



Debate Winter School

TEXTBOOK

THE LANGUAGE OF NALANDA DEBATE
Sera Jey Debate Winter School 2023

CHALLENGER



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STATEMENT OF THESIS

Take the subject X

It follows that it is/has Y

STATEMENT OF THESIS AND REASON (3-PART SYLLOGISM)

Take the subject X

It follows that it is/has Y

Because it is/has Z

STATEMENT OF PERVASION

It follows that if *it* is/has A, then *it* necessarily is/has B

COUNTING THE JOINTS OF DEBATE

It follows you can posit the difference between A and B in terms of *Three Joints, Four Joints, Equivalence, or Contradiction.*

INFORMATION SEEKING QUESTIONS

It follows you can posit the definition/categories/an example of C.

(after Defender accepts)

Posit it/them

REQUESTING A REASON

X is/has Y because...?

REQUESTING AN EXAMPLE AFTER DEFENDER DENIES A PERVASION

Posit an example!

WHEN DEFENDER GOES BACK ON A POSITION

Tsa! / Strike! / Contradiction!

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Restate the pervasion (said after a reason is denied with “No Pervasion”)

Restate the thesis (said after a thesis is either accepted or denied)

Restate the reason (said after a reason is denied)

DEFENDER



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RESPONDING TO A THESIS STATEMENT/STATEMENT OF PERVASION

I accept
Why?

RESPONDING TO A REASON/3-PART SYLLOGISM

No Pervasion
The reason's not true.
I accept

RESPONDING TO AN INFORMATION SEEKING QUESTION

Take the subject X

RESPONDING TO A REQUEST FOR A REASON

Because it is/has Z

RESPONDING TO A REQUEST FOR AN EXAMPLE AFTER DENYING A PERVASION

Take the subject X

RESPONDING TO A CLARIFYING QUESTION

(if asked to restate the pervasion)

If *it* is/has A, then *it* is not necessarily/does not necessarily have B

(if clarifying a thesis you accepted)

I accept that X is Y

(if clarifying a thesis you denied by saying "Why?")

Why is X Y?

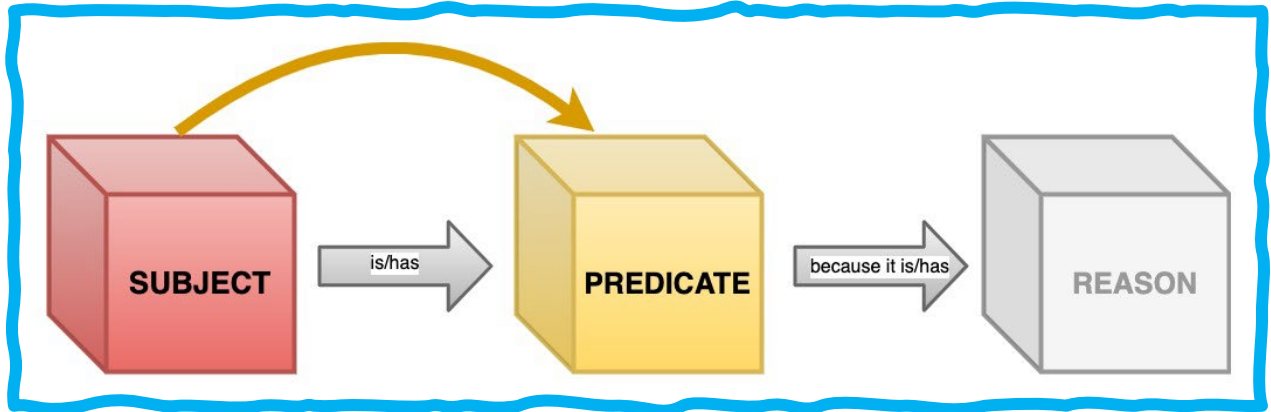
(if clarifying a reason you denied by saying "Reason's not true")

I deny that X is Y

The Four Answers - Visual Guide

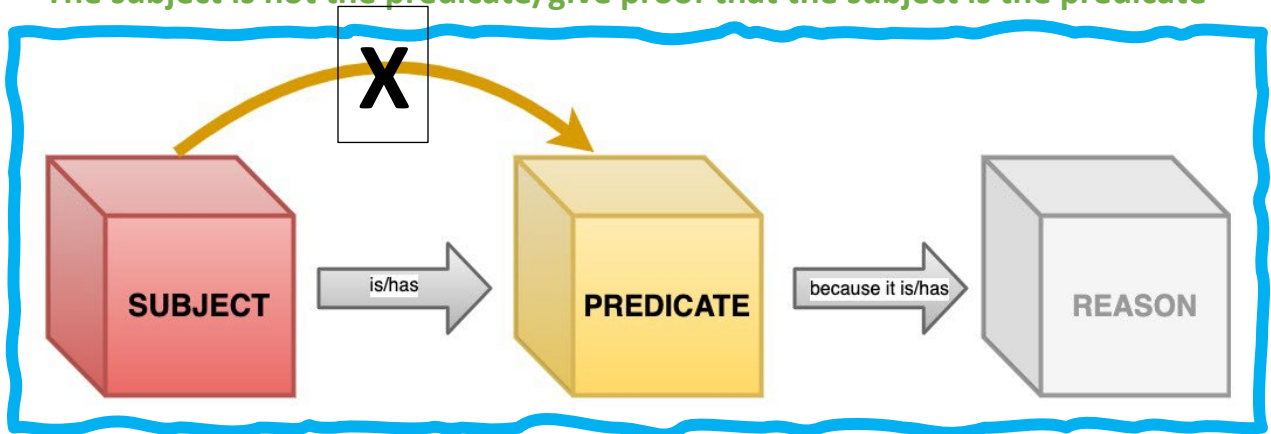
I ACCEPT

The subject is the predicate



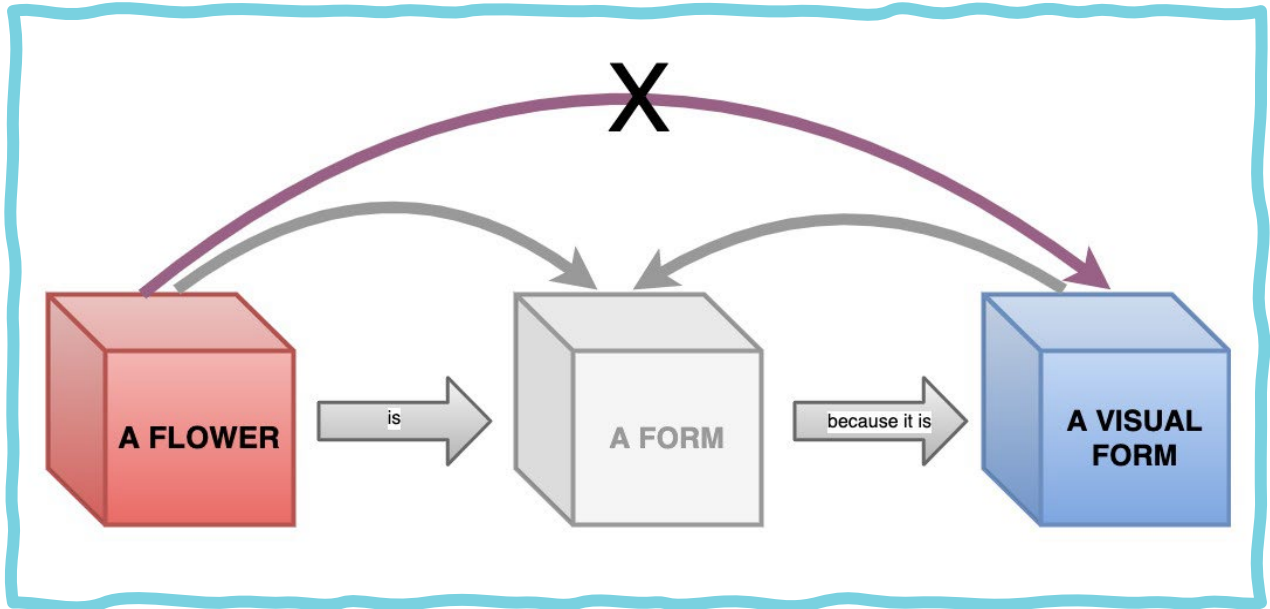
WHY?

The subject is not the predicate/give proof that the subject is the predicate



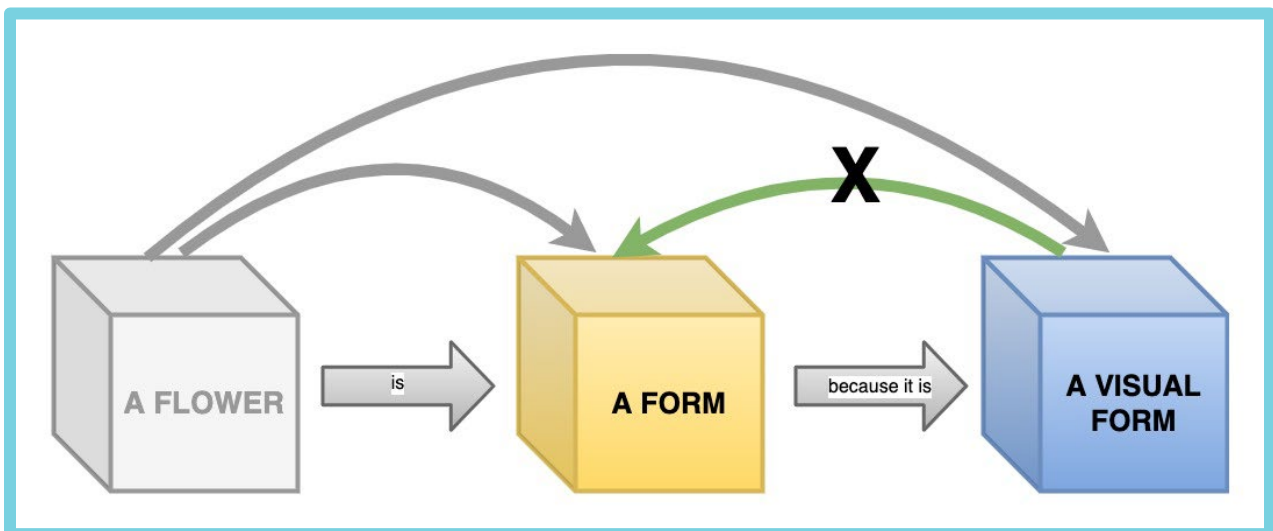
REASON'S NOT TRUE

The subject is not the reason (the reason is not established within the subject)



NO PERVASION

There is no pervasion between the reason and the predicate (if it's the reason, it's not necessarily the predicate)



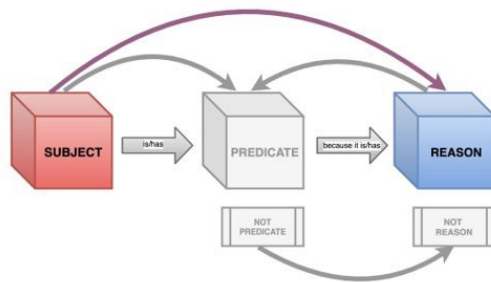
THE THREE LIMBS OF A FLAWLESS REASON

All Three Limbs:

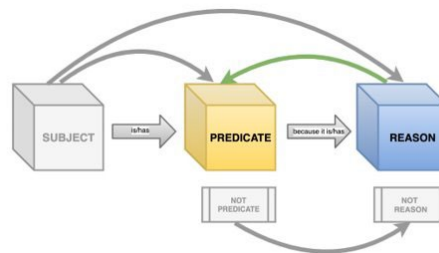
subject	predicate	reason
a flower	impermanent	a product

1. A flower is a product
2. If it is a product it is necessarily impermanent.
3. If it is **not** impermanent it is necessarily **not** a product.

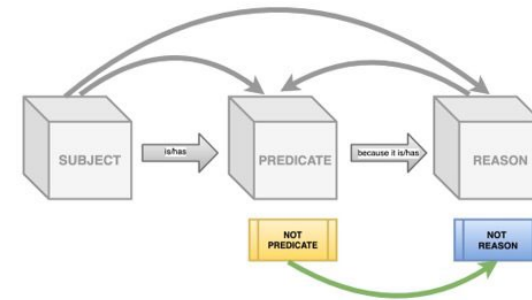
1.



2.



3.



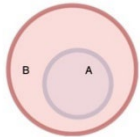
How to Count the Joints of Debate

The assertions here are made from the perspective of the Nalanda Tradition.

Note that for equivalence and contradiction there may *sometimes* be something that is neither (a) nor (b), but the convention is not to count that as a separate Joint.

(a) Form and **(b) External Matter** have...

3 Joints.



If **it** is **(a) form**, **it** is necessarily **(b) external matter**.

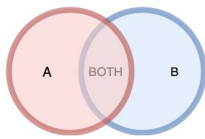
If **it** is **(b) external matter**, **it** is not necessarily **(a) form**.

There is something that is neither.

1. Something which is both
= **the color white**
2. Something which is **(b) external matter** but not **(a) form**
= **the word "OK"**
3. Something which is neither **(a) form** nor **(b) external matter**
= **unicorns**

(a) Form and (b) One (aka a singular object) have...

4 Joints.



If **it** is (a) form, **it** is not necessarily (b) one.

If **it** is (b) one, **it** is not necessarily (a) form.

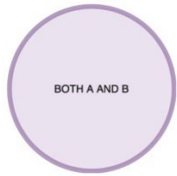
There is something that is both.

There is something that is neither.

1. Something which is both
= **the color white**
2. Something which is (a) Form but not (b) One:
= **the colors red and white**
3. Something which is (b) One but not (a) Form
= **the eye consciousness**
4. Something which is neither (a) Form nor (b) One
= **the eye consciousness and the ear consciousness**

(a) Form and (b) an object seen in the domain of visual consciousness are...

Equivalent.



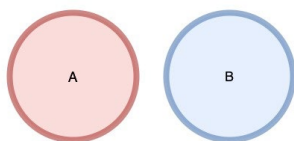
If **it** is (a) form, **it** is necessarily (b) an object seen in the domain of visual consciousness.

If **it** is (b) an object seen in the domain of visual consciousness, **it** is necessarily (a) Form.

1. Something which is both
= **the shape of an elephant.**

(a) Form and (b) Consciousness are...

contradictory.



If **it** is (a) form, **it** is necessarily **not** (b) consciousness.

If **it** is (b) consciousness, **it** is necessarily **not** (a) form.

1. Something which is (a) Form but not (b) Consciousness:
= **the color red**
2. Something which is (b) consciousness but not (a) Form
= **the eye consciousness.**

TEMPLATE

Extended Answers

I ACCEPT:

C: Take the subject **flower** it follows it is **a form**.

D: I accept.

C: **[seeking a reason to prove the thesis]** It is a form because...?

D: It is a form because **it is an object seen in the domain of visual consciousness**.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **matter**.

D: I accept.

C: **[opposite thesis]** Take the subject **flower**, it follows that it is **not matter**. D: Why?

C: Because it is **not particle like or composed of particles**.

D: Reason not true.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **external matter**.

D: I accept.

C: **[new thesis]** Take the subject **form**, it follows it is **external matter**.

D: I accept.

AFTER WHY?:

C: Take the subject **flower** it follows it is **a form**.

D: Why?

C: **[give reason to prove the thesis]** It follows it is **a form** because it is **an object seen in the domain of visual consciousness**.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject **flower** it follows it is **a form**.

D: Why?

C: **[opposite thesis]** Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **not a form**.

D: I accept.

AFTER REASON NOT TRUE:

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: It follows it is **form** because **it is an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness**.

D: Reason not true.

C: **[confirm the reason]** Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **not an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness**.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: It follows it is **form** because it is **object given over to experience through the nose sensing modality and smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness.**

D: Reason not true.

C: **[ask defender to confirm the denied reason]** Restate the reason.

D: A **form** is **not an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness.**

(or) D: The reason that a **form** is **an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness** is not true.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form** because it is **an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness.**

D: Reason not true.

C: **[new thesis from subject and reason]** Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness.**

D: Why?

C: It follows **it** is **an object smelled in the domain of olfactory consciousness,** because it is **a smell.**

D: Reason not true.

AFTER NO PERVASION:

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: Because it is **matter**.

D: No pervasion.

C: **[confirm the denied pervasion]** It follows if **it** is **matter** it is not necessarily **form**.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: Because it is **matter**.

D: No pervasion.

C: **[ask the defender to confirm the pervasion]** restate the pervasion.

D: If **it** is **matter** it is not necessarily **form**.

C: Take the subject **flower**, it follows it is **form**.

D: Why?

C: Because it is **matter**.

D: No pervasion.

C: **[seeking example]** Posit an example of **it** which is **matter** but **not a form**.

D: Take the subject **the smell of roses**.

C: **[double-checking the example]** Take the subject **the smell of roses**, it follows it is **matter**.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject **the smell of roses**, it follows it is **not a form**.

D: I accept.

Debate Winter School

Introducing Nalanda Debate

Sera Jey Monastic University

1. Knowledge and Reality Bound Together
2. Making discoveries through logic
3. Two parties of a debate
4. The syllogism
5. Unmasking your thought processes through debate
6. The ingredients of debate
7. Aristotle and Dignaga
8. The Joints of Debate
9. The eight doors of pervasion
10. Definition-definienda relation
11. Staying on subject

1 Knowledge and Reality Bound Together

“If something exists, it’s necessarily knowable.”

Do you think that this is a sensible statement? It certainly can be controversial – any statement which is not immediately evident leaves itself open to debate. Since this entire textbook is intended to help guide the reader to debate claims like the above one with clarity, focus, and creativity, we might as well start right off with a good, hearty debate.

So, let’s look at the claim for a moment; one way to do this, is to consider the counterfactual. In this case, the counterfactual would be simply a counter-example - something which does exist but is not knowable. Can you imagine something like

that? Just bring it to mind... an unknowable object which exists. Certainly, you can bring it to mind; the mind's capacity to imagine something isn't impeded by it not existing or not being knowable. We can also imagine a car made of water; a tree that grows out of a cloud; Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory with its river of chocolate.

Or how about simply an object which is so far away that there is no way to know that it exists. This is certainly conceivable; perhaps even sensible. But a little debate may lead us to start questioning whether such a thing is truly possible...

It follows that if it exists it is necessarily knowable?
Why?
It follows that if it exists it is not necessarily knowable?
I accept.
Give an example.
Take the subject: an unknown object which exists in the far reaches of space.
Take the subject: an unknown object which exists in the far reaches of space. It follows that it is an example of something which exists, but is not knowable?
I accept.
[same subject] It follows that its existence is certain?
I accept.
[same subject] It follows that its existence is provable?
I accept.
[same subject] It follows that it is proven to exist?
I accept.
[same subject] It follows that it is proven to exist by a person?

I accept.
[now switching to a different, but related subject] Take the subject: the person who is proving that the unknown object in the far reaches of space exists. It follows he is proving the existence of the unknown object in the far reaches of space?
I accept.
It follows they are proving the existence of that object from within a state of knowing that that object exists?
Why?
It follows that they're proving the existence of that object from within a state of not knowing that that object exists?
I accept.
It follows they're proving the existence of that object from a state of ignorance about that object's existence?
I accept.
It follows that they're using flawed and unreliable evidence and reasons to prove the existence of that object?
Why?
It follows that they're using flawless and reliable evidence and reasons to prove the existence of that object?
I accept.
It follows that the evidence they're using is able to prove to someone that the object exists?
I accept.
It follows that their evidence is not able to prove to someone that the object exists, because the evidence not able to prove to themselves that the object exists.
The reason's not true.
It follows their evidence can't prove the existence of the object to themselves, because they see the evidence but it wasn't able to prove to them that that object exists.
Reason's not true.
It follows the evidence hasn't been able to prove that the object exists, because they don't know for sure that the object exists.
Reason's not true.



It follows they don't know for sure that the object exists, because they don't know that the object exists; because the object is not known to exist; because it is not known; because it is an unknown object.

Takeaway: While it may seem perfectly plausible that an object can exist without being known, when you start to tease out the logical implications of such an object, it becomes very difficult to see how it could actually be in such an unknown state. The very knowledge of it contradicts its status as unknown, doesn't it? This is the starting point of Nalanda Debate; reality is linked with knowledge. Ontology is tied to epistemology. The world is dependent on the mind.

2 Making Discoveries Through Logic

Simply being able to bring something to mind, clearly, does not establish it as existing. And even though something appears in your mind, that doesn't prove that it's knowable. But there must be ways to know that things exist, right? If there weren't any way

to determine with certainty whether something existed or not, we could hardly accomplish any of our desired aims with much success. Let's not get too philosophical or complex about this. It's very easy to understand with simple examples.

Think about driving a car and coming up to a stoplight. If you don't have a definitive understanding which is free of any doubt about the existence of a red stoplight in front of you, you will put yourself and any passengers in the car at immediate and life-threatening risk. How do you have that knowledge of the red stoplight?

Or for another example, if you want to grow a nice field of corn but do not know what kind of seeds to buy to produce corn, your chances of success at fulfilling your goal are zero. You must have knowledge of the causal relationship between corn seed and corn. If you know just that, but then don't know what other conditions are required – a properly plowed and prepared field that is irrigated and given the right fertilizer, etc. – you might grab your big sack of seed and just hurl it over the field, then go home and hope for your harvest. This would be tragic. A tragedy caused solely by a lack of knowledge.

Okay, let's do one more. Imagine coming back to your house or apartment from a trip to the store and seeing big plumes of gray smoke billowing out of all sides of the building. Now, imagine not knowing that smoke is a result of fire. Without being able to realize that fire exists there in your home, you might just sit and watch the smoke float up into space, thinking it's a lovely site to behold.

Definitive, doubt-free knowledge, then, is clearly an integral part of just being able to make it through a typical day. And we must somehow gain this knowledge. We have a lot of cognitions; moments of conscious perception, or awareness. Some are purely conceptual, occurring only in the space of mental experience. Some are related with sense organs and their systems of perception, whose unique operation is to import sense data directly into our minds from 'the outside world'. But for both of these styles of cognition, there is no

guarantee that they are correct. There are instances which are correct, but just as many which are mistaken in one way or another.

What is needed, then, is a clear delineation between the correct cognitions and the mistaken ones. What is needed is a map of the mind, with the different classes of correct cognitions clearly enumerated and explained. This is precisely the motivation behind the Pramana tradition of literature, and more broadly, the investigation of Pramana throughout the Indian philosophical tradition.

Pramana can be discussed as a textual tradition, but here, we're discussing Pramana as a classification of mental states. Pramana are a type of mind. They are minds which give correct knowledge. They are knowledge-bearing cognitions, knowledge-inducing cognitions. The Tibetan choice of terminology that the translators found to render this Sanskrit term "Pramana" into Tibetan is informative. In Tibetan Pramana are called Tsayma (tshad ma). This is a term which also means measurement; Tsayma are minds which take an accurate measure of the objects with which they interact. They accurately gauge the things which are experienced by them.

The visual perception which sees a red traffic light as green – due to perhaps some unusual lighting condition, or a flaw in one's visual system, or perhaps just tinted sunglasses – is an Apramana. It is a consciousness which does not accurately gauge its object – instead of seeing a red traffic light as red, it sees it as green. The visual perception which sees a red traffic light as red is a Pramana – it is a mind which takes an accurate measure of the object that it is engaged with. Therefore, in this textbook, we will refer to this type of cognition as a *gauge cognition* (or gauge mind/gauge consciousness). Pramana has also been rendered into English as "valid cognition," "reliable cognizer," and "epistemic instrument."

Starting from this most basic distinction between gauge cognitions and non-gauge cognitions, a natural next step is to ask what constitutes a gauge cognition. How are they

produced? What stops them from being produced? What are their limits? What are the varieties of gauge cognitions?

Gauge cognitions can be organized along several metrics, but for our purposes in introducing Nalanda Debate, we will use the scheme that is based on the means of enacting each gauge cognition. These, in turn, allow us to develop an organizational scheme of ontology itself – what types of knowable objects exist. In this vein there is a necessary and direct relation between ontology and epistemology. The classes of existent – or knowable – objects are defined in terms of how knowledge of them is produced. They are defined by the gauge cognitions which are able to accurately gauge them.

The first class of objects are the evident phenomena. These are objects that are empirically observable; they are present directly in sensory cognition. The kind of gauge mind which is mainly responsible for generating knowledge of these evident phenomena is called a *direct cognition*. They are so called because they are incidences of cognition which are concept-free and have avoided any condition that could obscure it. They realize their objects directly and correctly.

An example of this kind of object is a tree. It can be perceived directly and correctly by appearing directly in the visual domain of consciousness; it is known by a *visual direct gauge cognition*. You simply need to stand in front of the tree, open your eyes, be sure there is nothing obscuring your site or mind, and you will undoubtedly gain knowledge of it. Someone with an acute sense of smell and who is familiar with nature can even realize the presence of the tree via an instance of *olfactory direct gauge cognition*. Perhaps a *tactile*

direct gauge cognition, auditory direct gauge cognition, or, for the adventurous, a gustatory direct gauge cognition can even generate knowledge of the tree.

They can each know the tree because the tree appears – or is experienced – in the respective domain of consciousness related with each physical sense organ, and those cognitions can induce a memory which is confident and accurate about what was experienced. The direct gauge cognition understands the evident phenomenon that appears to it well enough to counteract any confusion or doubt about what it is. After a visual direct gauge cognition sees a tree, the person who had such a consciousness does not think “What was/is that big object in front of me? Is it a person? I know, it must be a building!” Do not misunderstand what is being said here – there do exist other types of cognition in the domain of visual consciousness that can see a tree but misapprehend it, or simply lack the required degree of attentiveness to generate a doubt-free remembrance of it. Those are visual consciousnesses which see the tree, but they do not meet the criteria for being a visual direct gauge consciousness.

Next, let’s turn to the remaining classes of knowable objects; those which are not known by the simple empirical process whereby the object appears in the experiential field of a direct gauge cognition. Of the three types of knowable objects, the remaining two types both varieties of *hidden phenomena*. There are *slightly hidden phenomena* as well as *extremely hidden phenomena*.

Slightly hidden phenomena are those which 1) do not appear to sensory consciousness of ordinary people and 2) are known in reliance on a fact-based reason. It

may seem like, given the extraordinary emphasis on empirical evidence that the scientific endeavor is known for, that scientific facts would belong unanimously to the first category (the evident phenomena). Let's investigate to see if this is the case.

Take, for example, something as fundamental as the existence of electrons. Is an electron something which is observable directly in sensory cognition? Does it appear – in the sense of being experienced, seen – in the domain of visual consciousness? It is not something which we can see, not even with the aid of an imaging device or microscope. Nor can we hear it in the domain of auditory consciousness, smell it with the olfactory consciousness, taste it in the gustatory consciousness, or feel it with our body consciousness.¹

An electron meets the first half of the meaning of slightly hidden phenomena stated above; it doesn't appear to the sensory consciousness of ordinary people. Yet, we have no doubt that it exists. So then there must be something which gives us that certainty. The knowledge of electrons is developed in reliance on reasons. This is the second half of the meaning of slightly hidden phenomena.

An electron can be established to exist through reasons. However, this doesn't imply that every human on the planet is in a position to understand the reasons which prove the existence of electrons. In fact, it would probably require a fairly advanced understanding of physics and the history of the discovery of electrons in order to understand the reasons which prove its existence.

So, let's take a slightly simpler example, going back to the situation described above about having knowledge of the fire in your house when you see smoke billowing out from all sides. For the person standing outside, they cannot see the fire directly. The fire is not

¹ The sensation of electrical current felt in the domain of body consciousness feels a current of electricity; yet, it seems like this wouldn't be able to identify and ascertain a single electron. This is open grounds for debate; please feel free to question this claim!

empirically observed in any domain of sensory consciousness. But we certainly know it's there in the house, without the slightest shred of doubt. We know it by relying on a reason – in this case, the reason is something which itself is directly observable; the smoke. By seeing the smoke, we can accurately infer the presence of fire in the house, even though the fire never contacts our sensory organs in the form of data coming in from the outside world.

The type of consciousness which generates knowledge of these slightly hidden phenomena are called *evidence gauge cognitions*. Instead of knowing their objects directly, they know them through inference after supplying evidence. Smoke is evidence. Fire is known by using that evidence. The evidence gauge cognition which knows the presence of fire in the house after supplying the evidence of the existence of smoke does know its object accurately. It does generate knowledge of the fire in the house – yet, it does not do so by the fire simply appearing to a sensory cognition. The fire isn't experienced in any field of sensory consciousness.²

A reason is needed. Evidence is needed. That evidence must be internalized and thought about. Evidence gauge cognitions are thus necessarily instances of conceptual consciousness. They do not occur in any of the five domains of sensory consciousness. Instead, they take place within the sixth domain of consciousness; that of mental consciousness. This mental consciousness is indeed related with sensory consciousnesses – the evidence that we needed to understand the existence of fire in the house was given by the visual consciousness. The visual consciousness saw the smoke. But that very cognition which knows the fire – the evidence gauge cognition – is itself mental. It is a consciousness which must use language and concepts to approach and engage with the objects that it knows.

² If you got close enough to the house, you may feel the warmth of the fire; the example then, is a case where you're standing far enough away to not feel the warmth of the fire.

This leaves us with only one of the three types of knowable objects left: the *extremely hidden phenomena*. Like slightly hidden phenomena, these cannot be understood or known by way of appearing directly in a sensory cognition. And they also must be known in reliance on a reason – but a different kind of reason from before. Before we were looking at fact-based reasons. Smoke is a result of fire. That is a fact. Smoke is undeniable evidence for the existence of fire. You can thus generate knowledge of fire being somewhere – knowledge that is sound, accurate, and doubt-free - by using the reason of smoke. In fact, what's the first thought that comes to your mind when you smell smoke?

This fact-based reasoning works in cases where you can see or smell smoke and use it as a sign to indicate a fire is burning away. But what about a case where you can neither see the smoke nor the fire? Let's say there's a raging forest fire in California while you're in Delhi, and there's no video footage of it. If someone asks you if there's a forest fire in California, how will you answer them? Certainly, you cannot see or smell any smoke to indicate the presence of fire in California. But does that mean there's no way at all to get information about whether there's a forest fire there?

There is indeed a way to develop knowledge of the fire in California even when you're in Delhi. The knowledge of the fire also depends on a reason, but not on a fact-based reason. There's not really any way you could logically prove that a fire is burning through the California forest by any other knowledge that you can gain firsthand while in Delhi. You must, therefore, rely on the words of another person. You can generate knowledge of the forest fire by relying on a *trust-based reason*. The trust-based reason, in turn, allows you to create a genuine gauge cognition – a *trust gauge cognition*. As with the other gauge cognitions, a trust gauge cognition also generates valid knowledge of the object which it's cognizing.

Because generating this type of knowledge requires what we can essentially call an authoritative testimony of a third party, the objects thus known are called extremely hidden phenomena. There is not any direct path to learning about them through our own power – we must rely on someone else. The object is hidden from our sight, and it's even hidden from the powers of our faculties of logic. But it's not hidden from a third person, who can divulge their knowledge to us. The difficulty here, of course, is coming to establish that third person as a reliable source of knowledge. This is a question that won't be dealt with here. We can generally accept, however, some basic principles: if we can judge a person to be themselves capable of gaining valid knowledge of the object that we seek to know, and additionally can determine that they have no ulterior motive or desire to deceive us, then we can trust them as a reliable authority.

You may have by now thought about how contingent these types of objects are; whether they become evident, hidden, or slightly hidden is entire relative to the position of a particular person in relation to the object. For many objects, this is exactly right – classifying them according to this scheme is relative. There are certain things which necessitate the use of fact-based evidence to initially gain knowledge of them – like the subtle moment-by-moment disintegration of a flower, which is simply too subtle for sensory consciousness to catch. The rest of this textbook, and the tradition of Nalanda Debate and Nalanda Logic, centers entirely around using evidence-based reasons to develop evidence gauge cognitions of these types of objects.

The table on the next page (**1.1**) lists the three types of objects; the three types of gauge cognitions; and the three processes for creating each respective gauge cognitions.

Table 1.1

Type of Object	Gauge Cognition which Knows it	Process for Generating the Gauge Cognition	Is a reason required?
Evident Phenomena	Direct Gauge Cognition	Object appears directly in a domain of sensory consciousness	No
Slightly Hidden Phenomena	Evidence Gauge Cognition	An evidence-based reason is used as proof for the object	Yes
Extremely Hidden Phenomena	Trust Gauge Cognition	A trust-based reason is used as proof for the object	Yes

3 Two Parties of a Debate

Nalanda Debate is a process of enactive cognition. It is embodied cognition in the sense that it is a collaborative thought process. Two people work together to analyze a topic. The first party is the **Challenger**, who poses questions and points out logical

contradictions in the other party's positions. The second party is the **Defender**, who responds to the Challenger's questions. They choose a thesis to defend, actively refining and adjusting their position as the debate progresses. A Defender must be flexible enough to be willing to change their assertion when clean and clear reasoning reveals that it is untenable or contradicts other assertions that have been accepted.

The magic of Nalanda Debate lies in this enactive process of walking through a series of steps of logical reasoning by talking them through, step-by-step, with a partner. The reasoning process that emerges out of this is not something that can be easily replicated on one's own³. The power of this mode of reasoning is nicely summed up by a well-known cliché: two heads are better than one.

It must be pointed out that this is an essential feature of logic in the Nalanda Tradition. This is not merely a technique of pedagogy or a method for learning. It is the position of the Nalanda Tradition that logic itself – the ability of reasons and evidence to prove a claim – necessarily depends on the priors of the person who is on the receiving end of the logical proof. For a reason to become a flawless reason, there must be a person to whom the reason is being presented. That person must, in turn, have a certain set of prior beliefs and knowledge.

A flawless reason does not exist in a vacuum, ready to be unleashed on the world and prove some thesis to everyone who happens to hear it. If we look at any area of life where people make investigations using logic, we can see that evidence for one person does not work as evidence for everyone. The complex forms of the eyes of organisms as they're observed today is taken as evidence for the existence of God. It's also taken as evidence for the *non-existence* of God. For someone who believes that God doesn't exist but that organisms evolve due to natural selection, positing the complex forms of the eyes of

³ Whether it can be truly replicated at all is a difficult question that requires more research.

organisms as proof of God will not convince them. There would have to be a shift in other priors and beliefs ahead of time; at the very least, they would have to start to doubt the non-existence of God.

A skilled Challenger could potentially lead them to generate such doubt, to accept that a complex design is necessarily caused by a designer with a mind, etc. Then they may gradually come to a point where that reason can convince them of the existence of God. Still, we can't say it's a flawless reason to prove that thesis, because the thesis being proven is not established by a gauge cognition. A truly flawless syllogism requires that it maps onto reality and that it fits into the minds of the debaters.

Thus, Nalanda Debate is not just a way to use of logic – it is the medium in which logic lives. This mode of reasoning that proceeds by way of a shared exploration of a topic is unique to the Nalanda Tradition; not many other schools and styles of logic that have developed depend on a necessary component of oral debate. There exists oral debate, for instance in the Western/Greek-origin tradition of logic, but it is fundamental different from debate here. There the intent is not to be used as a process of enactive cognition where another person's mind is borrowed for the sake of one person to become aware of and remove their cognitive biases and self-contradicting beliefs. In Aristotle's tradition, the intent is to persuade an audience that one's position is more reasonable than another's position. We can see how this tradition of debate has carried over to the present day when we observe public discourse.

The Challenger in a debate has a specific form for the types of statements they make and questions they ask. Likewise, the Defender has a limited set of responses that they are allowed to give. The format of the debate enables a structured and focused discussion to unfold.

The roles of Challenger and Defender are also not limited to just one person each. There can be a team of people working together as either Challenger or Defender. When this happens, it's called a group debate instead of a partner debate. In group debates, it's most common for there to be several Challengers and two Defenders, but the numbers are not definite. You may debate in a way that is practical in your learning community.

This is the last key point to keep in mind regarding the parties of a debate: your debating partners are your community. Nalanda Debate is naturally antagonistic in *form* but not in spirit. The spirit is one of friendliness, discovery, and joy. If you begin to notice yourself getting emotionally heated, or feel offense when someone argues with your deeply held belief, recall that your debate partner is there to help you change your beliefs.

Our beliefs are not 100% flawed, but they are incomplete. If we didn't have biases, ignorance, and misunderstandings, there would be no need to debate in the first place. It is not just to prove that we are right about everything, and our partner is wrong about everything. That may be a natural way we feel, but how silly is it! Nalanda Debate will challenge your desire to always need to be right, but the joy of growing and learning will overcome the pain of being proven wrong. Eventually you'll see "losing" a debate as the greatest gift possible; because it is gaining a new perspective, new knowledge. Please keep in mind the spirit of friendliness, discovery, and joy.

4 The Syllogism

A syllogism is a logical statement. Nalanda Tradition reasoning is formulated around a three-part syllogism which has a reason that is defined as 'being the three limbs [of proving a thesis]' (trairupya in Sanskrit or tsul sum yin pa in Tibetan). The three parts of the

syllogism are what are stated when you state the syllogism verbally, while the three limbs are the way a person understands the connections between those three parts. Thus, the three parts of a syllogism and the three limbs of a reason are distinct.

This form of syllogism is different from the Greek syllogism formulated by Aristotle. The syllogism can be used as a means of getting valid knowledge. As such, it is also very useful to understand the structure of debate.

The syllogism can be a bit confusing at first. It may take some time and repetition before it becomes familiar. If you take the time to get a grip on it now, the structure of debate will make more sense and it will be easier to follow the flow of debate.

A BIT OF HISTORY

The syllogism comes from the 5th-6th century Indian Buddhist master Dignaga. It was an adaptation of a five-fold reasoning process of an opponent (non-Buddhist school) called the Nyayas. After Dignaga, it became widely used. Even though it is from the Buddhist pramana school, the syllogism is used in other Buddhist doctrinal schools (though sometimes for different purposes). For example, you might see it in some Madhyamaka (Middle Way) philosophy.

Since the early days, people in the commentarial tradition (and now modern scholars) have interpreted Dignaga's syllogism in various ways. There is just so much fascinating debate and disagreement over the exact meaning and intention of the syllogism, and how it

changed over time. The account given below is just a very basic overview. It is meant to introduce you to Nalanda Debate and provide you with a useful understanding of how the reasoning works here.

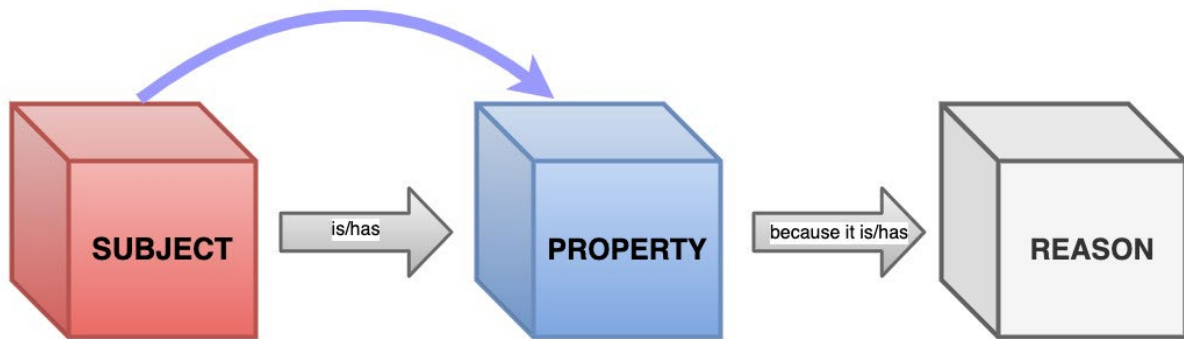
THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE 3-PART SYLLOGISM

There are three basic building blocks of the syllogism in Nalanda Debate. They are the **subject, the predicate and the reason.**



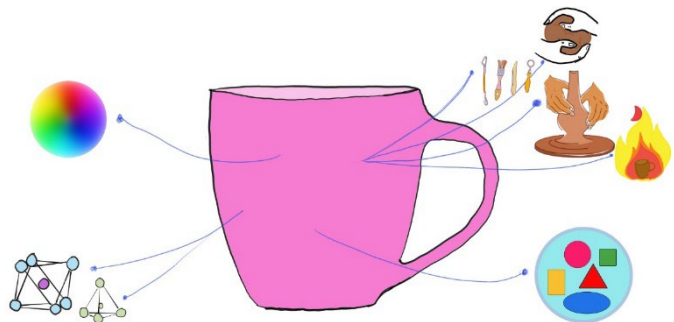
A common example is that *sound* (the subject) *is impermanent* (the predicate) *because it is a product* (the reason)

As we shall see, all debates begin with a **thesis**, a statement that can be accepted or questioned. The thesis is the subject and the predicate together.



For example, the thesis in the above example is that *sound* (the subject) is *impermanent* (the reason). This is **the thing that you want to prove**.

A single subject can have many different properties or qualities. In fact, it can have infinite qualities. For example, a simple object like a cup has qualities of color, being created by causes, shape, being composed of particles, impermanence, the capacity to complete tasks and functions, etc.



The Three Limbs

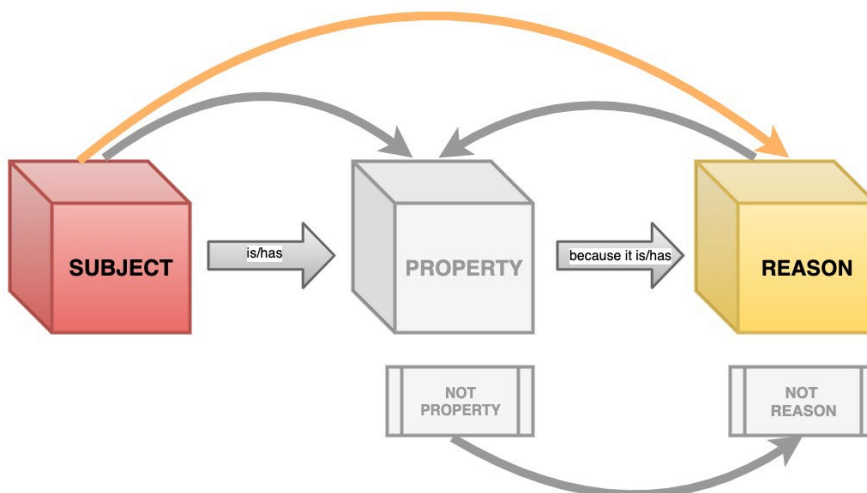
When the reason in a syllogism can correctly prove the thesis, it is a flawless reason. A flawless reason is three limbs. These limbs are like three connections between the three building blocks above. The aim is to confirm all these connections through your own knowledge, in order to prove the thesis and gain knowledge of it. Let's examine the three limbs one by one. Take note of the which building blocks are involved in each limb, and

how they are related. Also note that the following descriptions are given for ease of understanding – they are not how the three limbs are technically defined.

LIMB 1:

the subject is the reason

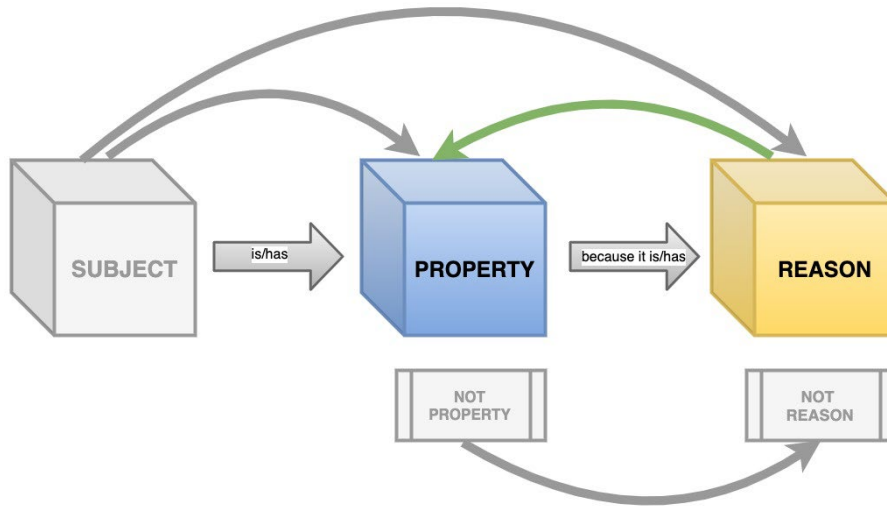
- For example, *sound is a product*.



LIMB 2:

If the reason, then the predicate

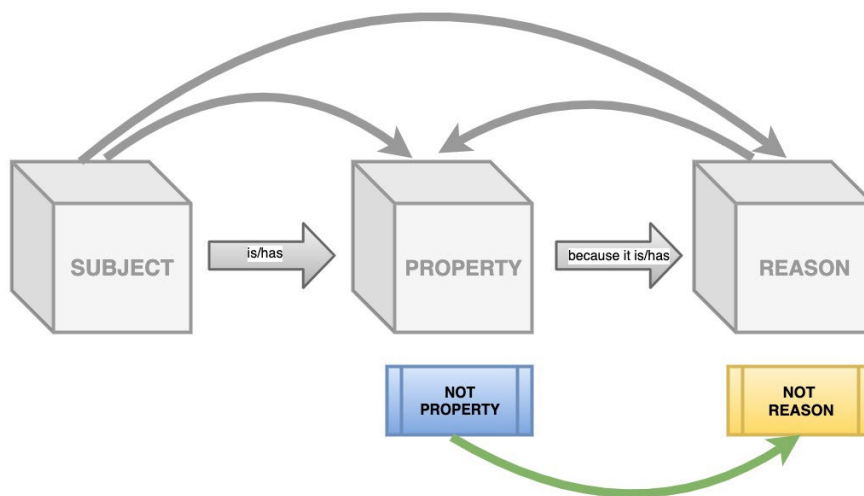
- For example, *if it's a product, then it's necessarily impermanent.*



LIMB 3:

If not the predicate, then not the reason

- For example, *if it's permanent, then it's necessarily not a product.*



RELEVANCE FOR DEBATE

The answer a defender gives in debate will depend upon how they understand the reasoning of the syllogism (which connections they accept and which they don't). So, if you are defender, remember:

If you accept the thesis – then you will answer “I accept.”

If you don't accept the thesis – then you will answer “Why?”

If you don't accept the reason because you don't accept Limb 1

– then you will answer, “Reason not true.”

If you don't accept the reason because you don't accept Limb 2 and/or Limb 3

– then you will answer “no pervasion.”

One important factor to keep in mind as a challenger, is that if you are debating with a defender who doesn't know that sound is a product (i.e. Limb 1), then the syllogism won't hold for them. If they reject the claim and answer “reason not true,” then the syllogism is not proven. The onus is then on you as the challenge to prove to them that sound is a product.

There are a few other formal requirements for a syllogism to be valid, although they are philosophically interesting, they are not necessary to start debating, so they will not concern us here.

5 Unmasking Thought Processes Through Debate

An inevitability of being human is the almost uninterrupted experience of thoughts that are constantly within us. Oftentimes they are like background static and at other times they come to the fore and dictate our opinions and actions. The efficacy of our thoughts in dictating our actions has led to a long-standing debate about what seem to be two opposing processes; reason and intuition. How these two are distinguished and cultivated is not as clear as one would like but both do seem to be equally connected to thoughts. In the case of reason, thoughts are first meticulously laid out as theories and then analyzed. This is followed by testing the various hypotheses that emerge from observing the outcomes the theories suggest. Once one is satisfied with the conclusions that they have drawn, we become 'convinced' of the outcome of our reasoning.

Intuition, on the other hand, seems to arise from the mind as a flash of insight accompanied with a strong feeling that makes the person convinced of its message. The intellectual labor of reason seems unnecessary when compared with reason, especially with respect to the speed with which it arises. Even though intuition seems to suggest things uninfluenced by thought, the truths it feels and reveals are mediated to us with words and concepts and therefore still by thoughts.

In both cases, however, the final convictions of both reason and intuition can prove to be faulty when the convictions they produce are often misguided, partial or entirely unrealistic. It could very well be argued that in situations when the person is wrong, their convictions were not backed by correct reasons and real intuitions. This is possibly correct but it then begs the question; how do we check the validity of our reasoning and of our intuition? Do we as humans have to tools to test our thoughts and the messages that they communicate to us? Or is the only option at our disposal acting out our convictions, convinced that we are correct hoping we wont be proven otherwise!

Just as observations of patterns in the physical world led scientists discover physical 'laws' which could withstand experimental rigor, a large group of people devoted their attention away from the physical world to that of mental phenomena. This emphasis was probably dictated by both the lack of the sophisticated tools and of the importance of mental phenomena in our well-being. Like materialists discovered the building blocks of matter through their search, philosophers went to find the 'atoms' of our minds. This led them to pay close attention to what most of our psychological world is made up of; thoughts.

An obvious point of divergence between both camps is the lack of 'empirical' proof when one tries to establish the governing laws of thought. This, coupled with their seemingly subjective nature, seems to make any search for objectivity an almost futile endeavor. However, much like modern psychology's concern with mental health is coming to discover, there do seem to be some underlying 'laws' that function similarly amongst humans. This has led to a renewed interest in the efforts of the philosophers of the past. The shift that such an exercise requires is a willingness to not necessarily equate empirical proof with third person accounts where the data must be received through the senses but to consider how first-person experience could be equally unbiased and empirical.

With this spirit one can begin to consider how one may discover the governing principles of our thinking and put some order in our thoughts so that our ideas can be accurate representations of reality. And this is precisely how the study of debate and logic has been conducted in the Indian Epistemological tradition. It began as an inquiry to test the validity of the many theories present in a country rich in philosophy like India was. In such place which was rich with highly sophisticated philosophies such as the Nyaya, Mimamsa, Samkhya, Yoga, Vedanta, Jaina and Buddhists, it was essential that a student have the tools to decode the thinking of these schools to arrive at her/his own personal understanding.

Nalanda debate, the subject we are currently studying, is one such theory of knowledge that trains one to analyze the content of their thoughts to identify the errors we make that lead to unrealistic expectations. In identifying these errors, one automatically recognizes those parts of our thinking that need to be reworked and how to go about doing it. The end result of such an inquiry is to gain confidence and certainty that one's thoughts are accurate representations of reality and the plans and goals that one sets out to achieve based on one's reasoning or intuition are actually achievable.

There are some considerations that might be helpful to know before one embarks on this journey. Firstly, it is helpful to distinguish the study of debate from other studies. Learning about most subjects is largely an assimilation of new information pertinent to that particular field. This new information is then contemplated to the best of one's abilities which gradually leads to familiarity and eventually expertise with the concepts one has learnt. Most subjects are, therefore, studying new concepts and collecting new information. Debate is rather different. It is probably easy to understand when the study of debate is compared to the study of grammar.

Grammar itself is devoid of any one language and is concerned with the rules that underlie all languages. This enables a student to understand and unlock the principles that govern our speech and what distinguishes correct speech from incorrect. The study of grammar is also transferable from one language to another precisely because it underlies all language. Similarly, debate is the study of the rules that govern our thinking. It underlies all our thinking just like grammar underlies language. It is not comparable to subjects where one is required to assimilate new information and then try to make sense of the information one has acquired. It is learning the rules of how to separate what one learns as either correct or incorrect. In that sense, debate is like learning the grammar of thoughts.

What makes this distinction blurry is that, despite being a study of the rules that govern our thoughts and concepts instead of the concepts themselves, it has to be taught via concepts which in our case will mostly be Buddhist concepts. Despite this necessity it is best approached having clarity about this distinction so the student knows where to focus one's efforts. When one studies grammar, it has to be related to a specific language. This permits a student to focus on the rules that govern the language which then make it easier to transfer to others. So, a student of grammar finds herself/himself having to contend with new vocabulary and the rules that bind them together even though the focus is on the latter. Similarly, a student of debate has to contend with the concepts and the rules that tie them together to make them coherent (or not). The focus, however, should be on the latter.

Another important thing to remember is that debate is never 'new' or abstract for anybody. Language is learnt and already spoken when one learns grammar for the first time in school and only then does grammar shed light on why what we say is correct and when it is not. Similarly, we are already very well versed with thinking and therefore are familiar with the 'vocabulary' of debate. Not only are we familiar with its vocabulary but we also have an instinctive understanding of when our assumptions are stable or not. This instinctive 'feeling' is what we have learnt through interaction with others and their ways of thinking just like we learn how to speak 'correctly' by interacting with people. So, in this sense the study of debate is merely the discovery of the principles that govern our existing thoughts.

Even though it is in some sense natural and innate to us, having a clear understanding of its workings has the enormous benefit of allowing us to see our own assumptions and question our preexisting certainties and check to see if they are correct or not. The correctness will reflect in one's life by removing cognitive biases that are found to be misguided and allow room for them to be replaced with a healthy and coherent picture of reality that our thoughts will come always closer to than they could before. This reality can

be anything from subtle metaphysical realities to everyday experiences. In the case of acquiring new information, it provides a strong tool that enables one to test both one's interpretations which has the same outcome, that of mirroring reality more accurately.

Lastly, like grammar, it is a skill that is easiest acquired through practice and repetition. An ideal situation to learn this skill is when it is confronted with others that are learning the skill and with those already familiar with it. Dialogue with opposing views analyzed through the lens of debate becomes an almost impersonal 'objective' look at participant's assumptions and places them out in the open to be tested by all. Even though this might be initially uncomfortable and could leave the participant frustrated with the repeated mistakes, eventually, like with languages, it comes to become effortless and natural and permeate one's life.

Since one thing that we humans are proud of is our brain and our intelligence with its ability to influence the internal and external world which enables us to act in a way that can make our lives better, a tool that permits consistency and accuracy in one's thinking and consequently one's actions can only be beneficial.

6 The Ingredients of Debate

B-A Two Types of Debate

There are, generally speaking, two types of debate in Nalanda Debate. **Counting debate** is the type of debate used to set the groundwork for one's main debate. This comes at the beginning of a debate session. In counting debate, you spend time with your partner reviewing the content of whichever topic you wish to debate. To be able to debate deeply about a topic, both the Challenger and Defender must already have some familiarity with the topic. You must study up, at least enough to know the general categories, definitions,

and main ideas within a given topic. Then when you meet to debate, you can review those main ideas, which refreshes your memory and also lays a common ground for the main debate to be built upon.

Logic debate is the type of debate where reasons are given to prove and disprove claims (aka theses). This is where syllogisms are used. Using the groundwork that's been set in the counting debate, the Defender then takes a position regarding some issue that's relevant to the topic at hand. The Challenger proceeds to challenge that position. They can do this by asking the Defender to give examples or supporting reasons. The Challenger can also directly contradict the Defender's position by providing a reason that they think will undermine it.

While there is no definite time requirement for the counting debate, during an hour-long debate session it is typical to spend about ten minutes on the counting debate and the rest of the time on the logic debate.

B-B Two Types of Questions

There are two types of questions in Nalanda Debate: information-seeking questions and logic questions. **Information-seeking questions** are open-ended questions. For example, if the Challenger wants to know the definition of consciousness, they can ask the Defender to posit that definition; this gives the Defender the freedom to posit any thing they'd like.

Logic questions are yes-or-no questions. These are not open-ended questions. If the Challenger wants to know whether the Defender accepts that consciousness is a material object, they will ask them directly. The Defender then does not have the freedom to give

any open-ended answer, but is required to either accept or deny the thesis - no more and no less.

Counting debate only uses information-seeking questions. Logic debate uses information-seeking questions as well, but primarily uses logic questions.

B-C Two Types of Logic Questions

There are also two types of logic questions: **statements of thesis** and **statements of pervasion**. There is a dual nature to these debate forms – they are questions, but are phrased as declarative statements. This has to do with a dual function of the debate format. It suffices to think of these logic questions as yes-or-no questions.

Statements of thesis are expressions of a thesis to be proven. A thesis is a unit composed of two parts – a subject and a predicate. These were covered already in section **3 The Syllogism**. They look like this:

Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it is a plant.

The meaning of the above thesis statement is, “Is an oak tree a plant?” The subject can be absolutely anything at all; it doesn’t even have to exist. As long as you can bring it to mind and speak it in words, it can be taken as a subject. The same goes for predicates. We can make a thesis statement like this:

Take the subject: a unicorn. It follows that it is eternal.

There is no necessity for a thesis to be true or correct – the only necessity is that it has these two components: a subject and a predicate. The Defender has the freedom to either accept or reject it – the ways to phrase their response are explained below.

Statements of pervasion are expressions of a logical entailment. For example:

It follows that if it's an oak tree, then it's necessarily a plant.

On first glance, this may appear to be no different from the thesis statement above. Yet, there is a big difference. Like the thesis statement, this acts as a yes or no question. The question being asked is, "Is it true that whatever is an oak tree is also a plant?"

In the statement of thesis above, **oak tree** was the subject. In the statement of pervasion here, *there is no explicitly stated subject*. The pronoun "it" must be replaced with a specified subject. The debaters must bring the subject up in their minds. They will supply one or more subjects in subsequent statements and questions. If the Defender accepts this pervasion, then the Challenger can check its validity by posing two new thesis statements. **Oak tree** becomes the predicate of one of the thesis statements. **Plant** becomes the predicate of the other thesis statement.

Thesis 1 – Take the subject: a silver oak. It follows that it's an oak tree.

Thesis 2 – Take the subject: a silver oak. It follows that it's a plant.

What's happened is that the Challenger has produced a subject and made these two thesis statements. This is done in order to check the pervasion. Since the Defender has accepted that whatever is an oak tree is also a plant, the Challenger chooses a subject which they already believe to be an oak tree. In the above example, they chose **a silver oak** as the subject. If they are able to convince the Defender that it is an oak tree, but is not a plant, then they will have caused the Defender to contradict themselves. They will have found a case of something which cancels out the truth of the pervasion. It will not be possible to any longer accept that whatever is an oak tree is also a plant.

B-D The Four Allowed Answers

After an open-ended question is asked, the Defender should respond in accord to with the question. If the question asked for a definition, the Defender should state the definition. Open-ended questions are the only times where a Defender has the flexibility to respond in such an elaborate way. After a logic question, the Defender only has a limited selection of allowed answers. There are four – two that are used to respond to a statement of thesis or a statement of pervasion, and two that are used to respond to a reason (or a full 3-part syllogism).

The answers that a defender may give when responding to a statement of thesis or a statement of pervasion are as follows:

1. I accept.

2. Why?

The answers that are allowed when responding to a full syllogism where a reason is stated are as follows:

3. The reason's not true.

4. No pervasion

(‘I accept’ is occasionally suitable here)

Since statements of theses and pervasions are able to be read as yes/no questions, the answers can likewise be taken to mean yes and no.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant.

Defender: **I accept.**

Giving this response indicates that the Defender accepts the thesis and they believe it to be true. They accept that an oak tree is a plant.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant.

Defender: **Why?**

Giving this response means that the Defender denies the thesis and does not accept it as true. By denying a thesis, the Defender is implicitly accepting its opposite. If they don't accept that something is a plant, then they must accept that it is a plant.⁴ Now a Challenger may choose to either state the opposite thesis (Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's not a plant), which the Defender now must accept. Or, they may choose to give a reason to prove that an oak tree is a plant. By giving a reason, they are forming a 3-part syllogism: their statement now contains a subject, a predicate, and a reason. How shall a Defender respond after a reason is given?

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant, because it is a cactus.

Defender: The reason's not true.

Here the Challenger provided a reason to prove their thesis. Yet, the Defender did not accept the reason to be a flawless reason. Therefore, they responded, "The reason's not true." By responding in this way, the Defender is saying that the reason does not apply to the subject. An oak tree is not a cactus; the fact of being a cactus, or the quality of being a cactus, does not apply to an oak tree. The Defender gave an appropriate response. Now, how is the answer "No pervasion" used?

⁴ In psychological reality, a person may have uncertainty and be undecided about their position. The Nalanda Debate format forces them to choose one.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant, because it is an organic lifeform.

Defender: No pervasion.

The Challenger once again provided a reason to prove their thesis. The Defender once again did not accept that the reason was strong enough to prove the thesis. This time they responded by saying “**No pervasion.**” This means that even though the reason is true of the subject, there is no pervasion between the reason and the predicate. An oak tree is a organic lifeform. However, merely being a organic lifeform does not make it necessary to also be a plant; there exist organic lifeforms which are not plants. Therefore, there is no relationship of logical necessity or entailment. It's not certain that an organic lifeform is a plant.

There is no pervasion that if something is a biological entity it is necessarily a plant. Another way to say this is that plant does not pervade organic lifeform. Or, for a third way: Organic lifeform is not pervaded by plant.

These are the primary answers that a Defender will give after a Challenger states a 3-part syllogism with a subject, predicate, and reason. The Challenger only gives a reason if the Defender has already denied the thesis. The purpose of stating the reason is to prove the thesis which has already been denied. If the Defender wants to maintain their position – for instance, that an oak tree is not a plant – then they must answer with either “The reason's not true” or “No pervasion” after the reason is given. This is because if they accept that the reason is able to prove the thesis, then they accept that the thesis is correct. They must reverse their initial position. However, sometimes a Defender may indeed wish to do this, because they are convinced by the reason. There is no need to stubbornly maintain a position if you see that it is wrong.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant.

Defender: Why?

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant, because it is organic matter with leaves and roots that uses photosynthesis.

Defender: I accept.

Table 1.6

Four Answers

After thesis/pervasion statement

I accept or Why?

After a reason

The reason's not true.

No pervasion.

I accept.

B-E Information-Seeking Questions

While the Defender is generally limited to the four answers explained in the previous section, there are many occasions where a Challenger will want more information from a Defender to better understand their position. At those times, the Challenger will ask an

information-seeking question, which is an open-ended question. After these questions, the Defender must answer by giving whatever information has been requested. They will not use one of the four standard answers.

Asking For a Definition/Categories/Divisions

During a counting debate, information-seeking questions are the primary questions which a Challenger will ask. This is because they are not using reasoning to prove theses – instead, they are allowing the Defender to lay out the topic which they will debate, giving the relevant definitions and categories. For example:

Challenger: It follows that you can posit the definition of matter.

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: Posit it!

Defender: Take the subject: something that is particle-like or composed of particles.

Challenger: It follows that you can posit the categories of matter.

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: Posit them!

Defender: Take the subject: Internal matter and external matter.

Since the Challenger asked the Defender to posit something, the Defender didn't use one of the four standard answers. Instead, they simply posited the definition which was requested.

Asking For a Reason

Similarly, during a logic debate, the Challenger may wish to know what a Defender's reason is for accepting a certain thesis. In this case, the Challenger asks for a reason by using the word "Because?" with an inflection to indicate that it's a question:

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's matter.

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: It's matter because?

Defender: Because it is a plant.

When prompted to give a reason with the question "Because?" the Defender states their reason. This Defender should try their best to give a flawless reason as described in **1.4 The Syllogism**.

Asking for an example when there is no pervasion

If a Defender does not accept a pervasion, then they must prove that there is no pervasion by providing an example. They don't need to give a reason as when proving a thesis, because disproving a pervasion means that you show that you can posit something which is the first item but not the second one.

Challenger: It follows that if it's a plant, it's necessarily a tree.

Defender: Why?

Challenger: It follows that if it's a plant, it's **not necessarily a tree.**

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: Posit an example.

Defender: Take the subject: a cactus.

In this situation, positing an example of something which is a plant but is not a tree was sufficient to show that there is no pervasion. The Challenger may go on to check each individually, to make sure the Defender can prove that the cactus is a plant and is a non-tree (not a tree).

B-F Other Miscellaneous Debate Phrases

The above sections covered the primary phrases that are used in the Nalanda Debate format. Those are what you will be using most of the time. There are still a few other types of phrases that are possible, so we will cover them now. The first type of phrase is used when a Challenger wants to make sure that both they and the Defender have a shared understanding of what has been accepted or denied. They will ask the Defender to repeat the thesis/reason/pervasion. This is a good practice because many statements are made very quickly in a debate and it is extremely common for a Defender to mishear what the Challenger has said. Use these phrases often to ensure that the Challenger and Defender are on the same page.

Restating the Thesis

Challenger: Take the subject: a rose bush. It follows that it's impermanent.

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: Restate the thesis!

Defender: I accept that a rose bush is impermanent.

Restate the Why

Challenger: Take the subject: a rose bush. It follows that it's impermanent.

Defender: Why?.

Challenger: Restate the why!

Defender: I don't accept that a rose bush is impermanent. / Why is a rose bush impermanent?.

Restating the Reason

Challenger: Take the subject: a rose bush. It follows that it's impermanent.

Defender: Why?.

Challenger: It follows that it's impermanent because it's matter.

Defender: The reason's not true.

Challenger: Restate the reason.

Defender: A rose bush being matter is not true. / It's not true that a rose bush is matter.

Restating the Pervasion

Challenger: Take the subject: a rose bush. It follows that it's matter.

Defender: Why?.

Challenger: It follows that it's matter because it's a plant.

Defender: No pervasion.

Challenger: Restate the pervasion!

Defender: If it's matter, it's not necessarily a plant.

Doubt!

If a Defender truly has no idea which one of the four allowed answers to give, then they may just say, "Doubt!" This is not common and should be used sparingly.

Tsa!

Strike!

Contradiction!

The above three have the same meaning and are used in the same context. They will be some of the most common phrases that you will use. They are used when a Defender first accepts a thesis, and then later accepts the opposite of (eg., the negation of) that thesis. For example...

C: Take the subject: a white rose. It follows that it's white.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that if it's white then it's necessarily a color.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that if it's not a color, then it's necessarily not white.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: a white rose. It follows that it's not a color.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: a white rose. It follows that it's not white.

D: Why?

C: It follows that it's not white, because it's not a color. You accepted the pervasion.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that it's not white.

D: I accept.

C: Tsa!!!

Checkmate!

This is stated by the Challenger when the Defender has accepted a reason as well as a pervasion, and now has no other option to accept the thesis implied by that reason and pervasion. For example...

C: Take the subject: a cactus. It follows that it generates food through photosynthesis.

D: Why?

C: It follows that if it's a plant, then it necessarily generates food through photosynthesis.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: a cactus. It follows that it's a plant.

D: I accept.

C: Checkmate! Take the subject: a cactus. It follows that it generates food through photosynthesis, because it's a plant!

Opposite Pervasion

This can be stated by a Defender when there is a case that a Challenger gives a reason, but instead of a pervasion such that if it's the reason then it's necessarily predicate, the opposite pervasion holds. In other words, if it's the reason then it's necessarily *not* the predicate. For example...

C: Take the subject: Sound. It follows that it's permanent, because it is a product.

D: Opposite Pervasion!

The standard response of "No Pervasion" is also suitable to say in these cases; it is up to the Defender.

Lost Subject!

This phrase is covered below in detail; please look at **1.15 Staying on Subject**.

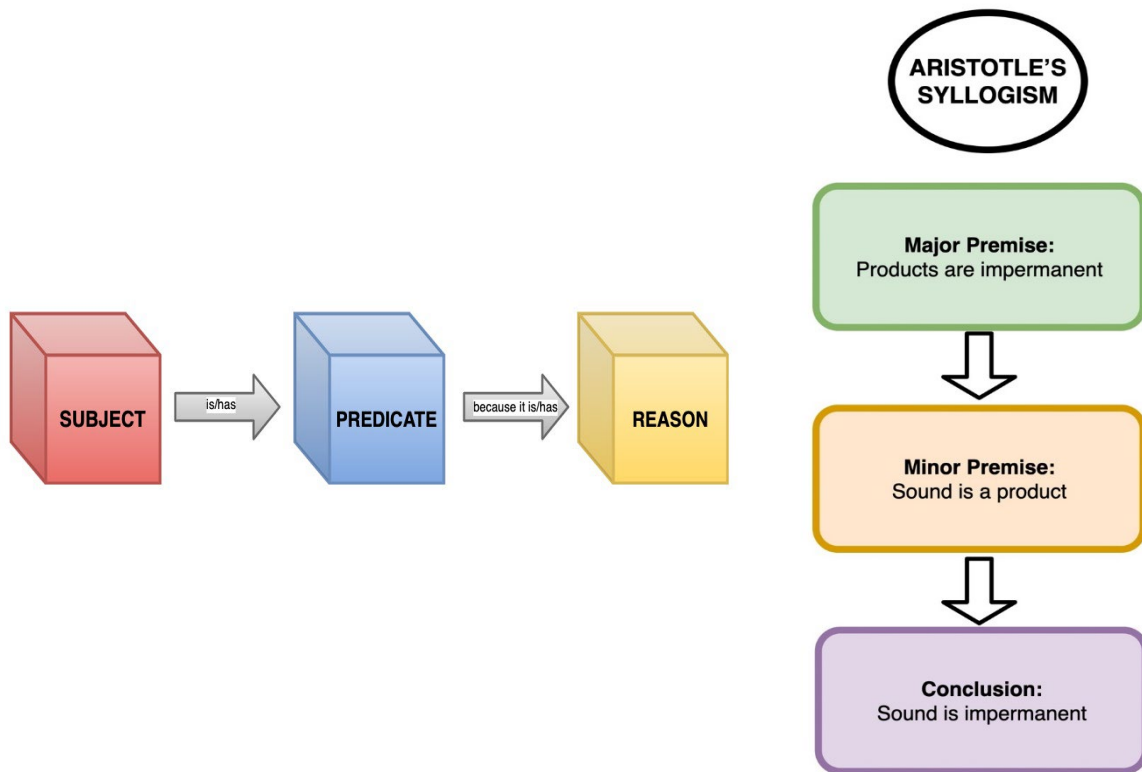
7 Aristotle & Dignaga

Some scholars have noticed the similarity of the three-part syllogism in Nalanda Debate with the Aristotelian or Greek syllogism.

We should be careful. These sorts of cross-cultural comparisons are risky. The 19th century European scholars of orientalism, upon finding out that the ancient Indians had a system of reasoning, believed that they were attempting to do the same thing as the Greeks. And it was quite popular, in the early 19th century, to explain Dignaga's *trairupya* in terms of the Aristotelian syllogism.

Though it is possible to squeeze the three-limbs of the trairupya into an Aristotelian syllogism (see below), do we really want to do so? What is lost in the meaning of the three-limbs if we do? And in doing so, will we negatively judge the effectiveness of the three-limbs because it fails to adequately perform the function of an Aristotelian syllogism (when this is never what it aimed to do)?

For students who are already familiar with Western logic and the Greek syllogism, we can—tentatively—make a comparison of these two in order to understand the differences by contrast. If we place the two structures side by side, we see:



There are two main differences between these forms: that of structure and that of the theoretical assumptions.

1. DIFFERENCE IN STRUCTURE

The order of the propositions is evidently different (as we can see from the diagram). In Dignaga's version we start with the claim. Any debate will begin with the challenger proposing such a claim. In the Aristotelian Syllogism, this claim comes last, so it makes sense to call it the "conclusion." By the time we get to the claim in a Greek syllogism, it has already been proven. Whereas in Nalanda Debate, stating the claim is just the beginning...

Another difference in the form is that we have is between the formulation of the major premise and the second/third limb. Consider what you think the difference is between the phrase, "products are impermanent" and the phrase "if it is a product, then it is necessarily impermanent."

2. DIFFERENCE IN THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The theoretical assumptions of the two are also different, primarily in the background assumptions of psychology and the process for a person to actually generate knowledge by using a proof. A Greek syllogism is a standard of logical proof. It is abstract logic. It is deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning means that, as long as the first and second premises are true, the conclusion must necessarily also be true.

On the other hand, Dignaga's syllogism is sometimes called epistemological. If one comes to know that the three limbs are established, they should come to accept the claim. For this reason, Dignaga's three limbs are an account of what goes on in basic reasoning.

A consequence of this is that the "validity" of our debate reasoning cannot be separated from the person that is doing the reasoning, (the reasoner). In fact, it is an oddity of this three-limbed process that it is only considered valid, for a specific person, in a specific moment, by a specific means. i.e., it is valid for:

- a. one who doubts the truth of the claim
- b. at the time they come to realize it
- c. through establishing the three-limbs.

It is not enough then, for the three-limbs to be true, they must be known to be true, more specifically, to constitute valid knowledge, the reasoner has to go from a state of not-knowing to a state of knowing the claim to be true. So the Aristotelian syllogism can be abstracted from the reasoners doing the reasoning, but the three-limbs cannot.

Another difference that we must acknowledge is a difference in the understanding of how qualities or properties exist within (i.e., on the basis on) a basis of the quality. For instance, in the thesis:

Sound is impermanent

Sound is the subject, so it is the basis of properties. Impermanence is the predicate, so it is a property or quality which exists within or on the basis of sound. It can be known by observing sound and comprehending it there.

When it comes to the relationship between the quality and the base where the quality exists, Aristotle differs from Nalanda Logic. Aristotle wrote:

“When one thing is predicated of another, all that which is predicable of the predicate will be predicable also of the subject. Thus, ‘man’ is predicated of the individual man; but ‘animal’ is predicated of ‘man’; it will, therefore, be predicable of the individual man also: for the individual man is both ‘man’ and ‘animal’.”

For Aristotle, then the thesis statement above would then imply that *if it's sound, then it's necessarily impermanent*. While this, indeed, is true of sound, there are many cases that you'll come across as you study Nalanda Debate where this pattern does not hold. For example:

A knowable object is permanent

Is itself a true thesis statement. Yet, if we try to turn it into a statement of pervasion:

If it's a knowable object, then it's necessarily permanent

it no longer is true. Sound is a knowable object which is not permanent. So Aristotle's claim in the above quote is understood to be incorrect in Nalanda Debate.

Disclaimer: The structure and purpose of Indian reasoning really changed over time, so we have to be careful about generalities. At certain points in the traipurya's history, examples were more or less important in the process, and scholars (in and out of the lineage) have

argued at length about the effect of such differences. There are differences between schools and differences between svatantrika and prasangika approaches. In addition, although debate logic is based upon the reasoning of Dignaga's three limbs, you might think it is a little different in practice to in theory, and you would be right. When we reason, we are developing actual inferential knowledge – an inferential gauge mind that knows its object. This is an “inference for self;” yet when we challenge someone in debate we are doing “inference for others,” by using syllogisms – words - to prove and disprove claims and theses. The latter is based on the former, but they are not quite the same.

8 The Joints of Debate

Many of the tools used for philosophical analysis in Nalanda Debate are used to help us understand the phenomena of our world by making different types of comparisons between two different things. By seeing how they're related and how they differ, we come to better understand each of them.



One of the most important types of comparative analyses for beginning debaters is the comparison of the Joints of Debate. Counting the Joints of Debate is when we make an analysis of two phenomena by starting off with the question: Can we find a third phenomenon which is both of the two that we're analyzing.

Let's go straight to an example to make this clear. Take the subject: (a) the color of a rose and (b) the color red. Now ask yourself - can you call something to mind which is both

the color of a rose and also is the color red? In other words, is there something that you can think of which has, on the one hand, the property of being (a) a rose's color, and on the other hand, has the property of being (b) red? An example of something which is a **Joint Hub** of (a) the color of a rose and (b) the color red is: the color of a red rose in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden.

The color of a red rose in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden is a Joint Hub of (a) the color of a rose and (b) the color red for a very simple reason; because it is both of them. When a third item is both of the things that you're comparing - both (a) and (b) - then it is said to be a Joint Hub of (a) and (b).

When we've found one illustration of a Joint Hub between (a) and (b), we've already established that the relationship between (a) and (b) is not a relationship of **Contradiction**. Contradiction is one of the possible relationships between two phenomena that we can find when counting the Joints of Debate; if two phenomena are Contradictory, then they have no Joint Hub.

We can continue to determine the relationship between (a) the color of a rose and (b) the color red by asking a second question. Is there a pervasion such that if it's the color of a rose, then it's necessarily the color red? In other words, can we think of something which is (a) but is not (b)?

The color of a white rose is an illustration of an exception joint of the color of a rose but not the color red. It's an exception joint because it shows that there is no pervasion between being the color of a rose and being the color red; in other words, it shows that even though Joint Hubs of those two exist, there also are exceptions where something is (a)

but is not (b). With this question and the illustration given, we now have established two joints between (a) the color of a rose and (b) the color red.

The third question to ask is: Can we think of something which is (b) the color red, but not (a) the color of a rose? The color of red robes is an illustration of an exception joint of being the color red, but not the color of a rose. Now we have already counted three Joints.

The last question to ask is: Can we posit something which is neither (a) the color of a rose nor (b) the color red? We can posit something like the color of blue topaz. Likewise, we can always fall back on our proverbial unicorns and rabbit horns. After going through each of those questions, we now have Four Joints.

You can see how this analysis takes a naïve thought that you might have, such as, "Oh yeah, the color of roses is red," and brings greater nuance to your understanding of the relationship between colors of roses and the color red. Likewise, we can come to illuminate more meaningful topics by using this analysis of Counting the Joints of Debate.

The Possible Relationships When Counting the Joints

Above, we compared two phenomena which have a relationship of Four Joints. Now we will look in turn at the other possible relationships that we can find by Counting the Joints. There are four possible relationships.

Three Joints

Four Joints

Equivalence

Contradiction

These can each be represented by a classical Venn Diagram style of visual depiction. Yet, it's important to keep in mind that working through them in debate brings a level of understanding beyond just looking at a diagram; this is like the difference between working through a math problem to understand it versus just seeing the correct answer. It's like the difference between having the experience of baking a cake and reading a cake recipe. Look at the *Visual Aids and Cheat Sheets* section for examples of each relationship, together with their matching Venn Diagrams. Continue reading for in depth explanations of each relationship.

Three Joins

An example of a pair of items with a relationship of Three Joins is (a) a planet and (b) the planet Earth. What are the Three Joins?

- 1 - A joint which is (a) but not (b)
- 2 - A joint which is both (a) and (b)
- 3 - A joint which is neither (a) nor (b)

For example

- 1- Mercury is (a) a planet, but not (b) Planet Earth
- 2- Earth during the Mesozoic Period is (a) a planet and also is (b) the planet Earth
- 3- The Sun is neither (a) a planet nor (b) planet earth

When you're Counting the Joins in debate, the Defender first posits the relationship (so here, they'll say there are Three Joins). Then, the Challenger asks for examples of each of

the Joints in turn. The Defender responds by providing examples. The Challenger then double-checks that the example posited fits the joint which it was asserted to be; it is here where a more elaborate logic debate can be introduced and the Challenger can challenge what the Defender has posited.

Here is an example script for how you can debate a pair of items with Three Joints. Short descriptions of what is happening in the debate are marked with asterisks and in red.

C: It follows that you can posit the relationship between (a) a planet and (b) planet Earth in terms of the Three Joints, Four Joints, Equivalence or Contradiction.

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: There are Three Joints.

It follows there are Three Joints between (a) a planet and (b) planet Earth?

I accept.

If there are Three Joints, then which pervades which?

If it's planet Earth, it's necessarily a planet, but if it's a planet, it's not necessarily planet Earth.

**Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint #1: (a) but not (b)*

Can you posit an example of something which is a planet but is not planet Earth? **(Joint 1)**

Yes.

Posit it.

Take the subject: the planet Mercury.

*Now we move on to check that the subject given by the Defender is the first of the two items, a planet. This is done by the Challenger asking the Defender for a reason, and then checking that the reason has a pervasion with the predicate.

Take the subject: the planet Mercury. It follows that it's a planet.

I accept.

It's a planet because?

Because it one of the planets orbiting the Sun in our Solar System.

It follows that if it's one of the main satellites orbiting the Sun in our Solar System, then it's necessarily a planet?

I accept.

(Here the Challenger could begin a logic debate by thinking of a subject that can disprove, or cancel that pervasion... in other words, they may try to take something like Pluto as the subject, and try to prove that it is one of the main satellites orbiting the Sun in our Solar System, but is still not a planet. If they can successfully prove that such is the case, they'll have caused the Defender to reverse their original position.)

*Now we move on to check that the subject given by the Defender is *not* planet Earth.

Take the subject: Mercury It follows that it is not planet Earth.

I accept.

It is not planet Earth because?

Because it is the closest planet to the Sun.

It follows that if it's the closest planet to the Sun, it's necessary not planet Earth.

I accept.

*Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint #2: both (a) and (b)

It follows that you can posit something which is both (a) a planet and (b) planet Earth.

I accept.

Posit it.

Take the subject: Earth during the Mesozoic Period.

*Now we move on to check that the subject given by the Defender is the first of the two items, a planet.

Take the subject: Earth during the Mesozoic Period. It follows that it's a planet.

I accept.

It's a planet because?

Because it is a life-supporting planet.

It follows that if it's a life-supporting planet, then it's necessarily a planet.

I accept.

*Now we move on to check that the subject given by the Defender is the second of the two items, planet Earth.

Take the subject: Earth during the Mesozoic Period. It follows that it's planet Earth.

I accept.

It's planet Earth because?

Because it is the base for sentient life in our solar system.

It follows that if it's the base for sentient life in our solar system, then it's necessarily planet Earth.

I accept.

**Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint #3: neither (a) nor (b)*

It follows that you can posit something which is neither (a) a planet nor (b) planet Earth.

I accept.

Posit it.

Take the subject: the Sun.

**Now the Challenger again checks for reasons why the given subject it is not either a planet nor planet Earth.*

Take the subject: the Sun. It follows that it's **not** a planet.

I accept.

It's not a planet because?

Because it is a mass of particles engaged in nuclear fusion.

It follows that if it's a mass of particles engaged in nuclear fusion, then it's necessarily not a planet.

I accept.

Take the subject: the Sun. It follows that it's **not** planet Earth.

I accept.

It's not planet Earth because?

Because it is not a planet.

It follows that if it's not a planet, then it's necessarily **not** planet Earth?

I accept.

Fin

Four Joins

An example of a pair of items with a relationship of Four Joins is (a) a gas at room temperature and (b) an element. What are the Four Joins?

1 - A joint which is both (a) and (b)

2 - A joint which is (a) but not (b)

3 - A joint which is (b) but not (a)

4 - A joint which is neither (a) nor (b)

For example

1- Hydrogen is both (a) a gas at room temperature and is also (b) an element

2- Fog is (a) a gas at room temperature but is not (b) an element

3- Gold is (b) an element but is not (a) a gas at room temperature

4- Steel alloy is neither (a) a gas at room temperature nor (b) an element

Here is an example script for how you can debate a pair of items with Four Joints. Short descriptions of what is happening in the debate are marked with asterisks and in red.

C: It follows that you can posit the relationship between (a) a gas at room temperature and (b) an element in terms of the Three Joints, Four Joints, Equivalence or Contradiction.

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: There are Four Joints.

It follows there are Four Joints between (a) a gas at room temperature and (b) an element?

I accept.

**Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint #1: both (a) and (b)*

Can you posit an example of something which is both (a) a gas at room temperature and (b) an element? **(Joint 1)**

Yes.

Posit it.

Take the subject: hydrogen

**Now we check that the subject given by the Defender is a gas at room temperature.*

Take the subject: hydrogen. It follows that it's a gas at room temperature.

I accept.

It's a gas at room temperature because?

Because it is matter in a state where it will expand to fill a container, having no fixed shape or volume.

It follows that if it's matter in a state where it will expand to fill a container, having no fixed shape or volume, then it's necessarily a gas?

I accept.

**Now we move on to check that the subject given by the Defender is an element.*

Take the subject: Hydrogen. It follows that it is an element.

I accept.

It is an element because?

Because it is the element with one proton.

It follows that if it's the element with one proton, then it's necessary an element.

I accept.

**Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint #2: (a) but not (b)*

It follows that you can posit something which is (a) a gas at room temperature but is not (b) an element.

I accept.

Posit it.

Take the subject: Fog.

**Checking for a reason to prove that this subject is a gas at room temperature.*

Take the subject: Fog. It follows that it's a gas at room temperature.

I accept.

It's a gas at room temperature because?

Because at room temperature it expands to fill a container, with no definite shape or volume.

It follows that if at room temperature it expands to fill a container, with no definite shape or volume, then it's necessarily a gas at room temperature.

I accept.

**Now we check that the subject given by the Defender is not an element.*

Take the subject: Fog. It follows that it's **not** an element.

I accept.

It's not an element because?

Because it is a composite of multiple elements.

It follows that if it's a composite of multiple elements, then it's necessarily **not** an element.

I accept.

**Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint*

#3: (b) but not (a)



It follows that you can posit something which is (b) an element, but not (a) a gas at room temperature.

I accept.

Posit it.

Take the subject: Gold.

*Check for reasons that Gold is (b) but not (a)

Take the subject: Gold. It follows that it's an element.

I accept.

It's an element because?

Because it is matter with a variety of isotopes.

It follows that if it's matter with a variety of isotopes, then it's necessarily an element.

I accept.

Take the subject: Gold. It follows that it's **not** a gas at room temperature.

I accept.

It's not a gas at room temperature because?

Because it is a solid at room temperature.

It follows that if it's a solid at room temperature, then it's necessarily **not** a gas at room temperature?

I accept.

Fin

Contradiction

An example of a pair of items with a relationship of Contradiction is (a) the color white and (b) the color red. Here, we're calling this a 'relationship' of Contradiction, but it can more accurately be called a lack of a relationship; there is no Joint Hub which connects the two items. There is no way to count the joints of two items if they are Contradictory.

Instead of counting the joints, then, the Challenger will merely ask the Defender for a reason for why the two items are Contradictory, as follows.

Here is an example script for how you can debate a pair of items with a relationship of Contradiction. Short descriptions of what is happening in the debate are marked with asterisks and in red.

C: It follows that you can posit the relationship between (a) the color white and (b) the color red in terms of the Three Joints, Four Joints, Equivalence or Contradiction.

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Contradiction.

It follows that (a) the color white and (b) the color red are contradictory.

I accept.

**Now the Challenger asks for a reason to prove that (a) and (b) are Contradictory.*

They are Contradictory because?

*Now the Challenger gives the definition of Contradictory as a reason to establish that (a) and (b) are Contradictory.

Because they are (Reason 1) different and (Reason 2) a Joint Hub of the two of them is impossible.

It follows if they are different and a Joint Hub of the two of them is impossible, they are necessarily Contradictory.

I accept.

*This is the point where the Challenger could begin a logic debate by trying to convince the Defender that there does exist a Joint Hub between (a) and (b). They attempt this by positing a subject and giving reasons and/or consequences to establish that it is both (a) and (b). For example...

C: Take the subject: The color of a white and red dress. It follows that it is not white and red.

D: Why?

C: It follows that it is white and red.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: The color of a white and red dress. It follows that it is not white and red, because it is not red.

D: The reason's not true.

C: It follows that it's not red, because it is white.

D: No pervasion.

C: It follows that if it's white, it's not necessarily not red?

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: «The color of a white and red dress» It follows that it is white and red.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that it is the color white and the color red.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that it is both the color white and the color red.

D: I accept.

C: Take the subject: the color white and the color red. It follows they are not Contradictory.

D: Why?

C: Because a Joint Hub of the two of them is possible;
because a Joint Hub of the two of them exists; because
the color of a white and red dress is a Joint Hub of
those two. You already accepted that reason.



Fin

Equivalence

An example of a pair of items with a relationship of Equivalence is (a) carbon and (b) an element with six protons. Like the relationship of Contradiction above, a relationship of Equivalence is in some sense simpler than Three Joints or Four Joints. Instead of counting

the joints, the Challenger will once again ask the Defender for a reason for why the two items are Equivalent.

Here is an example script for how you can debate a pair of items with a relationship of Equivalence. Short descriptions of what is happening in the debate are marked with asterisks and in red.

C: It follows that you can posit the relationship between (a) carbon and (b) an element with six atoms in terms of the Three Joints, Four Joints, Equivalence or Contradiction.

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Equivalence.

*the Challenger double-checks the answer just given, to ensure clarity and mutual understanding.

C: It follows that (a) the color white and (b) the color red are Equivalent.

D: I accept.

*Now the Challenger asks for a reason to prove that (a) and (b) are Equivalent.

C: They are Equivalent because?

*Now the Challenger gives the definition of Equivalent as a reason to establish that (a) and (b) are Equivalent.

D: Because they have the eight doors of pervasion of equivalence.

C: It follows if they have the eight doors of pervasion of equivalence, then they're necessarily Equivalent.

D: I accept.

C: Posit the eight doors of pervasion of equivalence.

*Now the Challenger gives the eight doors of pervasion; here there is the shorter way to state them. In the following section, we will see the full way of stating them.

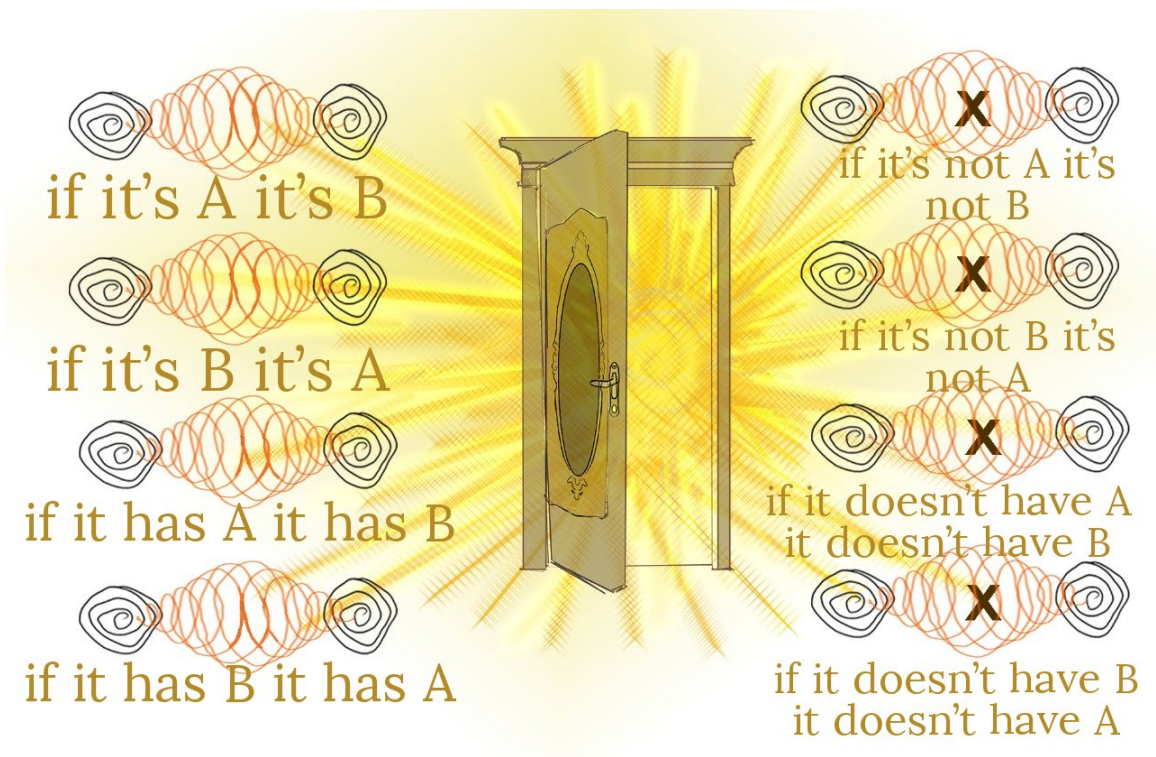
D: The two doors of being and the two of non-being; the two doors of having and the two of not having.

*Like with the above example debate for the relationship of Contradiction, this is where a Challenger could decide to move into a logic debate by trying to find an example of something which is (a) carbon, but is not (b) an element with six protons, or which is (b) but not (a).

Fin

9 The Eight Doors of Pervasion

The image below lists the eight doors of pervasion, which are present for two objects that have a relationship of Equivalence. It's important to recognize that all eight doors of pervasion are needed for two items to be Equivalent; there must be complete overlap. Can you think of a pair of items which has two or four of the following doors of pervasion, but not all eight?



10 Definitions and Defined Objects

In Nalanda Debate, being able to posit a clear definition for an object is very important. Anything which has a definition is a defined object; another term for defined objects is *definiendum*. This is likely an unfamiliar term, but you will get used to using it quickly. Whenever we have a definition and a definiendum, those two are Equivalent – they necessarily have a relationship of Equivalence. While debating about a pair which is definition and definiendum, we say they have *the eight doors of pervasion of definition/definiendum*. Some examples of a definition and its definiendum are listed below.

Definition

Something reasonably described as a hue

Something able to complete a task

Definiendum

Color

Thing

Something observed by a gauge mind

Existent

A non-differentiated phenomenon

One/Singular

An object experienced in the domain of visual consciousness

Form

One way to think of the definition of something is as its defining characteristic. Note that the characteristic itself is the definition; a string of descriptive words does not define an object. Something reasonably described as a hue is the definition of color, but the phrase, "Something reasonably described as a hue," is not the definition of color. Why? Because that sentence does not have the eight doors of pervasion with color. If it's a color, it's not necessarily the phrase "Something reasonably described as a hue." In fact, those two are Contradictory; there does not exist a joint hub of that phrase and a color. That phrase is a sound, while colors are forms.

Another important component to definitions is what's called an illustration. Definitions, definienda, and illustrations have a close relationship: when we are generating new knowledge of some phenomenon, whether as simple as a rock or as complex as impermanence, we first have knowledge of the definition within an illustration, and then we can know the definiendum by seeing how the illustration illustrates it.

For example: first there is an eye consciousness perceiving a mug. Then you can know how that illustrates a certain definiendum, like thing, by understanding how it is the definition, which in this context is *something able to complete a task*. You can form an understanding of the name-meaning relation between thing and *something able to complete a task* on the basis of a mug. A mug is an illustration of a thing.

11 Staying on Subject

One of the main things that distinguishes Nalanda Debate from ordinary discussions – or even typical debates – is its power to keep the debate focused on a single topic. The way it does this is by having a structure that separates out the subject and predicate so that they can be held in the mind clearly and considered individually. This structure is the 3-Part Syllogism, which was explained in an earlier section.

Analyzing a broad topic, like the nature of color, for instance, warrants inspection of many different subjects. Yet, it is important to switch your subjects consciously. It is also important to make sure that you are positing reasons that are actually connected to the subject at hand. Read the following example debate to see an example where the Challenger loses a connection to the subject.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant.

D: Why?

C: Because it uses photosynthesis.

D: Reason's not true!

C: That follows because photosynthesis is the process whereby plants make food by taking in the sun's energy through their leaves.

D: You've lost the subject!

At first glance, this may seem like a perfectly fine exchange: the reasons given by the Challenger are true, so everything checks out, right? Not exactly. Recall that simply being true is not sufficient for a reason to become a flawless reason. There must also be a pervasion between the reason and the predicate. Is there a pervasion between the second reason and the predicate?

To check it, we have to form a statement of pervasion. Statements of pervasion take the form of an if-then statement. The reason goes first and the predicate goes second.

It follows that if photosynthesis is the process whereby plants make food by taking in the sun's energy through their leaves, then it is necessarily a plant.

Remember that the pronoun “it” refers back to the subject. Yet there is no pronoun “it” in the first half of the pervasion statement. What happened to the subject? We lost the subject! Let’s see what happens when we check the pervasion by positing a new subject.

Challenger: Take the subject: a lump of coal. It follows that it’s a plant, because photosynthesis is the process whereby plants make food by taking in the sun’s energy through their leaves.

What is happening here will become more clear as you practice debate yourself. The Challenger failed to link their reason to the subject. Instead of referring back to the subject by using the pronoun “it,” they snuck a separate subject into the reason itself; *photosynthesis*. The reason is now its own independent thesis.

No matter what new subject you can think of, the thesis that “photosynthesis is the process whereby plants make food by taking in the sun’s energy through their leaves” will always be true. It is meaningless to ask whether it is true of the subject, because it is simply an independent statement. Yet, the Defender can’t rightly say “The reason’s not true,” because it is true; as its own independent thesis, it’s understood to be

factual. While “No pervasion” is a correct response, if they say that the Challenger who posited such a reason may not understand their error. Thus, it is best for the Defender to say, “You’ve lost the subject!”

Look at another simple example:

Challenger: Take the subject: a white rose. It follows that it’s a color.

Defender: Why?

Challenger: It follows that it’s a color, because white is one of the four primary colors.

Defender: You’ve lost the subject!

Avoiding this problem is not difficult. As long as you use the pronoun “it” in your reason, you will be safe. This is why the convention in this textbook is to color the pronoun “it” blue, the same color used to signify the subject. Whenever there is an “it” that refers to the subject, it will appear blue.

Now let's look at the two examples above, but this time the Challenger will remember to use the pronoun "it" in their reason, linking their reason to the subject.

Challenger: Take the subject: a white rose. It follows that it's a color.

Defender: Why?

Challenger: It follows that it's a color, because it is the color white.

Defender: The reason's not true.

Challenger: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's a plant.

D: Why?

C: Because it uses photosynthesis.

D: Reason's not true!

C: That follows because it makes food by taking in the sun's energy through its leaves.

This time, the reason checks out – it is each of the three limbs of a flawless reason. given a flawless reason to prove that an oak tree is a plant, the Defender has no choice but to accept the thesis and move on.

This idea of a “lost subject” may not make sense immediately, but as you debate keep a lookout for situations where there seems to be something off with the reason, but you can’t quite put your finger on it... it is likely a case of a lost subject!

Chapter Review

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. What are the three types of knowable objects?
2. What are the two parties in a debate and what are their roles?
3. What are the three parts of a syllogism?
4. Give an example of a thesis statement.
5. Give an example of a statement of pervasion.
6. Describe the difference between a thesis statement and a pervasion statement.
7. Give an example of a straight-forward syllogism.
8. Give an example of a consequential syllogism.
9. Is reality related to our knowledge of it? Why or why not?
10. What are the four answers that a Defender may give? When do you give them?
11. Give a pair of objects that have Three Joints.
12. Give a pair of objects that have Four Joints.
13. Give a pair of objects that are Equivalent.
14. Give a pair of objects that are Contradictory.
15. What are the Eight Doors of Pervasion?
16. Give an example of a three-part syllogism where it would be appropriate for the Defender to respond, "Lost subject!" Why was the subject lost?