher education. One consequence of STEM-forward policies is that they force us to consider *the value question*: what valuable contribution does an education in the humanities provide? One answer to the value question is *the critical thinking response*: an education that includes the humanities provides one with critical thinking skills that are unique and different from those provided by a STEM education alone. The idea is that critical thinking is important and that the humanities provide skills in critical thinking that are not analogous to any provided by the STEM fields alone.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, critical thinking skills are often initially taught through lower division courses, called “Logic and Critical Thinking.”<sup>1</sup> In these courses, one studies argument identification, reliability of sources, validity, soundness,

evaluative language, and rules of debate. Argument evaluation is usually done by methods of both informal and formal analysis. Students are trained to identify informal fallacies, such as Begging the Question or Red Herring, as well as how to check the formal validity of an argument by way of a truth table, truth tree, or natural deduction. Importantly, such critical thinking courses are often required for all students. Thus, they are a meeting point for students entering all fields of inquiry, and they are a beginning point for understanding public discourse and how to engage in it.

In this work I argue for the inclusion of contributions from Jain Philosophy into critical thinking education. Jainism is a well-recognized world religion. It originated in India. Jainism sits alongside Buddhism and Cārvāka as one of the three heterodox schools of Indian philosophy. A heterodox school, as opposed to an orthodox school, denies the authority of the sacred Vedic texts. So while Hindu schools, such as Nyāya, accept the authority of the Vedas, Jains and Buddhist do not. The sixth-century ford-maker (*tirthankara*) Mahāvīra is considered to be one of the main teachers and founding figures of the Jain tradition.

In 2 I present and locate a space for the project of cross-cultural critical thinking, by presenting four key areas of contemporary research that suggest the need for cross-cultural critical thinking. In 3 I begin my articulation of contributions from Jaina philosophy. I start with the core concept of *anekāntavāda* (non-one-sidedness) and discuss how it does not face the standard criticisms that epistemic relativism faces, such as the charges of self-refutation and under-determination. As a consequence, it cannot be dismissed from critical thinking education on that basis. In 4 I present *nayavāda* (epistemic perspectives). I offer an account of it based on the phenomenological notion of a *perceptual horizon* as developed by Edmund Husserl. I argue that *nayavāda* is important for critical thinking in much the same way that *feminist standpoint epistemologists*, such as Alison Wylie, inform us that engaging distinct perspectives improves our own epistemic position. In 5 I present *intellectual ahimsā*, roughly intellectual non-violence, and the debate concerning whether it can be attributed to the Jains. My reason for engaging briefly in the debate over whether it can be attributed to the Jains relates to the fact that it would be difficult to argue that we should include Jain contributions to critical thinking, such as *intellectual ahimsā*, if the view cannot even be attributed to them. In 6 I present an account of *saptabhaṅgī* (the seven-fold theory of predication). The account aims to show how a logical contribution from Jainism can be used as a practical tool for critical thinking that showcases the intellectual virtue of *constructive engagement*. I thus support the claim that there are (a) non-western tools for teaching critical thinking and (b) these tools should be taught in critical thinking courses because they are useful for public discourse and debate.

## 2 Locating a Space for Cross-Cultural Critical Thinking

In order to defend the view that Jainism has relevant contributions to contemporary critical thinking education I want to specify some places where their contributions can be *seen* to be relevant. The four places where Jaina contributions seem to be relevant to critical thinking education are: (i) the *character debate* in critical thinking, (ii) the education for *intellectual virtues* movement, (iii) the *humanities for democracy* movement, and (iv) the *rationality for democracy* movement.

First, in his *Not By Skill Alone: The Centrality of Character to Critical Thinking*, Harvey Siegel (1993) contrasts two views of critical thinking: the skill view and the character view.<sup>2</sup> He argues that these two views are part of a central debate in critical thinking over what a *critical thinker is*. He goes on to defend the character view.

*The Skill View* holds that critical thinking is exhausted by the acquisition and proper deployment of critical thinking skills.

*The Character View* holds that critical thinking involves the acquisition and proper deployment of specific skills, as well as the acquisition of specific character traits, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of mind. These components are aspects of the “critical spirit.”

Given this distinction, one might ask: where, if at all, do contributions from the Jain tradition fall with respect to this classification scheme? In my articulation and development of Jain contributions to critical thinking, I will argue that on one understanding of *intellectual abhimsā*, a term not actually used by the Jains, they offer a character view of critical thinking.

Second, some theorists, moving out of the virtue epistemology tradition, such as Duncan Pritchard (2013)<sup>3</sup> and Jason Baehr (2013),<sup>4</sup> have argued for the view that we ought to be educating for intellectual virtues, as opposed to memorization and skill. If that view is correct, we should be asking the following questions: What intellectual virtues should be taught? How should those intellectual virtues be taught?

Consider Jason Baehr’s opening comments to his *Educating for Intellectual Virtues*.

*An intellectually virtuous person is one who desires and is committed to the pursuit of goods like knowledge, truth, and understanding.* It is this inherent epistemic orientation that permits a distinction between intellectual virtues and what are typically thought of as moral virtues (Baehr 2013: 248, emphasis added).

He goes on to elaborate an account of intellectual virtues.

[W]e can think of intellectual virtues as the *personal* qualities or characteristics of a lifelong learner. To be a lifelong learner, one must possess a reasonably broad base of practical and theoretical knowledge. But possessing even a great deal of knowledge is not sufficient. Being a lifelong learner also requires being *curious* and *inquisitive*. It requires a firm and powerful commitment to learning. It demands *attentiveness* and *reflectiveness*. And given the various ways in which a commitment to lifelong learning might get derailed, it also requires intellectual *determination*, *perseverance*, and *courage*. In other words, being a lifelong learner is largely constituted by the possession of various intellectual virtues (Baehr 2013: 249, emphasis added).

It is worth noting that Baehr’s presentation of the issues does not discuss and perhaps even tacitly assumes the absence of *significant cross-cultural variation* over (i) what intellectual virtues are, and (ii) what character traits count as being intellectual virtues. Moreover, his work does not engage significantly with the question: *what do non-Western traditions have to offer theoretical inquiry about intellectual virtues or what specific virtues we ought to be aiming at in education?*<sup>5</sup>

Third, in her (2010) *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum<sup>6</sup> maintains that a nation that wants to promote the *human development model of democracy*, as opposed to the *gross national product model of democracy*, will need to produce citizens with at least the following abilities (2010: 25-6):

- The ability to think well about political issues affecting the nation, to examine, reflect, argue, and debate, deferring to neither tradition nor authority.
- The ability to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, even though they may be different in race, religion, gender, and sexuality: to look at them with respect, as ends, not just as tools to be manipulated for one's own profit.
- The ability to have concern for the lives of others, to grasp what policies of many types mean for the opportunities and experiences of one's fellow citizens, of many types, and for people outside one's own nation.
- The ability to imagine well a variety of complex issues affecting the story of a human life as it unfolds: to think about childhood, adolescence, family relationships, illness, death, and much more in a way informed by an understanding of a wide range of human stories, not just by aggregate data.
- The ability to judge political leaders critically, but with an informed and realistic sense of the possibilities available to them.
- The ability to think about the good of the nation as a whole, not just that of one's own local group.
- The ability to see one's own nation, in turn, as a part of a complicated world order in which issues of many kinds require intelligent transnational deliberation for their resolution.

In her defense of the humanities as the place we should look to for the cultivation of those abilities it is important to take note of the special attention she gives to the goal of learning how to *argue* and *evaluate* evidence properly. In her chapter on *Socratic Pedagogy*, Nussbaum defends and highlights the importance of teaching the Socratic method of questioning and critical inquiry. And she *correctly* notes the importance of seeing the pedagogy from a non-Western perspective as well.

I have spoken so far of a Socratic method that had a wide influence in Europe and North America. *It would be wrong, however, to think that a Socratic approach to early education was found only there* (Nussbaum 2010: 67, emphasis added).

She emphasizes the importance of a model of education advanced by Rabindranath Tagore, who on her account defended the view that “humanity can make progress only by cultivating its capacity for a more inclusive sympathy, and this capacity can only be cultivated by an education that emphasizes global learning, the arts, and Socratic self-criticism” (2010: 68).

I am in strong agreement with Nussbaum's defense of the value of the humanities for democracy, as well as her stress on Socratic Pedagogy, which she correctly locates in both the West and outside the West. However, I am skeptical as to whether her account distinguishes between two views of *Socratic Pedagogy* for democracy.<sup>7</sup> Minimally, we can all agree, following Siegel's distinction, that critical thinking involves the use of critical thinking skills/tools, no matter what else it involves or is constituted by. As a consequence, we can think of two ways of looking at critical thinking education in relation to democracy by using a distinction between the tools we have and the context of application in which we use them.

*Democracy with Western tools in a multicultural context* is an account of critical thinking for democracy that is largely about taking tools found in the Western tradition, such as identification of fallacies from a specific list generated by Aristotle or formalization of a natural language argument in propositional logic and presenting them to students for application in the global multi-cultural context in which we now live. This means, for example, that we might use the tools of Aristotelian logic to understand a non-Western Buddhist text. With this approach, we show how *Socratic Pedagogy* can be applied to texts and speeches that come from outside of the West.<sup>8</sup>

*Democracy with Global tools for a multicultural context* is an account of critical thinking for democracy that aims to locate tools from a variety of traditions for the purposes of democracy in a multicultural context. With this approach, where possible, we show how *Socratic Pedagogy* or Aristotelian logic sits alongside, for example, Buddhist theories of good inference, the Nyāya account of good debate (*vāda*), the Jaina theory of perspectives, and Arabic conceptions of critical discourse, and we open up the set of tools so as to be inclusive not only about who participates, but also about what tools are acceptable.

Fourth, in his *In Praise of Rationality: Why Rationality Matters for Democracy*, Michael Lynch (2012)<sup>9</sup> presents a series of arguments in favor of scientific argumentation in public discourse.

Of course, the value of appealing to reasons also depends on whether they are *good* reasons. Good reasons are based on good principles. So, the aim of this book is to defend both the value of giving reasons in public discourse and the value of certain principles over others—in particular, the principles that constitute a scientific approach to the world. Appealing to these principles in public discourse matters, I argue, despite the fact that there appear to be—perversely enough—very good reasons to think that we can't defend them with non-circular reasons. It sometimes seems as if every “first principle” ends up being founded on something else that is arbitrary: emotion, faith, or plain prejudice. If that's so, then a magic serum is the best we could hope for after all. Nonetheless, I'll try to convince you that we can hope for more (Lynch 2012: X).

Again, while I am in agreement with the value and importance of scientific discourse on matters of public discourse, I am skeptical as to whether Lynch's account of reasoned discourse pays any attention to narratives about reason and debate from outside of the Western canon. Like Martha Nussbaum, he takes John Dewey to be one important influence on his thinking, in addition to C. S. Peirce and William James. However, unlike Nussbaum, he fails to consider twentieth-century philosophers, such as Tagore, Daya Krishna, S. Radhakrishnan, B. K. Matilal, or any other figure from a non-Western tradition that has

thought about reasoned discourse in a pluralistic society. *My contention* is that discussions of the value of scientific discourse in public discourse should engage narratives about reasoned discourse from outside the Western canon while taking into consideration *the consequences of colonialism on reasoned discourse that does not derive from the Western canon*. The deep question here is: what would a true engagement with reasoned discourse look like were we to look to the consequences of decolonizing the rhetoric of rationality?

Summing up: if education policy is to move away from a singular STEM focus to a more open education package that includes *education for intellectual virtues*, praises *scientific rationality for public discourse for the purposes of democracy*, and engages what the *humanities* have to offer in *critical thinking* (broadly construed), *we ought* to be looking for cross-culturally sensitive ways to promote and teach intellectual virtues, critical thinking, and narratives about rationality. *Cross-cultural sensitivity* at least requires locating and presenting tools for critical thinking that derive from different traditions. At least one reason why is that everyone who comes from a tradition that engages and discusses critical thinking needs to feel welcome at the round table of discourse without being forced to initially jettison their own tradition's conception of critical thinking and engagement.<sup>10</sup>

Taking this as my point of departure, I now begin an exposition of the Jain ideas of *anekāntavāda*, *naya*vāda and *intellectual abhiṃsā*, closing with an example of how the *saptabhaṅgī* can be used to teach the intellectual virtue of *constructive engagement*.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 Anekāntavāda as a Metaphysical Solution to Persistent Debate

*Anekāntavāda*, literally non-one-sidedness, is a metaphysical doctrine propounded by the Jains. It holds that the fundamental nature of reality is many-sided, rather than one-sided or absolute. One of the most instructive ways to understand the thesis is through a historical lens; it is a thesis that is generated through an attempt to respond to a variety of debates that existed in classical Indian philosophy. I will briefly consider one such debate: the metaphysics of causation.

In the case of causation, classical Indian philosophers engaged the question: does an effect already exist in some form prior to its cause? *Satkāryavāda* is the view that an effect does exist prior to its production. *Asatkāryavāda* is the view that an effect does not exist prior to its production. The debate over this aspect of causation is a debate over *generation* vs. *transformation*. The Nyāya School, for example, defends the view that causation involves generation: the effect is something new that did not exist prior in the cause. The Sāṃkhya School defends the view that causation involves transformation: the effect already exists in the cause. The force of the debate can be seen through the following two streams of thought:

1. If there *is no* pot at  $t_1$ , then how can a pot be produced at  $t_2$ ? There is nothing from which the pot can come into existence. A pot cannot be produced from a non-pot.
2. If there *is a* pot at  $t_1$ , then how can a pot be produced at  $t_2$ ? There is no need for a pot to be produced, if it already exists. A pot cannot be produced where there is no need for a pot.

Using *anekāntavāda*, the Jaina thinker Jinabhadra, in his *Viśeṣavāśyakabhāṣya*, says the following about the tension between these two views.

In this world there are things that are being produced having been produced already, others [are being produced] not having been produced already, others [are being produced] having been produced and not having been produced, others again [are being produced] while being produced, and some are not being produced at all, according to what one wishes to express. [...] For example, a pot is being produced having been produced in the form of clay etc., because it is made of that. That same [pot] is being produced not having been produced concerning its particular shape, because that was not there before (Bronkhorst 2009: 2, emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

The passage reveals the idea that non-one-sidedness is a way of accommodating opposing views into a harmony of truths about the same thing. That is, there is a sense in which both the Nyāya and the Sāṃkhya, although opposed to one another, are correct. The generation view advanced by the Nyāya is correct in so far as *a pot is new with respect to the form it has* when it is produced. Prior to the pot's production the form is absent in the material that constitutes it. The transformation view advanced by the Sāṃkhya is correct in so far as *a pot is not new with respect to its material constitution*. Prior to the pot's production the matter that makes up the pot exists.

But from this initial presentation of the Jaina doctrine one might be led to the conclusion that Jainism embraces some form of *epistemic relativism*—and, thus, that Jainism faces the standard objections to epistemic relativism, such as the charges of self-refutation and under-determination. Upon arriving at this conclusion, one might draw the further conclusion that it is inappropriate to teach Jainism, since it does not lead to a good initial training in critical thinking. The standard worry is that critical thinking education is trying to foster the skill of analysis and, as a consequence, one does not want to introduce epistemic relativism early on to students because it has a tendency to foster the attitude that analysis is useless, since everything is relative. However, the Jain reflection on the debate concerning generation and transformation through *anekāntavāda* is **not** an embrace of epistemic relativism. Rather, it is a view that derives from *engagement with actual historical debates* concerning reality and notices that in some cases there is a sense in which seemingly opposing sides can both be said to be advancing a view that, although true, is only partially true or true from some perspective. An intuitive way to see how *anekāntavāda* is **not** a form of epistemic relativism is simply to look at the difference in scope between epistemic relativism and *anekāntavāda*. Epistemic relativism is usually taken to be a totalizing view of relativity where one endorses the position that everything is relative—thus the charge of self-refutation. However, *anekāntavāda* is a metaphysical view about the nature of reality and our ability to grasp the way things ultimately stand. Epistemic relativism says that there is no way things stand absolutely. *Anekāntavāda*, by contrast, lays a metaphysical foundation for how things are for us epistemically as limited knowers. I will expand more on the nature of *anekāntavāda* in my development of the related doctrine of *nayavāda*.

For now, let me proceed by showing how objections waged against epistemic relativism can be blocked from being applied to the Jain doctrine. First, consider the following argument as a presentation of the twin objections of self-refutation and under-determination as applied to Jainism.

1. *Anekāntavāda* is the doctrine that reality is non-one-sided (*many-sided*).
2. If reality is non-one-sided, then it follows that it is *absolutely* the case that it is non-one-sided, and thus the doctrine is self-refuting. A doctrine is self-refuting, when if true, it would refute itself.
3. If reality is non-one sided (*many-sided*), then it follows that it is non-one-sided from only one side, and thus the doctrine is under-determining. A doctrine is under-determining when if true it lacks the scope to substantiate what it claims.
4. If the doctrine that reality is non-one-sided is self-refuting and under-determining, then it is not a plausible account of reality.
- ∴
5. *Anekāntavāda* is not a plausible account of reality.

The two-pronged objection is familiar to those that have engaged the literature on epistemic relativism that can be found in the works of contemporary Western philosophers, such as Thomas Nagel's *The Last Word*,<sup>13</sup> and Paul Boghossian's *Fear of Knowledge*.<sup>14</sup> First, the doctrine that *everything is relative* is thought to be self-refuting, because if true, there is in fact one principle that is absolute, *namely* that everything is relative. Second, if the doctrine of relativism is true, then it is under-determining, since only from some perspective is it true that everything is relative. However, there are two points that can be used to show the Jaina doctrine to be defensible at the metaphysical, epistemic, and logical levels.

*On the one hand*, it should be noted that the complaints deriving from the self-refutation charge and under-determination charge largely come from drawing *too close* of an analogy between non-one-sidedness and epistemic relativism. The central claim of non-one-sidedness is that *reality has many sides*. The central claim of epistemic relativism is *that everything is relative*. The two theses are *thought* to be equivalent since they both are denials of:

*Absolutism*: there is only one complete set of truths.

That is:

If *Non-one-sidedness* is true, then *Absolutism* is false.

And

If *Relativism* is true, then *Absolutism* is false.

But from basic propositional logic we cannot deduce that two independent theses that imply a single statement are equivalent. That is, from the above, we cannot deduce the bi-conditional:

*Non-one-sidedness is true* if and only if *Relativism is true*.

Thus, it does not automatically follow that an objection to epistemic relativism is an objection to non-one-sidedness.



*On the other hand*, if one were to press the point that epistemic relativism and non-one-sidedness must be equivalent or sufficiently similar with respect to the force of the objection, it could be pointed out that a defense of epistemic relativism is a defense of the coherence of non-one-sidedness.

One way to defend epistemic relativism against the charge of self-refutation is to point out that it is a mistake to think that the use of the quantifier “everything” in (R) = [everything is relative] takes (R) itself to be in the range of “everything.” Simply put, the statement of relativism does *not* apply to itself because the quantifier has a *restricted* domain. The view that quantifiers have restricted domains is not at all *ad hoc*, as some might suggest. In common parlance quantifiers such as “every *x*” and “no *x*” commonly take restricted domains. If, to use a familiar example, David Lewis says, “No beer!” while looking in his fridge, it would be inappropriate to interpret his utterance as meaning: *there is no beer anywhere*. Rather, it would be better to interpret his use of “no” as tacitly taking the contents of the fridge as its domain of discourse, and his statement to mean “there is no beer in the fridge *here*,” not that there is no beer in *any* fridge *anywhere*.

This strategy can also be extended to block the charge of under-determination. When an epistemic relativist claims that everything is relative, she need not intend her statement to be within the scope of “everything”; rather the relativity claim could simply aim to describe the way things are. In other words, we can distinguish between object-language statements and meta-language statements. The statement that “everything is relative” belongs to the meta-language, and it says of every object-language sentence that its truth conditions are relative in some non-trivial sense.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, one can avail themselves of tools from Western philosophy itself to block the charges of self-refutation and under-determination, if the analogy with relativism is pressed. As I see it, however, *it is far better to distance anekāntavāda* from the kind of epistemic relativism that is debated in books such as Nagel’s and Boghossian’s.

#### 4 **Nayavāda, Perceptual Horizons, and Feminist Standpoint Epistemology**

*Nayavāda* is the theory of perspectives or epistemic standpoints. It is developed out of an account of the human epistemic condition, and it is one of the main components of *anekāntavāda*. The *nayas* are standpoints that someone searching for the truth can take up.<sup>16</sup> A *naya* is what a non-omniscient thinker adopts in every act of cognition. The *nayas* serve to categorize the different points of view from which reality might be investigated. Recognition of the fact that one’s inquiry is from only one of these standpoints enables the investigator to recognize the partial and limited nature of their knowledge. This should prevent the individual with the right attitude from becoming one-sided and dogmatic.<sup>17</sup>

An initial pathway into understanding *nayavāda*, in its connection to *anekāntavāda*, is to present it through the parable of *the Elephant and the Blind Men*:

Several blind men are brought before a king and asked to describe an elephant. An elephant is brought to them and they proceed to feel it with their hands. One, who grasps the elephant’s trunk, claims that an elephant is like a snake. Another, grasping a leg, claims it is like a tree. Yet another grasps the tail and says it is like a rope; and another, feeling the elephant’s side, claims it is like a wall. The blind men then argue amongst themselves

about the true nature of the elephant. Who is correct? Only one that can see the whole elephant can say who is correct.

Just as the metaphysical doctrine of *anekāntavāda* is often confused with many doctrines, such as epistemic relativism, so is the epistemological doctrine *nayavāda*.<sup>18</sup> There are three typical views it is confused with.

- (a) Anti-Realism: the doctrine that there is no truth, or that truth is not ultimately real. *However*, notice there is an elephant before them, so there is some truth about what is actually before the blind men.
- (b) Anti-Absolutism: the doctrine that there is no absolute truth, or that truth is relative and conventional. *However*, notice there really is an elephant. It is just that from any standpoint one can only grasp so much, and thus everyone's conclusion is from a limited standpoint.
- (c) Anti-Knowledge: the doctrine that there is no knowledge, or that truth cannot be known. *However*, notice that a sighted person can know the truth about what is before the blind men. It is just that the blind cannot know it because their perspectives are limited.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, one can get a *comparative grasp* of the basic doctrine by comparing it to a well-known point that is often made by phenomenologists when they describe the phenomenology of perception. Edmund Husserl articulates and deploys the notion of a *horizon* in phenomenological philosophy. The concept of a *horizon* can be applied to many domains, but one common domain to which he applies it is *perception*. To say that perception has a *horizontal structure* is to point out that, for humans, perception is always from a vantage point.<sup>20</sup> The additional point that is often made is that perception reveals some properties of a three-dimensional object in the *foreground* always against a *background*. The *foreground-background* structure of perception often involves *perceptual anticipations*, expectations of what one would see if one were to move from a part that is in perceptual view to a part that is not in perceptual view. For example, if I am looking at a red ball from one side, as I walk around it, I will expect to continue to see the spherical shape of the ball as I move to other positions, which from my current position, cannot be seen. What goes for vision goes for tactile perception; thus, we can apply the concept of a horizontal-structure in perception to the elephant example.

The blind man who feels *the tail of the elephant as a rope*, and judges that what is before him is a rope, consequently *expects* that as he moves his hand down the tail he will continue to feel those things which one expects to feel when one touches a rope. The tail, being sufficiently similar to the rope in many respects, will continue to confirm his belief that he is holding a rope, even though he is not.

The blind man who feels *the stomach of the elephant as a wall*, and judges that what is before him is a wall, consequently *expects* that as he moves his hand across the stomach he will continue to feel those things which one expects to feel when they touch a wall. The large flat expanse of the elephant's stomach being sufficiently similar to a wall in many respects will continue to confirm his belief that he is touching a wall, even though he is not.

Against this backdrop we can easily imagine the two blind men in the following dialogue:

*Rope:* There is a rope before us, because the shape of the thing before us is long and tubular.

*Wall:* There is a wall before us, because the shape of the thing before us is flat, wide, and long.

Now although each is wrong about what is before them, each is right about their own interpretation of that which they take as evidence. Two important upshots that we can derive from the horizontal interpretation of the parable and the disagreement are: (i) *an error* once made can persist in light of expectation and confirmation bias; and (ii) the error once made can be corrected by experiencing from a distinct vantage point or coming into discussion with someone from a distinct vantage point or conceptual scheme.

It is clear from the layout of the parable and the phenomenological interpretation that I have offered that it can be used in a variety of ways for teaching critical thinking. In addition, however, I believe that the parable can be used to make an important connection between the core idea of *nayavāda* in Jaina philosophy and contemporary epistemology. The connection I will draw is between *feminist standpoint epistemology* and *nayavāda*. The argument for the connection I will make is the following:

1. Feminist standpoint epistemology has features  $F_1...F_n$ . These features are important for critical thinking education.
2. *Nayavāda* shares important features,  $F_1...F_n$ , in common with feminist standpoint epistemology.
3. Because of the commonality of features,  $F_1...F_n$ , one cannot maintain that feminist epistemology is important for critical thinking education without also holding that *nayavāda* is also important.
- ∴
4. *Nayavāda* is important for critical thinking education.

I will assume that (1) is true, because I think it is undeniable that feminist standpoint epistemology is important for critical thinking. As a consequence, I will build my argument through the examination of (2) and (3). The bulk of my defense will focus on the *parable of the elephant* as opposed to the longstanding historical and critical debate in Jaina studies over how many and what exactly each *naya* is. My reasons for doing this are twofold. On the one hand, the purpose of my argument for including contributions from Jain philosophy into critical thinking education focuses on actual materials that can be taught to a wide audience at an undergraduate level. On the other hand, while there is wide controversy over the nature of the *nayas*, there *ought* to be far less controversy over how one might use the *parable of the elephant* to teach students about the role of perspective.

One contemporary proponent of *standpoint epistemology*, Alison Wylie (2012),<sup>21</sup> presents standpoint epistemology as consisting of two theses:

*A generic situated knowledge thesis.* The point of departure for standpoint theorizing is a recognition that there is no “view from nowhere”; contingent histories, social context and relations, inevitably affect what epistemic agents know (including explicit knowledge as well as tacit experiential knowledge), and shape the hermeneutic resources, inferential heuristics, and other

epistemic resources they bring to bear in generating and adjudicating knowledge claims (Wylie 2012: 11).

And

*A systemic situated knowledge thesis.* What distinguishes standpoint theory from other genres of social epistemology predicated on a generic situated knowledge thesis is its focus on the epistemic effects of systemic structures of social differentiation. Standpoint theorists are concerned to understand the impact, on what we know and how we know, of our location in hierarchical systems of power relations that structure our material conditions of life, and the social relations of production and reproduction that, in turn, shape our identities and our epistemic capacities (Wylie 2012: 11-12, emphasis added).

Upon consideration of Wylie's second thesis it may seem that *nayavāda* is only related to standpoint epistemology with regards to the *generic thesis* about situated knowledge. That is, Jains—like phenomenologists and standpoint epistemologists—accept a situated thesis about knowledge, based on our capacities, that places the role of *perspective* in the center. However, unlike standpoint epistemologists, the Jains do not *develop* the thesis so as to acknowledge the effects of *power differentials* in knowledge building. While this would seem correct from the purely analytical and phenomenological account of *nayavāda* presented so far, it is *inconsistent* with the history of the development of Jainism in response to the pervasive debate and argumentation amongst schools of Indian philosophy, such as Buddhism, Nyāya, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Mīmāṃsā, and Cārvāka. One way to drive out this historical point about Jainism is through consideration of Scott Stroud's (2014)<sup>22</sup> commentary on Jainia rhetoric.

To understand the rhetoric of the religious-philosophical tradition of Jainism, one must understand something of the rhetorical milieu of the Indian subcontinent. India has always been a geography of competing schools of thought. The Vedas gave way to a range of interpretations, and the Upaniṣads ushered in a wave of thinkers rejecting or revisioning the traditional inheritance of the Vedic tradition. Jainism arises next to Buddhism as a movement that critiques many of the basic tenets of the philosophy percolating through the Vedas and the Upaniṣads (Stroud 2014: 134).

The connecting thread to *feminist standpoint epistemology* derives from the fact that Jainism arises in the context of a *social situation* with all of the following features:<sup>23</sup>

- (i) Jainism is a minority tradition in terms of the number of adherents it has.
- (ii) Jainism arises against the backdrop of a prevailing Vedic and Upaniṣadic backdrop, which has the top position.
- (iii) The caste system that is in play structures society so that there are inequalities with respect to access to religious texts.
- (iv) Jainism arises alongside Buddhism, another school that challenges the authority of the Vedas, and from which it must differentiate itself.

- (v) There is pervasive debate between rival schools involving members from different classes.
- (vi) Debates are often public and those who lose positions must often adopt the position of the winning side.

Given (i)-(vi) *nayavāda* is far from a *generic* recognition of standpoints and perspectives. Nevertheless, it would be fair to question whether *nayavāda* is developed as much as *feminist standpoint epistemology* with respect to the *systemic thesis* of Wylie.<sup>24</sup>

## 5 Intellectual Ahimsā

In 2 I claimed that the debate over intellectual virtues for education and the debate over the *skill* view, as opposed to the *critical spirit* view, of critical thinking are two places where one can place contributions from the Jaina tradition. In this section I want to make the case for that by engaging two sources.

In his *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (Anekāntavāda)*, B. K. Matilal (1981)<sup>25</sup> notes the following about *ahimsā* and the Jain account of it:

Non-violence, i.e., abstention from killing or taking the life of others, was the dominant trend in the whole of [the] Śramaṇa movement in India, particularly in Buddhism and Jainism. I think the Jains carried the principle of non-violence to the intellectual level, and thus propounded their *anekānta* doctrine. Thus, the hallmark of the *anekānta* doctrine was toleration. The principle embodied in the respect for the life of others was transformed by the Jaina philosophers, at the intellectual level, into respect for the view[s] of others. *This was, I think, a unique attempt to harmonize the persistent discord in the field of philosophy* (Matilal 1981: 313-314, emphasis added).

To understand *intellectual ahimsā* we must gain an understanding of two things. What is *ahimsā*?<sup>26</sup> And what could it mean when it is applied to the realm of inquiry?

*Ahimsā* is most often translated as non-harmfulness, non-violence, or absence of a desire to harm any creature. The doctrine, as Matilal points out, is *not unique* to Jainism; it can be found in the distinct Eightfold Paths of Buddhism and Yoga. The general notion cannot be understood through a mere translation of the term because the terms in English have different connotations than the term *ahimsā* has in the variety of systems in which it is propounded. It is better to take note of two important clarifications concerning the general notion.

First, the doctrine, though stated in negative terms, has a positive component as well. When one lives a life in accordance with *ahimsā*, one cultivates a general nature of benevolence towards all creatures. Benevolence is the positive attitude/disposition that one operates from.

Second, the doctrine should not be understood on consequentialist grounds. For example, *ahimsā* does not allow it to be the case that an individual who intends to harm but fails to cause harm has thereby acted in accord with non-harmfulness. Rather, *ahimsā* is about intent. One must lack the desire or intent to harm any creature.

With these clarifications in place, we have an adequate picture of the general concept of *ahimsā*. But what does it mean to apply it to the realm of inquiry? The fact that it is applied to the intellectual domain by the Jains shows that the Jaina tradition has a contribution to offer in the realm of intellectual virtues and a particular take on what the *critical spirit* might require. However, we need to know what their suggestion is concerning *inquiry*.

One common interpretation of *intellectual ahimsā* aligns it with the concept of *toleration*, as used by Locke in his 1698 *Letter Concerning Toleration*. One advantage of this assimilation is that it squares with some of the historical facts, and in particular, the fact that intellectual *ahimsā*, on the immanent conception, does require being *open* to engagement with other traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. As discussed in the last section, Jainism arose in a context of pervasive debate amongst rivaling traditions. However, as Cort (2000)<sup>27</sup> points out, the assimilation does not square with the fact that the Lockean notion of *tolerance* arises in a specific political/governmental/religious context in England and Europe that does not relate properly to the time period of classical Indian philosophy in which intellectual *ahimsā* is developed and extended to the intellectual realm. One view of the difference is that the political/governmental contexts are not sufficiently similar for one to use the Lockean notion as an interpretation of intellectual *ahimsā*.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, I will offer an account of the notion based on how it can be grounded philosophically in the parable of the elephant. I will do this by first offering the account and then a more nuanced and detailed interpretation of the parable that aligns with my commentary from the prior section on *nayavāda*.

*Intellectual ahimsā is a dispositional attitude of open inclusiveness<sup>29</sup> to epistemic friction from distinct points of view, which is ultimately grounded in (i) an acknowledgement of epistemic humility, and coupled with (ii) a desire for epistemic friction for the purposes of understanding and knowledge building.*

In the parable of the elephant, each blind man only has partial grasp of the total set of evidence. As a consequence, none of them can make an accurate judgment about what is before them. In fact, their own judgments, based on the parts they grasped, would continue to be confirmed by their expectations of what is to come. The man who judges early, upon grabbing the tail, that a rope is before him, will only continue to believe that there is a rope, as opposed to a tail, as long as the experience aligns with his expectations based on his judgment.

As a continuation of the parable, suppose that all the blind men were to get together to have a conversation about what is before them. They could potentially be led to mass disagreement because each person would be coming to the conversation holding firm to the limited point of view from which their evidence was derived. As long as they hold strong to their convictions that they have the *complete* set of evidence, there will be no reason for them to back down in the face of disagreement. We might expect belief polarization and cognitive entrenchment to follow.

Now further suppose that the King tells the blind men that there is an elephant before them. Each person would then be in a position to engage in the following line of reasoning. *From my limited grasp of the situation I was only able to judge what was before me, which led me to the wrong judgment. However, had I constructively discussed the situation with everyone, rather than prioritizing my own standpoint, I could have collectively reasoned with everyone over the question: what best accounts for all of our disparate judgments? In our collective dialogue we could have come to the conclusion that our disparate judgments are best explained by the fact that what is before us is something that has the features of a flat surface, a sturdy tree trunk, a snake, and a rope at different locations. On this basis we*

could have collectively arrived at the conclusion that it was an elephant whose stomach was like a wall, whose trunk was like a snake, and whose tail was like a rope.

What each individual arrives at is the recognition that inquiry is perspectival in nature. This in turn requires an acknowledgement that one must be epistemically *humble*—possessing a correct appreciation of the limitations of one's own perspective. However, epistemic *humility* is not about modesty for a moral end only. Rather, it is about the recognition that inquiry itself requires engagement with others for epistemic *correction* and *completion*. *Epistemic correction* refers to the fact that a particular point of view may have been incorrectly produced independently of any facts about another point of view. For example, epistemic correction is required when one miscalculates in doing sums because one has been inattentive to the numbers involved. *Epistemic completion*, by contrast, has to do with the need for a point of view to be completed by another point of view in order for less objectionable and insular judgments to be made. In general, one should adopt the attitude of *epistemic humility* in order to be open to *epistemic correction* or *completion* on the basis of understanding *the epistemology of the human condition*: most of the time when we seek understanding and knowledge, we are in a position that is similar to the situation the blind men are in. Furthermore, when one has awareness of the need for *epistemic correction* and *completeness*, and has adopted the dispositional attitude of *epistemic humility*, one should be led to have the appropriately coupled desire to seek, in the relevant contexts, *epistemic friction*—engagement with other points of view for the purposes of discovering whether *epistemic correction or completion* is required for improving one's own point of view, as well as others.

Now, none of what has been said so far tells us anything about how we should conduct ourselves when we are engaged in *intellectual ahimsā*. That is, I have not presented an account of the manner in which the Jains thought *intellectual ahimsā* should be carried out. It is completely consistent with the interpretation of the parable that I have given so far that one goes around being epistemically humble in their inquiry while being completely rude in their speech to every interlocutor one encounters. That is, my interpretation has not grounded the notion of *ahimsā* in relation to how we should conduct our *epistemic engagement*. However, I believe that this can be done through consideration of other materials from the Jain tradition.

For example, consider *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*, in which some rules for Jain monks regarding speech are presented. These rules are consistent with *ahimsā* as a form of non-violence, and they can be seen to reflect evidence in favor of a character view of critical thinking and indicate that concern for *intellectual ahimsā* is present in how the rules describe appropriate speech.

A wise monk does not speak inexpressible truth, truth mixed with falsehood, doubtful truth, or complete falsehood. A wise monk speaks after careful thought of things uncertain, even of truths, in a manner, which may be free from sin, mild and beyond doubt. Likewise, he does not use harsh words, nor even truth that may cause deep injury for even these generate bondage to negative karmas. A wise soul, conscious of evil intentions, does not speak words as prohibited above, or any other that may cause harm (Long 2009: *Dasaveāliya Sūtra* 7: 2-3, 11, 13).<sup>30</sup>

While the *Sūtra* does explain these rules relative to the Jain doctrine of karma, the rules need not be adopted for those reasons. More importantly, these rules appear to be expressing

several directives for right conduct pertaining to inquiry into truth and the transmission of knowledge between inquirers at different levels. These directives are centered on speech, and they clearly discuss the issue of non-harmfulness (*ahimsā*). While these directives are *not* a complete account of what the Jains thought, they do show a *partial template* that can be adumbrated, and they do establish that the Jains have a view that is relevant to the intellectual virtues movement for education as well as the character view of critical thinking. These directives also apply to many of Nussbaum's abilities that are necessary for a democracy based on happiness as opposed to gross national product.

- (i) *Speech about truth*: do not speak inexpressible truths, truths mixed with falsehood, doubtful truth, or complete falsehood.
- (ii) *Speech about uncertain matters*: do not speak about uncertain matters without careful thought about things.
- (iii) *Manner of Speech*: do not speak using harsh words. Adjust your speech to the context and people you are speaking with.<sup>31</sup>

Importantly, these directives would be subject to intellectual *ahimsā*. That is, intellectual *ahimsā* not only requires a first-order attitude toward speech when conducting inquiry; in addition, one has to have second-order epistemic humility about the very manner of conduct one ought to engage in. The dual application of intellectual *ahimsā* means that the principles of engagement may derive from either an error or a limited point of view, and thus may require *epistemic correction or completion*. Finally, I have in this section tried to present my argument both at a theoretical level as well as a practical teaching level. The interpretation of intellectual *ahimsā* offered here shows how one can easily communicate to students a valuable idea about how to conduct critical thinking through the use of an important component of the Jaina tradition.

## 6 Saptabhaṅgī as a Practical Tool for Critical Thinking

The *saptabhaṅgī* of Jaina logic is a seven-fold theory of predication. Many scholars working in Indian logic, the history of logic, and non-classical logic have offered formalizations and interpretations of the *saptabhaṅgī*. The number of interpretations and formalizations is quite extensive. Arvind Sharma (1988)<sup>32</sup> offers a critical examination of several early nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations offered by notable scholars such as Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. He points out several critical aspects relating to each presentation. Work on *saptabhaṅgī* continues even now. Pragati Jain (2000),<sup>33</sup> Jonardon Ganeri (2002),<sup>34</sup> Graham Priest (2008),<sup>35</sup> and Fabien Schang (2011)<sup>36</sup> all have clarified and interpreted the *saptabhaṅgī* in a variety of different logical ways, using textual analysis and different tools from twentieth-century logic. In my view, most of the research on *saptabhaṅgī* is fascinating, technically illuminating, theoretically interesting at the highest level, and a showcase of the best research at the intersection of logical, textual, and historical analysis.

However, *none* of this research shows *how* and *why* anyone should teach this material in an introductory level critical thinking course in which some components of symbolic logic are taught, such as propositional and predicate logic. In this section, I will offer an account of the *saptabhaṅgī*. My goal is in line with the project of advancing cross-cultural critical thinking. I aim to offer an account that leads to a *practical classroom exercise*. I will connect my



discussion of this exercise with the issue of *intellectual abhināsa* and a conception of the virtue of *constructive engagement*.

Where A, B, and C are variables ranging over standpoints (*naya*), and *p* is a variable ranging over existential statements or predicative judgments, the seven-fold theory of predication can be presented as follows.

1. From A, it is true that *p*.
2. From B, it is false that *p*.
3. From A, it is true that *p*, and from B, it is false that *p*.
4. From C, it is *unsayable* whether *p* or  $\neg p$ .
5. From A, it is true that *p*, and from C it is *unsayable* whether *p* or  $\neg p$ .
6. From B, it is false that *p*, and from C, it is *unsayable* whether *p* or  $\neg p$ .
7. From A, it is true that *p*; from B, it is false that *p*; and from C, it is *unsayable* whether *p* or  $\neg p$ .

There are four important things to take note of prior to considering how the theory of seven-fold predication can be used in a concrete exercise.

First, the main truth-values are: true, false, and *unsayable*. The set of seven comes from combining the basic three.

Second, the theory need not be taken to endorse the view that *there are true contradictions*. In order to avoid this interpretation, I have made sure to represent the perspectives with the variables A, B, and C. Thus, (3), for example, tells us that from some perspective A, *p* is true, and from *another distinct* perspective, B, *p* is false. This claim is very different from the claim that from the very same perspective A, *p* is true and *p* is false.

Third, there is, as Tripathi (1968)<sup>37</sup> notes, a great deal of debate over how to translate *avakṛtāya*. I have rendered it here as *unsayable* as opposed to *inexpressible* or *indescribable*. The main reason why I have done this is that *unsayable* is wider than either *inexpressible* or *indescribable*, since each of the latter is a way in which a sentence could be *unsayable*. On the one hand, a sentence *S* can be *unsayable* because what it is about is *indescribable*, such as when one tries to describe something for which there are no words other than the demonstrative *this*. On the other hand, *S* can also be *unsayable* because it is describable, but inexpressible. For example, if *S* is a sentence with infinite conjunctions, it is *inexpressible* by a human, but what it aims to capture is describable. Thus, by using *unsayable* we avoid some of the interesting debates that contemporary scholars of the texts may be interested to capture correctly in a translation of the *saptabhaṅgī*.

Fourth, it is important to *not* collapse the distinction between (3) and (4). While (3) asserts the dependence of the truth of *p* and the falsity of *p* on distinct perspectives, (4) aims to encapsulate the idea, as explained above, that some things are *unsayable*. At least one general reason for acknowledging a class of this sort derives from the idea that some questions are syntactically well formed, but semantically incoherent. For example, consider the question: *Does the number two have parents from Montana?* The question is grammatically well-formed, but it is incoherent with respect to meaning, since the category expressed by “parent” does not apply to numbers when taken literally. While one might be tempted to say that the correct answer to the question of whether 2 has parents from Montana is “no”; others might be inclined to deny that. One reason for denying the negative answer is that the negative answer “no” might also be taken to imply that, while the number 2 does *not* have parents from Montana, it does have parents from somewhere else, such as Texas. As a

consequence, one might take the alternative route and say that there is *no* answer to this question. It is unsayable, since saying “yes” would be false, and saying “no” implies that an answer is possible.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, given that my goal is to find a way to present the tool to critical thinking students, it is best to present the third value as *unsayable*, and then as I have done, explain why this notion is being used relative to the examination of textual sources from the Jain tradition. Now, with these clarifications in place, we are ready to move to how the *saptabhaṅgī* can be used as a tool for the purposes of learning critical thinking.

Let us take a classical philosophical debate as the background context for an analysis. The specific debate I will use is the debate between *realism* and *anti-realism*. Here I will use these terms quite generically. Thus, *realism* is the view that entities exist independently of a viewer and that the properties of an object, such as its color, are present independently of perception and detection. By contrast, *anti-realism* is the view that entities exist only as dependent on minds and that the properties of an object, such as its shape, are dependent on perception and detection. With these definitions in place, let us take a specific example to see how the *saptabhaṅgī* can be used to analyze the debate.

*Example:* Is the perceived round pot *really* round?

*Realism:* There are only two options: Either the perceived round pot is *really* round, or it is not *really* round. It cannot be both.

*Anti-realism:* The pot is both *really* round and not *really* round. Whether it is *really* round or not depends on the observer and their point of view.

Using the *saptabhaṅgī* we can present the situation in the debate as follows:

1. From some perspective, it is true that *the pot is really round*.
2. From some perspective, it is false that *the pot is really round*.
3. From some perspective, it is true that *the pot is really round*, and from another perspective, it is false that *the pot is really round*.
4. From some perspective, it is *unsayable* whether *the pot is really round* or *the pot is not really round*.

In this presentation I have left out the specific nature of each perspective from which the statement *the pot is really round* could be said to be *true*, *false*, *unsayable*, or any combination of them as outlined in (5)-(7). The task for a critical thinking student is to *fill out the nature of the perspectives* from which the statement has the different values. This task constitutes an important critical thinking tool for the following reason. It requires them to analyze a debate from multiple perspectives. This general technique, *perspectival analysis*, is common to many disciplines in which one applies a *theory* to arrive at an analysis. For example, in *Literary Theory*, one applies *Feminism* or *Post-Colonial Theory* to get an analysis of a portion of a text. In *Linguistics* and *Communication Studies*, one can use different theories of grammar and communication to get at what is said. In sum: whenever we think there is more than one theory for a domain, we must admit that the domain is *perspectival* with respect to the multiple theories. Thus, in using the *saptabhaṅgī* we have yet another way in which perspectival analysis can be accomplished.

Here is one way in which the perspectives can be filled out in an illuminating way concerning the *realism vs. anti-realism debate*. I will only show how perspectives (1), (2), and (4) work out, since (3) and (5)–(7) are combinations of the others.

1. From some perspective where there **is** a viewer and specific viewing conditions, which are good, a pot is correctly seen to be round and is correctly judged to be round. Presumably, a realist could hold this perspective, but not an anti-realist.
2. From some perspective where there **is** a viewer and specific viewing conditions, which are good, a pot is correctly seen to be elliptical and is correctly judged to be not round. Presumably, a realist could hold this perspective because the pot is not *really* round. And an anti-realist could also hold this perspective because they don't hold that "perceived" properties really exist.
4. From some perspective where there **is no** judgment, but there still **is** a **perspective**, or from the perspective of one merely watching the debate—e.g., of a person who is agnostic or non-partisan about realist and anti-realist disputes—it is *unsayable* whether the pot would be correctly judged to be round or not.

So, while the traditional approach to analyzing the *realism vs. anti-realism* debate using classical bivalent logic leads to the conclusion that only one position could be true, the *saptabhaṅgī* analysis aims to show that there is an alternative option, the case in which there is no viewer. The simple task the student is confronted with is to critically consider the question: is there a perspective from which the matter is *unsayable*? In this case, the option is one on which neither *realism* nor *anti-realism* holds, because there is no judgment. Furthermore, we might note that realists could agree that it is unsayable whether Mahāvīra's favorite pot was circular or elliptical. While there is a fact, we cannot access it. And anti-realists might agree that talk of properties such as circularity in the absence of viewers is, in general, meaningless.

However, one might complain that there isn't really much going on here worth teaching, since all we are adding is the perspective of the *unsayable*. Even worse, one might argue that, given the way we access the category of the *unsayable*, there are better ways to get the point across. I believe that both criticisms are mistaken, since there is much more to the tool than this simple exercise in critical thinking appears to show.

There is, in addition, the connection that the *saptabhaṅgī* holds to intellectual virtue and our earlier discussion of *intellectual abhīṣā*. We often walk into a debate thinking that the positions in a debate are (a) oppositional, and (b) that, therefore, only one position can be true. By practicing *saptabhaṅgī* analysis, a critical thinker becomes more open to the distinction between superficial disagreement and significant disagreement. This tool leads them to have an open mind when they enter into a debate. Rather than being pushed by *apparent* polar positions, a critical thinker equipped with the tool of *saptabhaṅgī* can look for ways in which both positions may have merit, while at the same time showing how both positions might be *unsayable* from some other perspective.

We might call this virtue *constructive engagement*, and roughly characterize it as the disposition to dislodge disagreement by finding a way in which parties in a disagreement could both be correct, saying something which cannot be determined, or simply engaged in a superficial dispute. While I have presented this virtue of *constructive engagement* in relation to *saptabhaṅgī*, it should be clear that the parable of the elephant and the blind men also helps one intuitively grasp the value of walking into a situation of disagreement with an open mind focused on distinguishing between superficial and significant disagreement. When one frames a disagreement with the idea that one side has to be correct, they approach listening to the arguments in a zero-sum competitive manner. When one frames a disagreement as potentially an *elephant* and *blind men* situation, they approach listening to the disagreement with the idea that perhaps each side of the debate has an incomplete view of the situation and that by combining the views we get a different picture of what could be the ultimate truth or even what is unsayable. In order to get more traction on why the virtue of constructive engagement is valuable let us explore the case of superficial debate in more detail, since it relates to a common situation we find ourselves with: the feeling of disagreement.

In general, it is quite difficult to give a complete account of the difference between *superficial* and *significant* disagreements. However, there is at least one class of *superficial* disagreements, *verbal* disagreements, which can be used to illuminate the distinction. David Chalmers<sup>39</sup> offers the following initial characterization:

[A] dispute between two parties is verbal when the two parties agree on the relevant facts about a domain of concern, and just disagree about the language used to describe that domain. In such a case, one has the sense that the two parties are “not really disagreeing”: that is, they are not really disagreeing about the domain of concern, and are only disagreeing over linguistic matters. (Chalmers 2011: 515)

This characterization is given as a prelude to a discussion of a classic case of a verbal dispute discussed by William James. A man walks rapidly around a tree, while a squirrel moves on the tree trunk. Both face the tree at all times, but the tree trunk stays between them. A group of people are arguing over the question: does the man go around the squirrel or not? James says of this situation:

Which party is right depends on what you practically mean by ‘going round’ the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him [...]. Make the distinction, and there is no occasion for any further dispute (James 1907: 25, cited in Chalmers 2011: 515-16).

Regarding the example Chalmers says the following.

One might question the plausibility of either of James' proffered analyses of 'going round', but in any case the key is the final sentence. Once we resolve an issue about language, the dispute over the nonlinguistic domain evaporates, or at least should evaporate. This potential evaporation is one of the central marks of a verbal dispute (Chalmers 2011: 516-17).

Intuitively, verbal disputes have the right kind of structure so as to fall into the category of *superficial* disagreement. By contrast, a class of cases in which we have *significant* disagreement would occur when we have moral conflicts that derive from fundamental principles of moral evaluation which are disparate, such as what we find in some cases of conflict between consequence-based ethics and rights-based ethics.

Now, returning to *constructive engagement*, it would seem that those who are aware of the fact that some disagreements are due to verbal disagreement and some are due to deep moral disconnect would be in a position to analyze disagreement and move through it in certain cases. And as I have already argued, the virtue of *constructive engagement* can be acquired through learning about *saptabhaṅgī*. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge the possibility that the critic who balks at the value of teaching *saptabhaṅgī* for the purposes of getting students to understand perspectival differences might still not be moved by the connection to *constructive engagement* that has been suggested here.

For supposing that *constructive engagement* is a virtue, and that we ought to teach that virtue in critical thinking, one can imagine the initial critic objecting in the following way. *We do not need to teach the saptabhaṅgī in order to teach constructive engagement. Rather, all we need to do is teach students how to identify truth-conditions, which we already do with classical logic.* For example, we might ask a student of critical thinking the following question: Can both A and E be false at the same time, if so explain how?

A: All politicians are greedy.

E: No politicians are greedy.

A student who understands and applies the Aristotelian Square of Opposition would correctly come to the conclusion that a universal affirmative, A, and a universal negative, E, can be false at the same time as long as both the particular affirmative, I, and the particular negative, O, are also true:

I: Some politicians are greedy.

O: Some politicians are not greedy.

Using this backdrop, one might argue that a student can learn the virtue of *constructive engagement* by applying the Aristotelian Square of Opposition. This important objection invites two responses.

First, the objection rests on the idea that the intellectual virtue of *constructive engagement* that would be acquired through Aristotle's Square of Opposition would be identical to the one acquired through the use of the Jain *saptabhaṅgī*. However, one might respond by arguing that this cannot hold, since Aristotle articulates and defends a bivalent logic, while the Jaina system articulates and defends, at minimum, a trivalent system.<sup>40</sup> As a consequence, while the

*generic* intellectual virtue *constructive engagement* might be similar in the two cases, its application, or the *specific* intellectual virtue, must be different. In some cases, bivalent analysis and trivalent analysis lead to the same conclusion, but given that they have different sets of truth-values, these systems comprehend or describe reality differently.

Nevertheless, our critic might still be unconvinced that these two systems are so different with respect to the intellectual virtue of *constructive engagement*. So there is a second way to respond to the objection. Now taking the assumption that the same intellectual virtue can be learned, we should note the following. The view that says that there is something that a critical thinker can learn from the *saptabhaṅgī* does not require a *defense* of the claim that what students can learn *cannot* also be learned from either (i) another technique, or (ii) from a technique they are already being taught.

Part of the goal of cross-cultural critical thinking is to *explicitly* introduce students to critical thinking through individuals, cultures, and traditions that have contributed to the important *cognitive kind: Critical Thinking* so as not to send them the *implicit* or *explicit* message that critical thinking is a highly valuable skill that derives only from the Western tradition. From the fact that Aristotle's Square of Opposition and *saptabhaṅgī* can both be used to help students acquire the intellectual virtue of *constructive engagement*, it does not follow that we ought to be *teaching* the virtue through Aristotle, as opposed to the Jaina *saptabhaṅgī*. The *saptabhaṅgī* shows us a path to thinking about debates in terms of what is *unsayable* as well as what holds according to a perspective where truth and falsity are available. We get perspectival analysis, which is inclusive of the option of the *unsayable* category. Given that cross-cultural critical thinking is supposed to allow individuals to engage a variety of cultures, it is important that they have a tool that recognizes the *unsayable* category because they might be engaging with a culture or tradition that accepts and respects the *unsayable*. While the *unsayable* is not a logical-epistemic or metaphysical-ontological category that is acknowledged by every culture or tradition, it is found in a variety of traditions other than Jainism, such as Buddhism. So, exposing students early on to this category as an option in critical thinking is clearly valuable.

Finally, in the account I have been forwarding, the cross-cultural critical thinking movement is ultimately about epistemic humility, not only in the first-order domain of inquiry, but also in our meta-inquiry about methods of inquiry. The move to a cross-culturally sensitive approach to critical thinking pedagogy comes from the recognition and realization that our individual epistemic perspectives are limited, that these limitations are in part a function of social conditioning that brings with it implicit biases, and how reaching out to those from distinct traditions can help us gain awareness of what our individual biases are and how we can coordinate critical thinking so as to reduce the negative effects of individual bias.

In the account of *anekāntavāda*, *nayavāda*, *intellectual abimsā*, and *saptabhaṅgī* I have offered here, the Jain tradition seems to have recognized and understood this point. Their tradition, as well as many other traditions, have something important to offer the project of cross-cultural critical thinking, which itself is a *corrective* enterprise to the standard model of critical thinking education deployed in the U.S., U.K., and those nations that follow their model.

**Anand Jayprakash Vaidya** is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Comparative Philosophy at San Jose State University in Northern California. He received his B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles and his PhD from the University of

California, Santa Barbara for his analytical study of how we come to know what is possible and impossible and what consequence knowledge of possibility has for theories of consciousness. His current research focuses on cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary public philosophy in the areas of mind, epistemology, critical thinking, and social justice. A wandering nomad at heart who lives in San Francisco with his wife Manjula, Anand is an avid fan of heavy metal, jazz, and classical Indian music, who regularly plays guitar and practices yoga and meditation.

- 
- \* This paper has improved a lot from a number of discussions, and is in a sense still a work in progress. For what I have accomplished here, I would like to thank the following people: the participants of the January 8-10, 2016 *International Conference on Science and Jain Philosophy* at IIT, Mumbai; Purushottama Bilimoria, Arindam Chakrabarti, Sydney Morrow, Ethan Mills, Amy Donahue, Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach; Manjula Rajan, Krupa Patel, Jeffery Long, Jarrod Brown, and Benjamin Zenk.
- 1 While there are many ways in which logic and critical thinking courses can be taught, I am talking most directly about those courses that are supported by books like Lewis Vaughn's, *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning about Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Paul Hurley's, *A Concise Introduction to Logic* 12<sup>th</sup> edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2014).
  - 2 Harvey Siegel, "Not by Skill Alone: The Centrality of Character to Critical Thinking," *Informal Logic* 15, no. 3, (1993). It is important to note that there is extensive discussion within critical thinking literature over which view of critical thinking is correct.
  - 3 Duncan Pritchard, "Epistemic Virtue and the Epistemology of Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 2, (2013): 236-37.
  - 4 Jason Baehr, "Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 2, (2013): 248-62.
  - 5 In 2014 when I began doing research for this paper, there were very few discussions of intellectual virtues outside of the Western canon by virtue epistemologists. However, as of 2018, there are works that consider intellectual virtues found in Chinese philosophy.
  - 6 Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).
  - 7 It is important to note that in her advocacy of critical thinking, Nussbaum also takes note of the importance of comparative religion. As a consequence, I think the real issue for her position is whether she holds that alternative conceptions of reasoning and modes of presenting reasoning belong in a comparative religions course as opposed to a logic and critical thinking course.
  - 8 The following work is one example of a teaching text that falls in this category: Wanda Teays, *Second Thoughts: Critical Thinking from a Multicultural Perspective* (Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996). I would like to note that the work that Wanda Teays has done is extremely important with respect to the current project. By first bringing in the concept of a multicultural context to which we can apply tools of critical thinking, we open the path to the further issues of: where do our tools come from? And ought we to be looking for other tools?
  - 9 Michael Lynch, *In Praise of Rationality: Why Democracy Needs Rationality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.
  - 10 Some will be inclined to respond to this view by claiming that I am inviting anarchy since some forms of critical engagement do not respect persons. It is clear that my account

requires a defense of what can be properly said to fall under the human kind *critical thinking*. And my account faces the classical problem of how openness in inquiry must rest on being closed to intolerance. However, I am at a loss to give an *a priori* account of how to combat either of these problems. Rather, I would think that an account of the human kind *critical thinking* and how to respond to the problem of openness resting on being closed to intolerance would proceed by some *a priori* thoughts improved upon by empirical investigation of cultures, traditions, and the nature of the human mind.

- 11 It should be noted that the phrase “constructive engagement” has been used by Bo Mou to define a methodology for comparative philosophy, see the editor’s introduction to the founding edition of the *Journal of Comparative Philosophy* for an articulation of the constructive engagement approach. While there is some overlap between Mou’s notion of constructive engagement and the one I aim to develop in this paper, there are also substantive differences. The main difference to be noted is that I am using “constructive engagement” to define an attitude, as opposed to a specific approach for doing comparative philosophy.
- 12 Johannes Bronkhorst, “*Anekāntavāda*, The Central Philosophy of Ājīvīkism,” *International Journal of Jaina Studies* 9, no. 1, (2013): 1-11.
- 13 Tom Nagel, *The Last Word*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 14 Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).
- 15 Interestingly, the strategy that I am using here should be familiar to those that have studied Tarski’s work on the semantical conception of truth and the liar’s paradox. At least one dilemma we come to from the work of Tarski is the following: *either* “is true” is an object-language predicate like “is tall,” in which case we get the liar’s paradox, since one can permissibly construct the sentence, “this sentence is false” in the object language, *or* we disallow “is true” from being used in an object-language sentence. I like the second disjunction. If we take the view that “is true” is a meta-language predicate, and not an object-language predicate, we do not generate the paradox. Likewise, if we hold that relativism is a statement in the meta-language about what holds of object-language sentences, then we do not generate the claim of self-refutation.
- 16 Internal to Jainism there is a debate over exactly how many *naya* there are. Some think that there are only seven, others believe that there are an infinite number. For the purposes of this inquiry, I have suspended this debate because the primary point I want to establish holds as long as there is more than one *naya*, which every Jain thinker would agree with.
- 17 For this basic account, see John Koller, “*Syādvāda* as the epistemological key to the Jaina middle way metaphysics of *Anekāntavāda*,” *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3, (2000): 400-07; and J. Soni, “Basic Jaina Epistemology,” *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3, (2000): 367-77.
- 18 For this articulation of how the parable of the elephant is *not* supposed to be understood, as well as for the initial parable itself, see Jeffery Long, *Jainism: An Introduction* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishing, 2009).
- 19 I agree with Long’s analysis that the parable does not advance the view that there is no knowledge. However, I want to point out that, although the parable makes it the case that only the sighted king can know directly, it does not follow that the blind men cannot know indirectly through collective reasoning. I will aim to establish this point in the remainder of my analysis. In addition, the limited nature of our perception, memory, and knowledge is sufficient to make the point about perspectival reasoning. Nothing depends on the actual blindness of the individuals in the parable.
- 20 For an articulation of this account of *horizon* see: Christian Beyer, “Edmund Husserl,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2015 (URL:



- <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/husserl/>; last accessed on 12 April, 2018).
- 21 Alison Wylie, "Standpoint Matters American Philosophical Association Pacific Division: Presidential Address," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 86, no. 2, (2012): 47-76.
- 22 Scott Stroud, "Anekāntavāda and Engaged Rhetorical Pluralism: Explicating Jaina Views on Perspectivism, Violence and Rhetoric," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 17, no. 2, (2014): 131-56.
- 23 See Stroud (2014: 135-37) for these points.
- 24 Stroud (2014) articulates a view of *anekāntavāda* as engaged rhetorical pluralism. In my view, his account can partially be used to substantiate a connection to *feminist standpoint epistemology*.
- 25 Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (Anekāntavāda)* (L. D. Series 79. Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1981).
- 26 For an engaging discussion on *ahiṃsā* see S. Bothara, *Ahiṃsā: The Science of Peace* (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharati Academy, 2004).
- 27 John Cort, "Intellectual *Ahiṃsā* Revisited: Jain Tolerance and Intolerance of Others," *Philosophy East & West* 50 no. 3, (2014): 324-47.
- 28 For a sustained discussion on tolerance and intolerance, see Purushottama Bilimoria, "The Limits of Intolerance: Comparative Reflection on India's Experiment with Tolerance," in *Tolerance in Comparative Perspective*, ed. V. Spencer, (NY: Lexington Books, 2018), 159-78.
- 29 The term "open inclusiveness" that I am using is derived from consideration of the work of Jeffery Long's "*Anekānta* and *Ahiṃsā*: A Jain Philosophy of Universal Acceptance," The Virchand Gandhi Lecture, April 18, 2013, Claremont School of Theology.
- 30 Translation based on that of Kastur Chand Lalwani, *Daśavaikālika Sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973).
- 31 It is important to note that the condition concerning manner of speech that limits the use of harsh words should *not* be taken to preclude the view that anger can be expressed in critical inquiry. One might think upon reading these conditions that certain emotions and especially the expression of some emotions is simply disallowed by the very idea of *intellectual ahiṃsā*. Some might argue that the emotion of anger and its expression are central to certain kinds of critical political inquiry, such as critical inquiry into race-based and gender-based discrimination or genocide. As a consequence, one might be inclined to read the conditions listed as directing people who are victims of such abuse or those advocating on their behalf to not express or feel anger towards those that have done harm. My own reading of these rules is that they do not preclude the role of anger in critical inquiry. In addition, on my reading no component of *intellectual ahiṃsā* precludes the idea that anger can be relevantly at play in critical inquiry or discussion. Rather, there is a superficial appearance of tension in the statement of the rules, *intellectual ahiṃsā*, and expressing anger through the use of harsh words. On my view, the core question is: Is it really possible to express one's anger calmly without the use of harsh words? If the answer is yes, I would think that the Jain rules discussed here are simply suggesting that expressing one's anger calmly is superior to doing it in a heated manner through harsh words. The emotion of anger toward a person or a group in no way entails that one intends harm to those that have caused them harm. Just anger does not entail retribution or intent to harm.
- 32 Arvind Sharma, "The Jain Doctrine of *Syādvāda*: A Critical Examination of Some Modern Presentations," in *Religions and Comparative Thought: Essays in Honour of the Late Dr. Ian Kesarcodi-Watson*, eds. P. Bilimoria & A. Fenner (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1988), 9-23.

- 
- 33 Pragati Jain, “*Saptabhaṅgī*: The Jaina Theory of Seven-Fold Predication: A Logical Analysis,” *Philosophy East and West* 50, no. 3, (2000): 385-99.
- 34 Jonardon Ganeri, “Jaina Logic and the Philosophical Basis of Pluralism,” *History and Philosophy of Logic* 23, no. 4, (2002): 267-81.
- 35 Graham Priest, “Jaina Logic: A Contemporary Perspective,” *History and Philosophy of Logic* 29, no. 3, (2008): 263-78.
- 36 Fabien Schang, “Two Indian Dialectical Logics: *Saptabhaṅgī* and *Catuṣkoṭī*,” *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 27, (2011): 45-75.
- 37 R.K. Tripathi, “*Avaktavya* in Jainism,” *Philosophy East and West* 18, no. 3, (1968): 187-93.
- 38 For the purposes of making clear that there are alternative ways of representing the seven-fold scheme, I offer here an alternative account due to Bilimoria (2018), which is based on the work of Matilal (1981). Bilimoria presents the schema as follows:
1. *syād asti*: from a particular point of view, a thing is;
  2. *syād nāsti*: from another point of view, it is not;
  3. *syād asti nāsti*: from 1 and 2 together, it is both;
  4. *syād avaktavya*: despite 3, it is indescribable;
  5. *syād asti avaktavya*: combining 1, 2, 3, and 4, somehow the thing is itself and is still indescribable;
  6. *syād nāsti avaktavya*: combining 2 and 4, the thing is not itself and is still indescribable;
  7. *syād asti nāsti avaktavya*: combining 1, 2, and 4, the thing is itself, is not itself, and yet is indescribable.
- On his account of the seven-fold theory of predication: “The Jaina logician is [...] attempting to capture a lacuna in our efforts at knowing anything in its nakedness; reality is multidimensional or varied, and even with all the strides we may have made in phenomenology and the sciences, we are still nowhere near uncovering the full truth about anything or any situation let alone in respect of the whole of metaphysics and cosmology.”
- 39 David Chalmers, “Verbal Disputes,” *Philosophical Review* 120, no. 4, (2011): 515-66.
- 40 I would like to thank Amy Donahue for pressing this point on me. While I am aware of the fact that the two systems have different sets of truth values, I was not convinced of the power of responding to the hypothetical critic I am considering through the use of this point until Amy pushed this point successfully several times. Thank you!