Fall Debate School

Book 1

Introducing Nalanda Debate

A brief overview of the philosophical underpinnings and essential context for understanding how to use the debate format

2023 Edition

Sera Jey Monastic University

Authors: Losang Donyo, Atisha Mathur, Jo Donovan

Acknowledgements: Jampa Sherab, Archhana Kombrabail, Diyah Said

Part 1: Theory of Nalanda Debate

1 Knowledge and reality bound together

"Everything that exists can be known."

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, then it is necessarily knowable?
Why?
It follows that if it exists, then 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 is 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

<u>Importance of Knowledge in Daily Life</u>

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 arriving at 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 get that knowledge of the red stoplight?

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 a fire exists in your house, 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.

Introducing Pramana (Gauge Cognitions)

Pramana can be discussed as a textual tradition, but here, we're discussing Pramana as a classification of mental states. Pramana refers to a specific type of mind, or cognition. They are minds which give correct knowledge. They are knowledge-bearing cognitions and knowledge-inducing cognitions. The terminology that the Sanskrit-to-Tibetan 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* (and sometimes gauge mind or gauge consciousness). Pramana has also been rendered into English as "valid cognition," "reliable cognizer," and "epistemic instrument" in other books.

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 the varieties of gauge cognitions?

Types of Knowable Objects

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 cognitive process for enacting each gauge cognition. This scheme, in turn, allow us to develop an organizational scheme of ontology itself – what types of knowable objects are there. 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 our sensory cognition. The kind of gauge mind which is mainly responsible for generating knowledge of these evident phenomena is

called a *true 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. These cognitions realize their objects directly and correctly.

An example of the kind of object realized by such a true direct cognition is a tree. It can be perceived directly and correctly by appearing 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 sight (or your 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 these 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 is that big object in front of me? Is it a person? Maybe it's a house!" Do not misunderstand what is being said here – there do exist cognitions in the domain of visual consciousness that can see a tree and 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 are 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 or 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. Then there must be something which gives us that certainty. The knowledge of electrons is developed in reliance on reasons; in other words, evidence is used to indirectly get at the existence of electrons by placing it into a structure of logical proof. This is the second half of the meaning of slightly hidden phenomena.

---

[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!

Although an electron can be established to exist through reasons, 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 might require an advanced understanding of physics and the history of the discovery of electrons in order to understand the reasons which prove its existence.

To illustrate this process of inference through evidence used as a reason in a logical proof, 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. A person standing outside cannot see the fire directly. The fire is not empirically observed in any domain of sensory consciousness. But they certainly know it's there in the house, without the slightest shred of doubt. They know it by relying on evidence that they use as a reason – in this case, the evidence is something which itself is directly observable; the smoke. By seeing the smoke, they can accurately infer the presence of fire in the house, even though the fire never contacts their sensory organs in the form of sense data coming in from the outside world in a way that can be processed via neurophysiological transduction.

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 way of the fire appearing to a sensory cognition. The fire isn't experienced in any field of sensory consciousness.[2]

---

[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.

A reason is needed. Evidence is needed. That evidence must be internalized. You also must spend time thinking about it. 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 to sensory consciousnesses − the evidence that was needed in order to understand the existence of fire in the house was given by the visual consciousness. The visual consciousness saw the smoke. But the actual 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.

This leaves us with the last of the three types of knowable objects: 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. Earlier, we were looking at fact-based or evidence-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 sight of smoke as your reason. Isn't that the very first thought that comes to your mind when you smell smoke? "Hmmm, I smell smoke... Oh no, a fire!"

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 New 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 that it's cognizing.

Because generating this type of knowledge requires an authoritative testimony of a third party, the objects thus known are called extremely hidden phenomena. There isn't any direct path to learning about them through our own resources – 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. How to do so 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 entirely 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

The Enactive Process of 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 logical reasoning steps and verbalizing them in a dialogue, 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 own[3]. 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.

---

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

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 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 and consider the possibility that God exists.

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. A proof for the existence of God, no matter how well it fits into the minds of the debaters, can never map onto reality.

Differentiating Nalanda Debate from Other Logic Traditions

Thus, Nalanda Debate is not just a way to use 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 in the world 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 fundamentally different from debate here.

In that tradition, 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. Because it is not intrinsically linked to the internal psychological and cognitive states of the debaters in the way that Nalanda Debate is, rigorous logical consistency is sacrificed for rhetorical and persuasive skill, even where the debaters lack genuine (valid and sound) logical proof. We can see how that tradition of debate has carried over to the present day when we observe public discourse.

While Aristotle is attributed with founding Western Logic and also did write about debate, he oriented the practice of debate towards political discourse. For the Nalanda Tradition, debate is the way in which logic is itself enacted.

Debate Partners Are Your Learning Community

Once again, in Nalanda Debate there are the two parties of Challenger and Defender. 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 offended 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 it's just silly, isn't it! Nalanda Debate will challenge your desire to always 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 that is the time when you gain 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. A reason which is all three limbs is called a flawless reason. We can make a three-part syllogism without a flawless reason, and thus without the three limbs. 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 the Nyayas (a non-Buddhist school). After Dignaga, it became widely used. Even though it is most clearly described and explored in the Buddhist Pramana literature, the syllogism is used in other Buddhist contexts; it is the

common thread that runs through the Nalanda tradition, and can be used by any philosopher who wishes to prove their positions.. For example, you will also see it in Madhyamaka (Middle Way) texts. Even though pre-Dignaga scholars used a similar reasoning process, it wasn't codified in the literature until Dignaga.

Since the early days, people in the commentarial tradition (and now modern scholars) have interpreted Dignaga's syllogism in various ways. There is 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 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**. The predicate being proven to be a property of the subject, so it can also be called the property.

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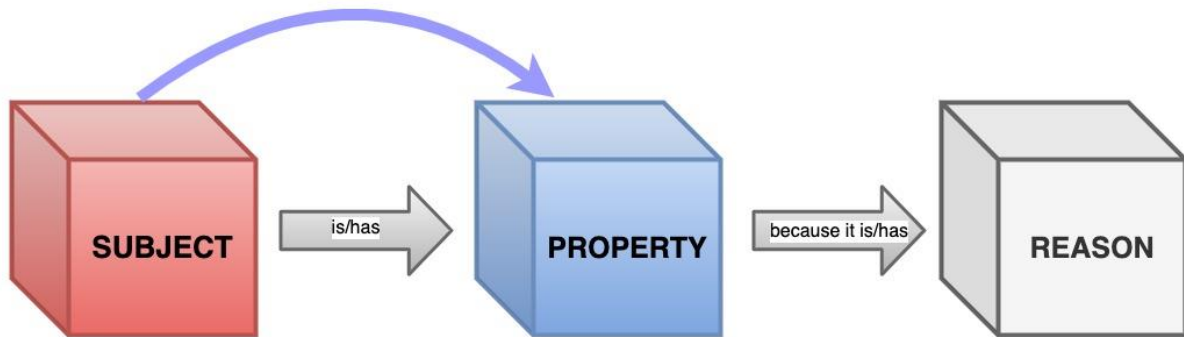
For example, the thesis in the above example is that *sound* (the subject) is *impermanent* (the predicate). This is **the thing that you want to prove**.

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. Each of those qualities can be proven as a predicate when a cup is taken as the subject.

The Three Limbs

When the reason in a syllogism can correctly prove the thesis (and certain epistemic requirements of the Defender are met), 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 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.

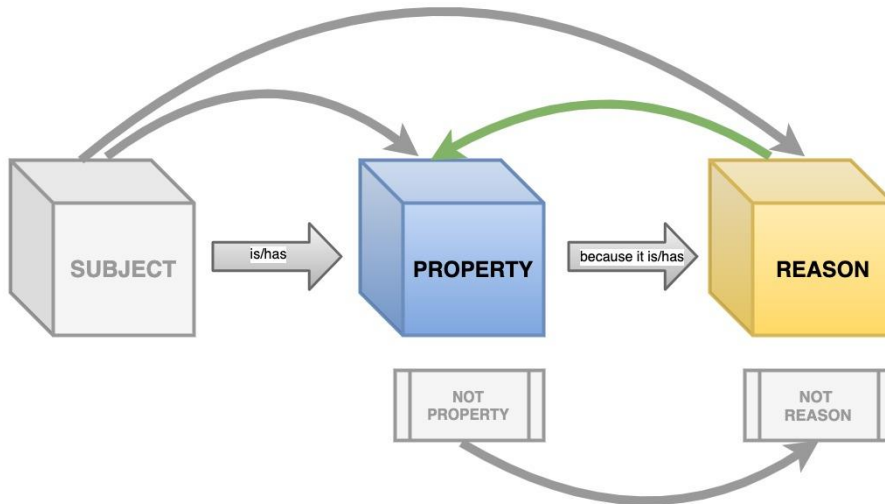**LIMB 1:**

The subject is the reason

- For example, *sound is a product*.
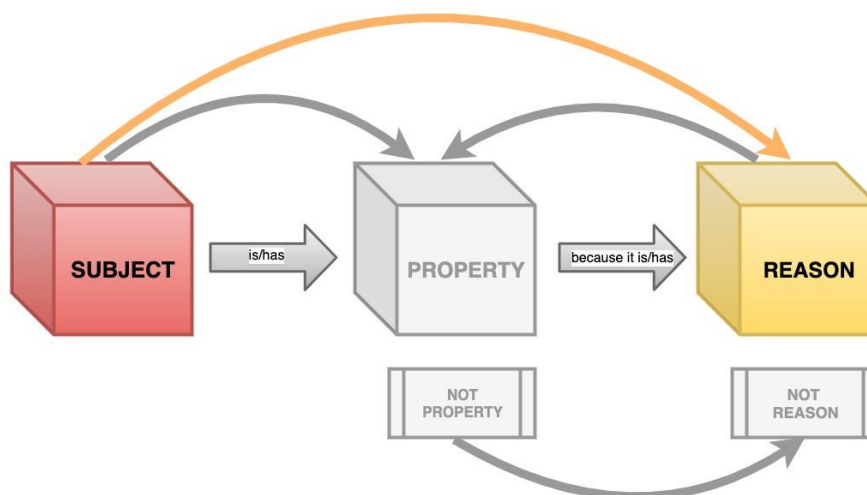
LIMB 2:

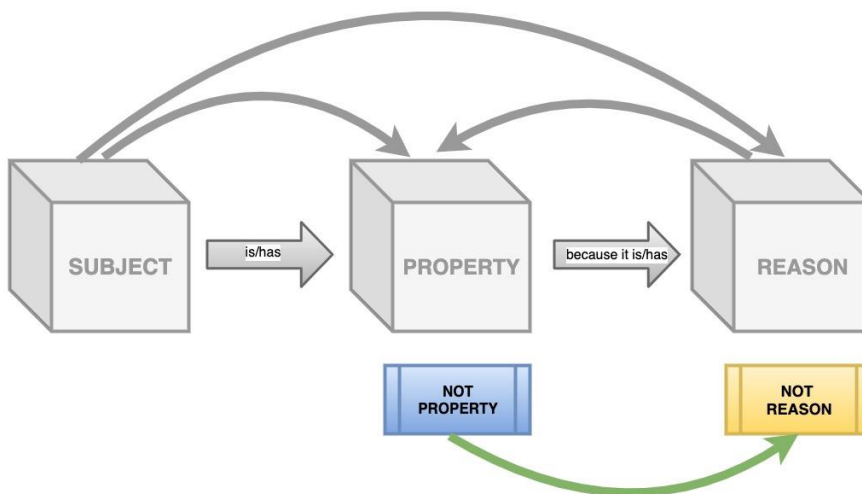**If it is the reason, then it is necessarily the predicate**

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

LIMB 3:

If it is not the predicate, then it is necessarily not the reason

- For example, *if it's permanent (not impermanent), 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 Challenger to prove to them that sound is a product.

       You would do this by creating a new three-part syllogism, where you keep the same subject (sound), but now make product your predicate, and add a new reason. The new syllogism, would become, for instance: "Take the subject: sound. It follows that it's a product, because it was produced from the contact of two objects."

There are a few other formal requirements for a syllogism to be flawless. They are philosophically interesting, but since they are not necessary to start debating. we will not cover them here.

5 Unmasking Thought Processes Through Debate

<u>Reason and Intuition</u>

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 intuition, 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, are still mediated 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 misguided, partial or entirely unrealistic. In situations when the person is wrong, the only conclusion we can draw is that their convictions were not backed by correct reasons and real intuitions. But this then begs the question; how do we check the validity of our reasoning and of our intuition? Do we as humans have 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 and simply hoping we won't be proven otherwise?

Building Blocks of Thought and Mind

Just as observations of patterns in the physical world led scientists to discover physical 'laws' which could withstand experimental rigor, another group of people performing a different kind of science devoted their attention away from the physical world, to that of mental phenomena. This emphasis was probably dictated by both the lack of a culture wherein the researchers use technologies to perform controlled physical experiments, and the presence of a culture that emphasizes the importance of mental phenomena in our well-being. While 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: our thoughts.

An obvious point of divergence between these two 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, as India was. In such a 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, contains one such theory of knowledge that trains one to analyze the content of their thoughts and 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.

How Debate Training Differs from Other Studies

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 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 underly 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.[4] 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 and is not a study of a the concepts within some field of study themselves, it still has to be taught via concepts. In our case, these will mostly be concepts that are embedded in a Buddhist worldview and using vocabulary of Buddhist philosophy. 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 that language which then makes it easier to transfer to others. So, a student of grammar finds herself/himself having to simultaneously contend with new vocabulary and the rules that bind them together, even though the focus is on the latter. Similarly, a student of debate must contend with new concepts and the rules that tie them together to make them coherent (or not). The focus, however, should be on the latter. Over time, it will be possible to create debate frameworks in other subject areas that may be more familiar to you, such as mathematics, the sciences, political science, sociology, etc.

---

[4] We're not referring to specific grammar rules of a given language, which are clearly not transferrable to all other languages. We're referring in general to the facts of grammatical structure in all languages, and the universal components of such structure.

There, the basic rules of debate will stay the same, even though the concepts being dealt with will change. Some efforts in this regard have already begun.

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. We can then 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. This reality can be anything from subtle metaphysical realities to everyday experiences. In the case of acquiring new information, Nalanda Debate provides a strong tool that enables one to test both one's interpretations. This, again, leads our thoughts to mirror reality more accurately.

The Need for Practice and Repetition

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 used 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 the 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 repeated mistakes, eventually, like with languages, it becomes effortless, natural, and then permeate one's life.

One thing that we humans are proud of is our brain and our intelligence. With its ability to influence the internal and external world, it enables us to act in a way that can make our lives better. So isn't it logical that a tool that permits consistency and accuracy in one's thinking - and consequently one's actions - can only be beneficial?

6 Aristotle & Dignaga

Some scholars have noticed the similarity of the three-part syllogism in Nalanda Debate and 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:
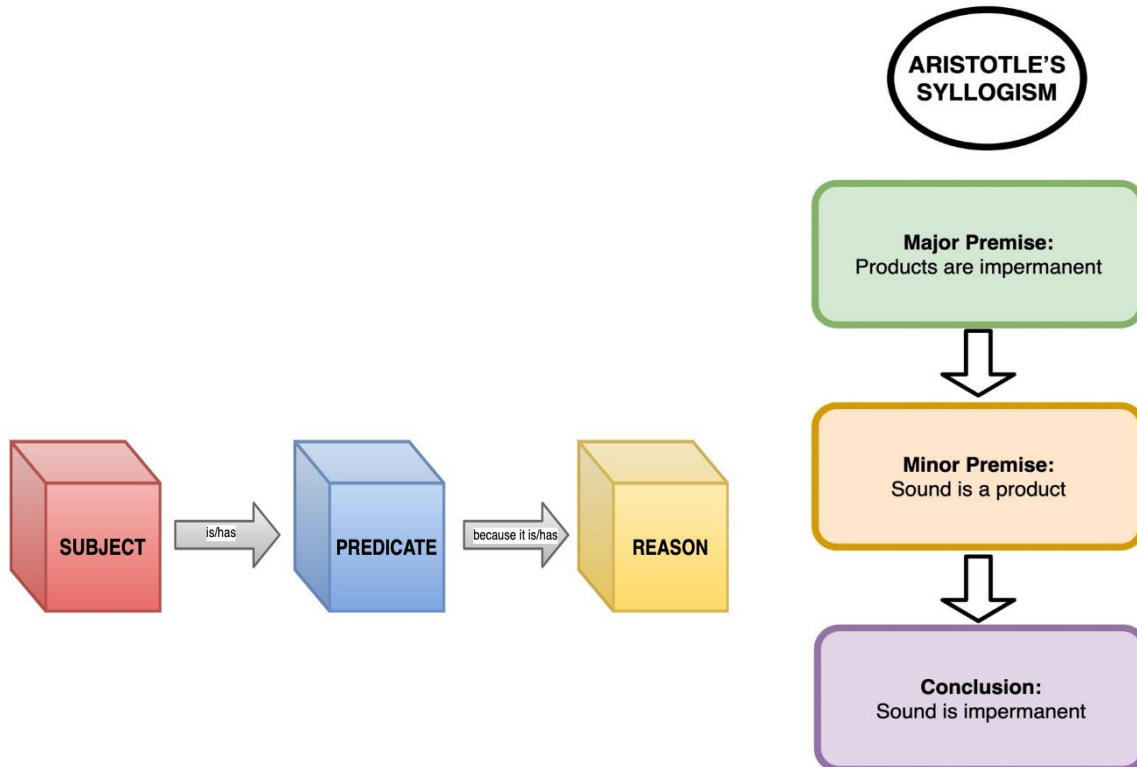
There are two main differences between these forms: that of structure and that of the theoretical assumptions. Let's now elaborate each in turn.

DIFFERENCE IN STRUCUTRE

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

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 establish the three limbs, they will then come to accept the thesis. For this reason, Dignaga's three limbs are an account of what goes on in the psychological process of reasoning.

A consequence of this is that the "validity" of our reasons and syllogisms 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 to be valid, or without flaw, for a specific person, in a specific moment, by a specific means. i.e., it is flawless:

a. for a *person* who doubts the truth of the claim, but wishes to know whether it's true.

b. at the *time* they come to establish the three limbs but do not yet have knowledge of the thesis

c. through the means of establishing the three-limbs.

It is not enough then, for the three-limbs to be true. They must be known to be true, and to fulfill their function of proving some fact, the reasoner who is relying on them has to go from a state of questioning the truth of the thesis to a state of knowing the thesis to be true. Returning to the Aristotelian syllogism and comparing it with what we have here, a significant distinction is that in Aristotle's system a proof can be abstracted from the reasoners doing the reasoning, but the three-limbs of Nalanda Tradition logic cannot.

This leads to the following being true in Nalanda Debate – even though in general, product is a flawless reason that proves that sound is impermanent, in the psychological context of Dharmakirti, product is not a flawless reason proving sound to be impermanent. Why? Because Dharmakirti does not wish to know whether the thesis is true or not; since he has already realized it to be true.

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. It is the foundation for a variety of properties to exist and to be cognized by observers. Impermanence is the predicate, so it is a property or quality which exists within or on the foundation 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's understanding 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, 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 trairupya's history, the use of examples when positing a syllogism were more or less important in the process, and scholars (in and out of the Nalanda lineage) have argued at length about the effect of such differences. There are differences between schools and differences between Svatantrika and Prasangika approaches, when looking at how Madhyamaka scholars apply this reasoning.

In addition, although debate logic is based upon the reasoning of Dignaga's three limbs, there are other pieces of the theory that aren't necessarily part of debate practice. 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. The practice is a form of communication – the bulk of the theory in the Pramana literature is directly discussing what happens when using logic and reasoning in dialogue, as a form of communication. Even though this logic-based dialogue can cause someone to change their beliefs, it is still up to each person as an individual to actually go and sit down and do some focused reflection to develop an "inference for self."

Part 2: How to Practice Nalanda Debate

7 The Ingredients of Nalanda Debate

7-A Two Types of Debate

There are, generally speaking, two phases of debate in Nalanda Debate: counting debate and logic debate. **Counting debate** is the phase of debate when we 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 phase of a debate where reasons are given to prove and disprove a thesis, or claim. 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.

7-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 anything 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 the claim that consciousness is a material object, they will ask them directly. The Defender then does not have the freedom to give any answer they wish, but is required to either accept or deny the thesis - no more and no less.

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

7-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 intended as questions but are phrased as declarative statements. This has to do with a dual function of the debate format – on the one hand, the Challenger is posing a proposition to the Defender. One the other hand, they are drawing out a logical consequence of the previously accepted

propositions or pervasions (this function is discussed further on in this text). 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 **4 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. Where does the specified subject come from? 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 any longer to accept that whatever is an oak tree is also a plant.

In the example above, the pervasion is true and fairly obvious, so it would take some crafty reasoning to convince someone otherwise. Let's now look at a case where the pervasion is not true. If the statement starts**:**

> **It follows that if it performs photosynthesis, then it's necessarily a plant.**

and then the Defender accepts it, now the Challenger has a real chance to give a counter-example that can disprove the pervasion. Supplying a new subject and using "performs photosynthesis" and "a plant" as our predicates for each of the two new thesis statements in turn, we can get something like:

> **Thesis 1 - Take the subject: cyanobacteria. It follows that it performs photosynthesis.**
>
> **Thesis 2 – Take the subject: cyanobacteria. It follows that it's a plant.**

Here, Thesis 1 is true, but Thesis 2 is not true (cyanobacteria are bacteria, not plants). However, it's the consequence that follows if the above statement of pervasion is accepted. If the Defender now accepts Thesis 1 but denies Thesis 2, the Challenger can come back with a 3-part syllogism.

> **Take the subject: cyanobacteria. It follows that it is a plant because it performs photosynthesis.**

This is what was implied by accepting the pervasion above (that if it performs photosynthesis, then it's necessarily a plant) – this is the primary way in which logic is used to point out the unwanted consequences of an opponent's internally contradictory beliefs. Thus, an understanding of pervasion is essential to logic in the Nalanda Tradition.

7-D The Four Allowed Answers

After an open-ended question is asked, the Defender should respond in accord with the question. If the Challenger 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 is asked, 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 thesis and pervasions can be read as yes/no questions, the answers can likewise be taken to mean yes and no. Let's now look at how the responses will look in a debate.

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 *not* a plant.[5] 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.

Defender: Why?

---

[5] 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 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[B]. The Defender gave an appropriate response.

Now, how is the answer "No pervasion" used?

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 an organic lifeform.

Defender: No pervasion.

[B] There is one uncommon case where the response of "The reason's not true" can be given even when the Defender does not know for certain that it isn't true. This is in the case where the very nature of the claim is unknowable by the Defender, so the meaning of "The reason's not true" comes to mean that due to doubt, the reason is not established as true by a Gauge Mind.

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 an organic lifeform. However, merely being an 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.

This is what is meant by pervasion: logical necessity, where there is a complete inclusion of one thing by another thing. 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 lifeforms. Or, for a third way: Organic lifeforms are not pervaded by plants.

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.

Challenger: STRIKE! (*this term is covered below*)

Table 1.6

Four Answers

After a thesis/pervasion statement:

I accept.

Why?

After a reason (three-part syllogism):

The reason's not true.

No pervasion.

[I accept.]

7-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, like they do when proving a thesis, because disproving a pervasion means only 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).

7-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 you need

to know 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 statements are made very quickly in a debate and it is extremely common for a Defender to simply mis-hear what the Challenger has said. Use these phrases often to ensure that the Challenger and Defender are on the same page.

State the Thesis

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

Defender: I accept.

Challenger: State the thesis!

Defender: I accept that a rose is impermanent.

Here, the Challenger is simply asking the Defender to explicitly state the thesis that they accepted. Even though the thesis was just laid out by the Challenger, our hearing, attention, and comprehension are not perfect! Oftentimes the thesis will be longer than the example above, and it is difficult to hold in working memory. You'll be surprised at how often the thesis that the Defender thinks they're accepting is not actually what was posited by the Challenger! Therefore, it is imperative that you frequently double-check by using this phrase, "State the thesis!"

State the Why

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

Defender: Why?

Challenger: State the why!

Defender: I don't accept that a rose is impermanent.

(Alternatively: Why is a rose impermanent?)

Just like with the above case of stating the thesis, it is good for the Challenger to get in the habit of double-checking what has been denied by the Defender.

State the Reason

Challenger: Take the subject: a rose. 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: State the reason.

Defender: A rose being matter is not true.

(Alternatively: It's not true that a rose is matter.)

This is like the prior two cases, but now you have to remember to put the subject and reason together into a thesis. That is what happens when you deny a reason – you can essentially ignore the predicate, and are looking at the 'Subject + Reason' pair as its own

thesis. Remember that, just like when a thesis is denied, by denying a reason you are implicitly accepting the negation – the direct opposite – of the reason. If you give this answer as a Defender, you should be prepared to then accept the opposite thesis. In the example above, if the Challenger then posits the new thesis: "Take the subject: a rose. It follows that it is *not* matter," then the Defender must accept it (or face a "Strike!" which is explained below).

State 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: State the pervasion!

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

When the Defender states the pervasion, they are actually stating the negation of the pervasion that was implied by the Ǝ-part syllogism posited by the Challenger. In the example above, "a plant" is provided as a reason to prove that "a rose is matter." The implied pervasion comes out to be: *If it's a plant, then it's necessarily matter.* Since the Defender denied it with their response of "No pervasion," then they have accepted the negation of that pervasion. When they go to state the pervasion, it must be the negated pervasion: *If it's a plant, then it's not necessarily matter.* You can see how this differs from the above cases, where you just say, "I don't accept that" or "It's not true that." Here, you state the negated pervasion.

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. There will occasionally be cases where an answer truly cannot be known. These are the most appropriate times to give this answer. For example:

Challenger: Take the subject: in the Defender's body. It follows there are ten trillion atoms.

Defender: Doubt!

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 (e.g., 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: Strike!!!

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 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 the section **11 Staying on Subject**.

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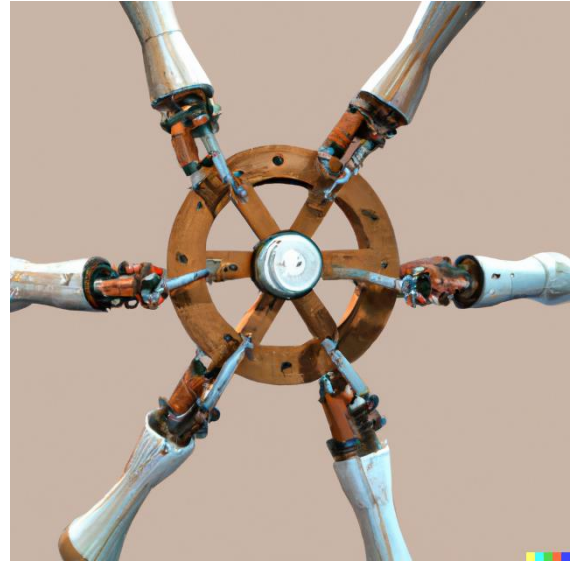
One of the most important types of comparative analyses for beginning debaters is the comparison of the Joints of Debate. Counting the Joints of Debate is when we make an analysis of two phenomena by starting off with the question: Can we find a third phenomenon which is both of the two that we're analyzing?

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
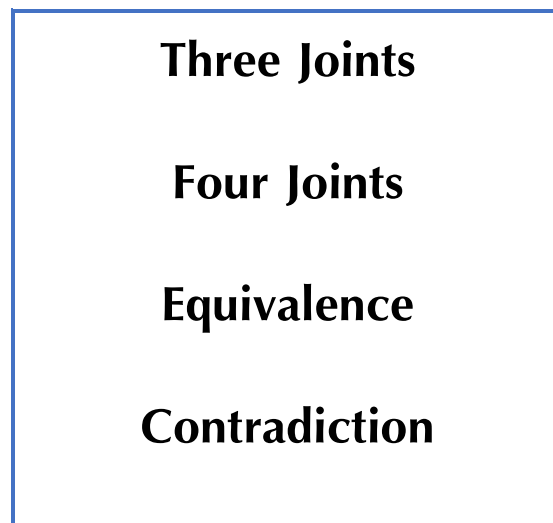
These can each be represented by a classical Venn Diagram style of visual depiction. Yet, it's important to keep in mind that working through them in debate brings a level of understanding beyond just looking at a diagram; this is like the difference between working through a math problem to understand 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 in the *Fall Debate School Workbook* for

examples of each relationship, together with their matching Venn Diagrams. Continue reading below for in-depth explanations of each relationship.

Three Joints

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

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 Joints in debate, the Defender first posits the relationship (so here, they'll say there are Three Joints). 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.

Below 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 orange. C = Challenger. D = Defender.

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.**

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

D: **I accept.**

C: **If there are Three Joints, then which pervades which?**

D: **If it s planet Earth, then it s necessarily a planet, but if it s a planet, it s not necessarily planet Earth.**

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

D: **Yes.**

C: **Posit it.**

D: **Take the subject: the planet Mercury.**

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

D: I accept.

C: It s a planet because?

D: Because it is one of the main satellites orbiting the Sun in our Solar System.

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

D: 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.

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

D: I accept.

C: It is not planet Earth because?

D: Because it is the closest planet to the Sun.

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Take the subject: Earth during the Mesozoic Period.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s a planet because?

D: Because it is a life-supporting planet.

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s planet Earth because?

D: Because it is the home planet of Shakyamuni Buddha.

C: It follows that if it s the home planet of Shakyamuni Buddha, then it s necessarily planet Earth.

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Take the subject: the Sun.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s not a planet because?

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

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s not planet Earth because?

D: Because it is not a planet.

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

D: I accept.

Fin

Four Joints

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

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

The following 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 orange.

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.

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

D: I accept.

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

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

D: Yes.

C: Posit it.

D: Take the subject: hydrogen.

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

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

D: I accept.

C: It s a gas at room temperature because?

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

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: It is an element because?

D: Because it is the element with one proton.

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Take the subject: Fog.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s a gas at room temperature because?

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

C: 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.

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s not an element because?

D: Because it is a composite of multiple elements.

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

D: I accept.

*Now the Challenger asks for an example of Joint

#3: (b) but not (a)

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

D: I accept.

C: Posit it.

D: Take the subject: Gold.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s an element because?

D: Because it is matter with a variety of isotopes.

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

D: I accept.

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

D: I accept.

C: It s not a gas at room temperature because?

D: Because it is a solid at room temperature.

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

D: 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.

Below 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 orange.

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.

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

D: I accept.

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

C: They are Contradictory because?

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

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

D: 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.

Below 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 orange.

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?

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 we'll use the shorter way to state them. In the following section, we will see the full way of stating them.

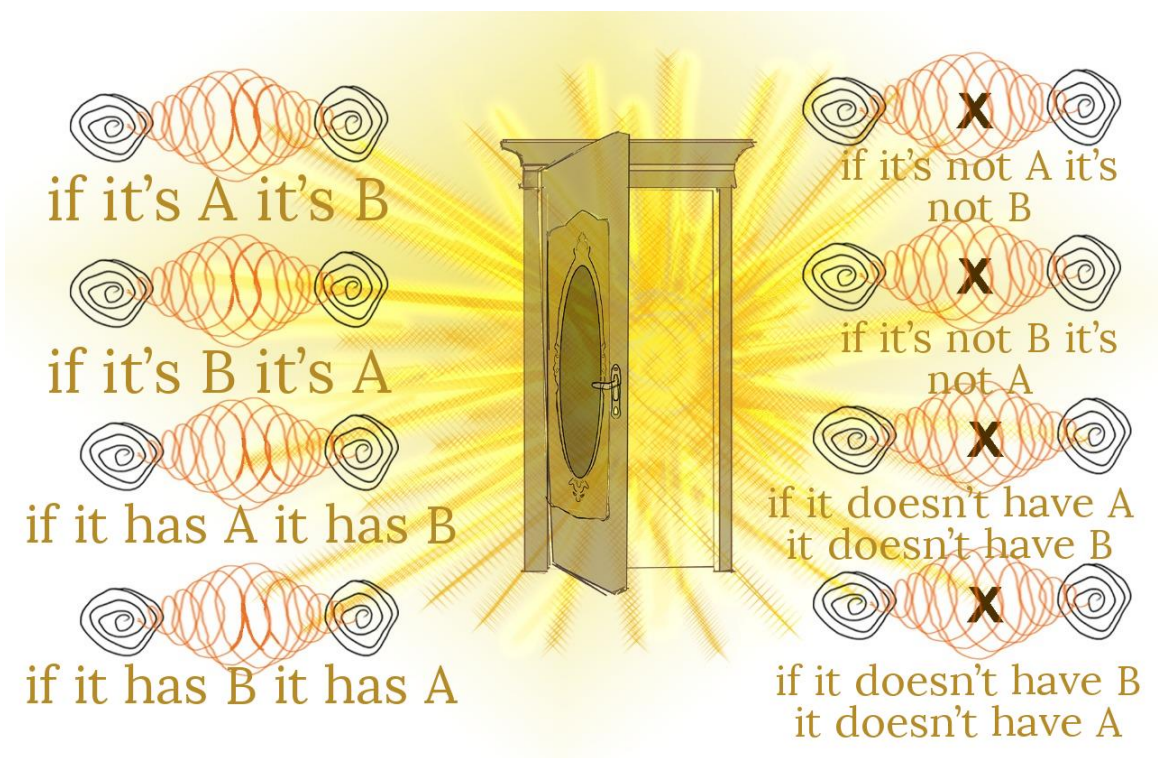**D: The two doors of being and the two of non-being; the two doors of existing and the two of not existing.**

*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?

In the image below, we see the phrasing, "If it doesn't have A, it doesn't have B." Alternatively, we can say "If A doesn't exist, then B necessarily doesn't exist." This will be addressed in section **12 Alternative and Abbreviated Debate Phrases**.

if it's A it's B

if it's B it's A

if it has A it has B

if it has B it has A

if it's not A it's not B

if it's not B it's not A

if it doesn't have A it doesn't have B

if it doesn't have B it doesn't have A

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 it. Whenever we have a definition and a definiendum, those two are Equivalent – they always 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	Definiendum
Something reasonably described as a hue	Color
Something able to complete a task	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, given that it is spoken language, while colors are visual forms. They are experienced

in different domains of consciousness (one in the auditory domain, the other in the visual domain).

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 some object that is capable of illustrating the definiendum. Then we can gain knowledge of the definiendum, once we see how the illustration illustrates it – which is to say, we see how it satisfies the definition (defining characteristics).

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.

Let's go back further in your cognitive timeline – how did you develop the knowledge of mugs? The eye consciousness perceived *a cylindrical, hollow shape with a wide mouth and handle made of ceramic, or similarly hard material, that is used to drink from* (for the current purpose, this can suffice as a definition of mug). Let's say you saw one with a Mickey Mouse image on it. You see such an object, see the liquid in it, and then see someone drinking from it. That's the first step – having a Gauge Cognition of an illustration (the Mickey Mouse cylindrical hollow wide-mouthed shape with a handle). Then you recognize its definition, the things that make it a mug. Then you say, "Momma, give me that cup! I want Mickey!" And she replies, "No dear, that's a mug, not a cup. See its shape? It's different from a cup."

Maybe there was a period of time where you couldn't quite tell the difference between cups and mugs, until you had enough experience with each of them to fully grasp the definition and understand how each illustration instantiates that definition. Then you gradually developed fuller knowledge of mugs and the definition of mug, until one day it clicked and you no longer confused cups and mugs.

This was a brief description of the cognitive process for creating conceptual cognitions, with linguistic labels, of the objects we perceive (both in daily life, as well as objects that require more background education and study). It is important to understand this process in the context of Nalanda Debate, because one of the primary ways that we analyze the topics of our inquiry – together with the analysis of the Joints of Debate – is by suggesting possible definitions for something, and then vetting them through positing examples that challenge the bounds of the suggested definition. If we find a true "edge case" or counterexample (something which is the definition but not the definiendum, or vise versa), then we know that the suggested definition has failed and we have to return to the drawing board.

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 connected to the current subject of your sylogism. Read the following example debate to see an example of where the Challenger gives a reason that loses any connection to the subject.

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

D: Why?

C: Because it uses photosynthesis.

D: The reason's not true!

C: It follows that it uses photosynthesis 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 must 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.

C: 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.

D: I accept.

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.

C: 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.

D: !!!

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 in this case, using this typical response does not highlight the reason for why there is no pervasion. Thus, it is best for the Defender to say, "You've lost the subject!"

Look at another simple example:

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

D: Why?

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

D: 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 the *Book of Debates* and *Fall Debate School Workbook* to color the pronoun "it" red, the same color used to signify the subject. Whenever there is an "it" that refers to the subject, it will appear red.

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.

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

D: Why?

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

D: The reason's not true.

C: 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.

The pervasion statement that comes out of the prior debate (using the reason as the first item and the predicate as the second item) is:

It follows that if it makes food by taking in the sun's energy through its leaves, then it's necessarily a plant.

This time, there is no fault of a lost subject. 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!

12 Alternative and abbreviated debate phrases

Now that you've seen the language of Nalanda Debate here and in the *Fall Debate School Workbook*, you may wonder if this language is so strict that there is no leeway at all to use different phrasings. For beginners, it is highly advised to use the debate phrases exactly as they've been presented here, because that will guarantee that your form stays perfect. With a clear form of your logical statements, your logic and reasoning will also remain clear.

Yet, at some point you will be mature enough in understanding the structure of Nalanda Debate to use some abbreviated phrasings. Before then, you also will likely hear other more advanced debaters using such phrasings. Below is a list of alternate phrasings to what has been presented so far – use them at your own risk!

Take the subject: an electron.

[Alternates]

Take: an electron.

Let's examine: an electron.

The subject: an electron.

Take the subject: an electron. It follows that it's matter.

[Alternate]

It follows that an electron is matter.

      We can also be more flexible in our predicate and reason – we don't always have to just say "it follows that *it is…* because it is…" Take note of the following possibilities.

Take the subject: a human. It follows that they walk because they run.

Take the subject: a sprout. It follows that it grows from a seed because it results from a seed.

Take the subject: an impermanent thing. It follows that it momentarily changes because it disintegrates in each moment.

      Likewise, we can use the phrasings of either "it has," "it exists," or "there is." In the Tibetan language, there is one word that means all of these, but in English they are different words.

Take the subject: a human. It follows that they have a head.

Take the subject: on a table. It follows there is a book.

Take the subject: in India. It follows there are elephants.

Take the subject in India. It follows that elephants exist.

Take the subject: on a smoky mountain pass. It follows that there is fire because there is smoke.

Take the subject: on a smoky mountain pass. It follows that fire exists because smoke exists.

Take the subject: a smoky mountain pass. It follows that it has fire because it has smoke.

      Another extremely common change to the structure as we've presented it so far is to continue posited predicates and reasons without explicitly restated the subject – this of course only works if you want to keep the same subject.

C: Take the subject: an oak tree. It follows that it's life.

D: Why?

C: It follows that it's not life.

D: I accept.

C: It follows that it's life because it is a plant.

D: The reason's not true.

C: It follows that it's a plant because it is a tree.

Finally, there can also be abbreviated versions of the answers given.

I accept.

[Alternates]

Accept

Agree

No pervasion.

[Alternates]

Pervasion

No need

The reason's not true.

[Alternates]

Reason's not true.

Reason

Not established.

Reason not established.

These examples are meant to give you a sense of the flexibility of Nalanda Debate. Even while keeping a formal structure of logic, there is still freedom in how you express your questions, doubts, and lines of reasoning. This can lead to fascinating discoveries, as well as humorous and unexpected consequences of the positions that you accept.

There are still several remaining questions that – as the first generation of debaters using the English language – you and your classmates will have to investigate and settle. For instance, what are the different implications in saying "Take the subject: A particle" versus "Take the subject: The particle," "Take the subject: Particles," or just the unadorned "Take the subject: Particle"?

Nalanda Debate – like all language - evolves. Since practicing it through the medium of the English language is something extremely novel, there is lots of room for experimentation and for improving and developing even the basic debate structure. It is our work as debaters to see what kind of creative forms we can come up with to better support the interactive flow of concentrated logic that Nalanda Debate gives us.

13 Breaking down the big questions

By now you've seen enough examples of Nalanda Debate to recognize that the types of statements we make when debating in a logic-oriented way are abnormally short – at least when we compare it to the way people tend to debate in our society, whether formally or informally. This is not a flaw in the system but is instead its secret power.

By breaking down big concepts into sizeable chunks and big questions into manageable theses and pervasion statements, we have a much greater ability to focus on a specific issue and to get clear about it through a thorough analysis. There is no exact science for how to break down a big question into the language of Nalanda Debate, but over time you will develop the skill to do so. In this section, we'll just give one example so that you have some idea of how you might go about it.

A big question in some cultures of philosophy circles around the mind-body problem. How can the mind and body interact if they are of a different substance, and the mind is intangible? How does the brain and body create the mind? What we'd want to do in order to address a question like this is to think about the different aspects of the question and the phenomena involved. Then we can find a way to address each aspect in turn.

Again, it's important to emphasize that there is not only one approach to this – and part of the reason for that is that the types of questions you ask and the reasons you give as a Challenger depend upon the way that your Defender responds.

You might want to start by establishing some common ground in understanding about what is the basic nature of the mind, and likewise with matter. For this, we can start with questions about what types of causes are required for a bodily action and what causes are needed for a mind. We can investigate the continuity of consciousness of a particular

person, tracing it back to its earlier causes. We can ask point blank – what is the definition of consciousness? What is the definition of matter?

In taking this kind of approach, we might find that its difficult to get to a consensus about anything with the Defender! But that's the beauty of Nalanda Debate – it's as if you're unlocking another person's mind and opening a window to see inside their mental landscape. If you find that your partner has difficulty positing a clear definition, or it's just one that you find totally absurd, then you can go back to something more basic. The whole time, you will want to posit various subjects that you think can help clarify the point you're trying to make in showing the Defender the absurdity of their view.

The following is a list of possible questions that could come up in such a debate. This is, again, not a well-plotted map for you to follow strictly but is an attempt to give a sense of what kinds of questions you can ask and where a debate might go. It often will go somewhere that you did not initially expect.

- **It follows that you can posit that definition of consciousness.**
- **It follows that you can posit the definition of matter.**
- **It follows that if it is a result, then it necessarily arises from a cause that is a similar type to itself.**
- **Take the subject: the first moment of consciousness of a newborn baby. It follows that it arose from causes.**
- **Take the subject: the minds of the parents of a newborn infant. It follows that they transform into the consciousness of the newborn.**
- **It follows that if it interacts with a body, it necessarily interacts with a body through a mechanism of direct mechanical work.**

- Take the subject: the Sun. It follows that it interacts with the Earth through a mechanism of direct mechanical work.

- Take the subject: the brain. It follows that it is mind.

- It follows that if it is a mind that is directly perceiving a brain, then it's necessarily a mind that is directly perceiving a mind.

- Take the subject: an eye consciousness cognizing the images on a screen that were generated by an fMRI scan. It follows that it is cognizing a mind.

- It follows that if someone has a mind, then they necessarily have a brain.

- Take the subject: the electrical activity of neuron firing. It follows that it is mind.

- It follows that if its an emergent phenomenon, then it's necessarily non-existent.

- Take the subject: consciousness. It follows that it's an emergent phenomenon.

- Take the subject: consciousness. It follows that it's non-existent.

- Take the subject: the brain. It follows that it's non-existent.

- Take the subject: the brain. It follows that it's an emergent phenomenon.

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?