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Jain Pluralism, Individuals and Context Sensitivity

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Abstract

In classical India, Jain philosophers developed a theory of viewpoints (*naya-vãda*) according to which any statement is asserted always within and dependent upon a given epistemic perspective or viewpoint that on one hand restricts its interpretation scope and on the other hand will render the conditions for the assertion of the statement at stake.

The Jainas furnished this theory of knowledge with an (epistemic) theory of disputation that takes into account the viewpoint in which the main thesis has been stated. In a recent joint paper with Nicolas Clerbout and Marie-Hélène Gorisse just published in the *Journal of Philosophical Logic* we developed a dialogical reconstruction of such a theory formulated in an argumentative frame: the idea is not to understand Jain theory of knowledge as the mere addition logic+meaning+epistemology+argumentation, but rather as a logic based on a notion of meaning that is exclusively based on argumentative notions. In fact we centred our study in the work of tenth century Jain philosopher Siddharsigani however in her PHD dissertation Marie-Hélène Gorisse showed that is also applies to the work of Prabhâchandra (of the same century) and it does seem that the general features I will talk about are shared by some other Jain philosophers.

In nowadays terms, it would be quite natural to understand the notion of viewpoint from a modal perspective. Certainly, the viewpoint indexes are not part of the object language. Indeed, viewpoints are implicit epistemic contexts that bound the assertion of statements, not operators that extend the set of logical constants. Moreover, each viewpoint represents a type of epistemic access to objects of the domain of discourse. This (epistemic) type defines a precise frame of the way assertions involving descriptions of those objects are to be interpreted and justified. Thus, each viewpoint is not to be seen just as a set of propositions (as in the standard notion of *possible world*) but rather as a whole epistemological, ontological and logical *Weltanschauung*. Furthermore, the most striking feature of the Jain pluralistic theory of knowledege is **to reach a complete knowledge,** a knowledge encompassing somehow all the main diverging viewpoints. This is as the base of the famous story of 5 blind men unable to realize that each of the different parts they are touching constitute an elephant. Thus, the issue at stake is not only to be able to discriminate each each point of view but rather to attempt to see them as constituting **positions in an overall a structure:** *complete or real knowledge* amounts to realizing that one given point of view is only one of the positions of a whole structure.

In such a context and assumming a dialogical approach two reconstructions are possible, namely to understand the Jain theory as the development of :

1) *An Epistemological Frame* where there is no specific logic but rather a frame constituted by different structural rules each specific to each viewpoint and that regulate how to devolop an argument (or counteragument) within the context of a given given viewpoint. This conception seems to apply particularly to Prabhâchandra's theory.
2) *Of a structure constitued by scenarios* with an underlying logic that regulates not only how to go from one scenario to the other but also from one scenario that constitutes the set (that defines a viewpoint) to the scenario of a different set.

The logic underlying the gnoseological features that characterize each viewpoint can be understood in a dialogical setting as resulting from the formulation of appropriate structural rules. In fact, we should distinguish three sets of such rules

1) General rules, that determine how to play by specifying how to move, how many times, when does the play finish and so on. These general rules include the Jain theory of inference as embedded in a general frame that norms how to carry out formal arguments that might lead to the deliver the proof of logical validity (the construction of a formal strategy).
2) .Rules that regulate how develop arguments involving existential claims. These rules reconstruct the logic of the existential claims underlying the first four viewpoints.
3) Rules that regulate how to develop arguments making use of linguistic substitution rules. These rules reconstruct the logic of the substitution of terms and predicates underlying the last three (word-oriented) viewpoints.

While the first set relates to a debate about the formal ways to develop an argument for ascription or not of a property based on a specific norm about the utterance of atomic formulae the second set is about what we would call nowadays quantification and the third set

is about the substitution of terms and predicates or more generally about the linguistic means to identify an individual.

In our setting the general rules about the ascription of properties is captured by the so-called *formal rule*, that describes how to formally defend that an atomic formula that expresses that a given object has (or has not) a specific property. The set of rules of involving existential claims involve complex formulae, however, they could be understood as a restriction of the formal rule if we understand existence as a property – this is also possible in the dialogical framework – though for the sake of simplicity we do not this here.

Now, as mentioned above, the main point of the Jain gnoseology is to understand the viewpoints as constituting a structure, a whole: according to my view the assertion theory has exactly that aim. Indeed, the assertion theory considers assertion forms such : (i) *it is arguable that α …*;(2) *it is arguable that A and it is arguable that not A, ect* which we can understand roughly as *there is one viewpoint-situation*. Accordinglgy, both possible reconstructions when linked with the assertion theory describe the Jain theory of reasoning as reasoning within a structure and both understand the Jain view as rendering new perspectives. Indeed,

> The first reconstruction understands the Jain setting as building a structure where the points are arguments (developed according to the logic of some view point) and the links are established by some relation of refutation. This constitutes a triple novelty, namely (1) nowadays argument-based approaches to non-monotonic reasoning do not consider that two points of the structure might be constituted by arguments with a different notion of inference (2) the refutation of an argument does not consist in blocking one inference-rule but rather the substitution of one structural rule with another in such a way that a different notion of inference is put into play – in the dialogical frame this affects the so-called global meaning: that is the general rules on how to play. (3) the notion of inference of a given viewpoint is based on an argumentative theory of meaning.

> - While the first reconstruction conceives the structure as constituted by a relation between arguments that challenge each other comparing different viewpoints, the second delivers a structure constituted by different set sof scenarios (each set corresponding to one of the viewpoints) in the style of a multiagent epistemic logic. However, this approach also provides a novelty. In fact his way to understand the Jain epistemic apporach offers a new metalogical concept for epistemic (or more generally for modal) structures that does not reduce neither to validity nor to satisfyability and that we in Lille, following a suggestion of Tero Tulenheimo, call *gobal satisfiability*.

> Both possible understanding of the structure seem to require a notion of individual dynamic enough to adapt to each of the viewpoints.

The main aim of our paper is to follow a thoroughly contextual approach to the Jain theory and this amounts to develop a reconstruction of the jain gnoseology

> 1. with the background of a theory of meaning that is based neither in a model theoretic semantics (based on denotation) nor a proof theoretic one (where norms of meaning reduce to norms for the production of logical proof); but

rather one where meaning is linked to rules that fix the development of specific argumentation forms : these rules define each of the viewpoints.

2. that distinguishes between contexts within a same viewpoint and (argumentative) contexts corresponding to different viewpoints.
3. That presents the theory of the viewpoints as a frame where different logical and epistemological theories can be compared and studied and where the theory of assertion form is a viewed as a theory that places this metalogical frame within a structure.
4. That presents the Jain theory of inference as embedded in a general frame on how to carry out logical arguments.

Let me point out that though the dialogical approach in general is not necessarily pluralistic and the contextualisation implemented by assertion forms do not necessarily assume that two different contexts might correspond to different viewpoints (logics); the general gnoseolgoical jain theory does include this possibility. It is not only that in one context we have one sort of objects and in the other one other sort of objects but rather that the epistemological access to one sort of objects