

THE ONTOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF JAIN SOTERIOLOGY, WITH A PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE BONDED AND LIBERATED STATES OF THE SOUL

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Ātma which is free from the defect of Karma gets to the highest point of the universe, knows all and perceives all, and obtains the transcendental bliss everlasting. (Kundakunda, Pañcāstikāya-sāra)

Jesus says, 'If your leaders say to you, "Look, the Father's rule is in the sky," then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. Rather the Father's rule is inside you and outside you. When you know yourself, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, you live in poverty, and you are poverty.' (Gospel of Thomas)

The aim of the Jain religious system is liberation of the soul or the living substance (skt. *jīva*) from the *samsāric* cycle of rebirths. The following contribution is aimed at investigating the Jain understanding of the mechanisms of bondage and liberation. The foundations of the Jain soteriological scheme will be mapped out by treating the notion of a living substance in a broader framework of Jain metaphysics. Additionally, the Jain view of the soul and its liberation from the endless journey through the cycle of innumerable possible birth-states will be put into a broader context of Indian philosophies and the unique contribution of Jain philosophy will be pointed out. Lastly, after highlighting certain common points, the contrast between the Jain and the Gnostic understandings of the

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bondage of the soul will be briefly alluded to, using contemporaneous sources.¹ The Jain sources will be taken from texts by philosophers like Umāsvāmī and Kundakunda.

Most Indian philosophical schools may be characterized as soteriological. Out of their dedicated efforts for liberation emerged detailed theories on the nature of reality and man's place in it, since only upon knowing the particularities of one's bondage can one hope to establish the methods to free oneself. Amongst all the Indian philosophical and religious traditions, it was the Jains that took the state of our bondage most literally. According to the Jain tradition, our souls are actually trapped in the continuous cycle of existences from old, being weighed down by our bodily forms, despite their natural movement being upward. This literal understanding of our physical entrapment is perhaps one of the reasons why Jains were so meticulous in their descriptions of the elements that make up reality and the working of the mechanism of bondage within them.

Ontology of the Soul

Despite the fact that Jain ontological theory proposes an infinite number of substances, it is generally based on a fundamental dichotomy between the sentient or living (skt. *jīva*) and the inanimate or non-living (skt. *ajīva*) substances (skt. *dravya*). The latter category is further subdivided into four² or five classes of substances. These are matter (*pudgala*), medium of motion (*dharma*), medium of rest (*adharmā*), space (*ākāśa*) and time (*kāla*). All the substances apart from time are referred to as *astikāyas*, literally meaning existents (skt. *sat*) with a bodily extension (skt. *kāya*) that are therefore able to occupy space.³ At first sight the choice of including the living substance in the *astikāya* category seems unusual, however, Chakravarti explains this to be due to the organic nature of *jīvas*. "Jīva exists as an organism and as such it is related to body and hence the spatial quality."⁴ Since a *jīva* in its empirical state is said to be of the same extent as the physical body it occupies and is in that way 'conditioned

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²Śvetāmbara Jains are divided in their acceptance of time as a substance.

³"Jīvas or souls, Pudgalas or non-souls, Dharma and Adharma, the principles of rest and motion, and finally Space – these are the *Astikāyas*": Āc. Kundakunda, *Pañcāstikāya-sāra*, A. Chakravarti, tr. and ed., New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 2009, 4. (Hereafter PAKS). "Excepting Time, (the other five) of these substances (are known) as 'Extensive substances' (*Astikāya*)": Āc. Kundakunda, *Niyamasāra*, tran. Uggar Sain, New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 2006, § 34. (Hereafter NS)

⁴ PAKS, 3.

by it', it is natural to draw a conclusion that it is an *astikāya*, implying that it is in some sense *res cogitans* and *res extensa* simultaneously. It is therefore inevitable that the souls in the Jain universe be individual and many, because of this unique trait. Jainism does not propose the existence of a single all-encompassing soul substance like some other Indian philosophical schools do. On the contrary, the number of souls in the Jain universe is infinite and they are not located in any particular part of the bodies they occupy but pervade the whole of them. "Just as the lotus-hued ruby when placed in a cup of milk imparts its luster to the milk, so *Ātmā* residing in its own body imports its luster or intelligence to the whole body."⁵ In addition, as the Jain metaphysical theory states that the number of space-points in the cosmos is countless and every soul is capable of expanding to the size of the cosmos, it is said that the number of space-points in a single soul is the same as the number of space-points in the cosmos, i.e. it is innumerable. "There are innumerable soul units in a soul."⁶ However, this adaptability of the soul's size to the relevant corporeity in no way affects the nature of the soul itself just as a piece of cloth can be folded into a great many formations without itself being affected. "*Jīva* pervades the whole body. Still he is not one with the body though when functioning, he is identical with it."⁷

Despite the reference to souls as substances, it is perhaps more precise to allude to them as existents, in order to encapsulate all aspects of substances as reals. Every existent in the Jain metaphysical theory is characterized by permanence on the one hand and change on the other. "Substance is one (as a class). It is the inherent essence of all things. It manifests itself through diverse forms. It undergoes infinite modifications. It has the triple characteristics of creation, destruction and permanence. It also has the antithetical qualities, that is, it may be described by the opposites."⁸ This ontological theory

⁵PAKS, § 33: "Like the light of a lamp, the soul assumes the size of the body it happens to occupy on account of the contraction and expansion of its space units." Umāsvāti/Umāsvāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra. That Which Is*, With the combined commentaries of Umāsvāti/Umāsvāmī, Pūjyapāda and Siddhasenagani, Tran. And intr., Nathmal Tatia, Harper Collins Publishers: San Francisco, London, 1994, § 127. (Hereafter TAS).

⁶TAS, § 5.8.

⁷PAKS, § 34. The relationship between body and soul is also explained by introducing two levels of truth, relative (skt. *vyavahāra*) and absolute (skt. *nīścaya*). "The *vyavahāra* point of view indeed declares that body and soul are one, but according to the *nīścaya* point of view, the soul and body are never identical," Āc. Kundakunda, *Samayasāra*, tran. and ed., A. Chakravarti, Benares: Bharatiya Jnanapitha Kashi, §27. (Hereafter SS). Despite the fact that body and soul seem to be in contact in our everyday experience, they are in fact not so.

⁸ PAKS, § 8.

corresponds directly to the Jain epistemological *motto* of non-one-sidedness or *anekāntavāda*. In other words, any entity can be considered from multiple viewpoints (skt. *naya*).

The aspect of persistence in the Jain ontological scheme corresponds to the substance (skt. *dravya*) and its qualities (skt. *guna*), whereas the aspects of origination and annihilation correspond to the modal (skt. *paryāya*) modification of the existents. Every substance in the Jain metaphysical theory is therefore a foundation for its qualities and modes. "Whatever has substantiality, has the dialectical triad of birth, death and permanence, and is substratum of qualities and modes, is Dravya."⁹ The qualities are essential or intrinsic and coexist with the substances.¹⁰ In that sense they are permanent. Nevertheless, the dynamic aspects of the substance qualities are their continuous acquisition of new modes and their destruction of the old ones. This dynamism is the impermanent nature of existents.

With such a specific understanding of reality as one and many Jain philosophers outlined a unique ontological model in which identity and difference are assigned equal shares.¹¹ When applied to a *jīva* as a *dravya*, consciousness would be one of its intrinsic qualities, i.e. *gunas*, and different forms of sentiency (hellish, plant, animal, human or divine) its extrinsic or accidental qualities, i.e. *paryāyas*.¹² "Thus the *Jīva* with its attributes and modes, roaming in *Samsāra*, may lose its particular form and assume a new one. Again this form may be lost and the original regained."¹³ *Jīva* as a *dravya* is therefore a link that connects numerous births and deaths of a being in the *samsāric* cycle that is without beginning. As substances *jīvas* are eternal, uncreated and imperishable. They have existed in the past and will continue to

⁹PAKS, § 6. "That which, whilst it does not forsake its innate nature, is connected with origination, annihilation and stability and which possesses qualities and modifications, they call a substance": Bharatiya Jnanapitha Kashi, *The Pravacana-sāra of Kunda-kunda Ācāryam together with the commentary, Tattva-dīpikā, by Amrtacandra Sūri*, tran. Barend Faddegon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, PS, §II.2. (Hereafter PS).

¹⁰"There is neither quality without substance nor substance without quality; hence these two are not incompatible in their nature." (PAKS, §13). "If the substance is entirely separate and distinct from its qualities, then it may change into infinite other substances or again if the qualities can exist separate from their substance, there will be no necessity for a substance at all (In either way the result would be absurd.)" (PAKS, § 44).

¹¹"There can be no destruction of things that do exist, nor can there be creation of things out of nothing. Coming into existence and ceasing to exist, things do have because of their attributes and modes." (PAKS, § 15).

¹²"The soul manifests in the following forms as Deva, as man, as a member of the Hell or as a plant or an animal." (PAKS, § 16).

¹³PAKS, § 21.

exist in the future, whether in a non-liberated or liberated state. However, no matter what state they adopt, they are always situated in time. Hence they are eternal in time and not sempiternal (i.e. timeless). Jain philosophers that accept time or *kāla* as a substance have proposed time to be the instrumental cause of modal change which happens in every single substance, soul being no exception.¹⁴ It is important to highlight that the Jain notion of a changing soul is a very innovative and radical proposal within the context of Indian philosophy.

Souls in Jainism are comprised of an innumerable number of intrinsic qualities, the fundamental ones being consciousness (skt. *caitanya*), bliss (skt. *sukha*) and energy (skt. *vīrya*).¹⁵ There is never a time when *jīvas* are without these qualities and in this sense the souls are permanent and unchanging. However, all of these qualities undergo infinite modifications and in this way the *jīvas* are continually changing. Consciousness is the most distinctive essential quality of the sentient existents and with it a *jīva* can investigate itself and the objective world around it.¹⁶ Because of the significance of this quality, the soul is identified as the knower (skt. *pramātr, jñātā*).¹⁷

Despite the fact that the existence of the soul is accepted somewhat naturally by the Jains, it is nevertheless derived from the experience of self-awareness (skt. *ahampratyaya*), which is one aspect of the consciousness *guna*.¹⁸ This cognitive (skt. *upayoga*) aspect of the soul is further divided into two stages or rather manifestations of consciousness, this being firstly, the incipient non-conceptual perception (skt. *darśana*) and secondly, the more distinct apprehension that follows in the form of knowledge¹⁹ (skt. *jñāna*). “Upayoga the instrument or means of knowledge is twofold – Jñāna

¹⁴“The functions of time are: becoming, change, motion and the sequence before and after.” (TAS, § 5.22).

¹⁵“The soul has the following attributes. It has Life, Consciousness, Upayoga (knowledge and perception) and is Potent, performs actions, and is affected by their results, is conditioned by his own body, is incorporeal and is ordinarily found with Karma.” (PAKS, § 27).

¹⁶“Sentience is the defining characteristic of the soul.” (TAS, § 2.8).

¹⁷P.S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*. Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 2001 [1979], 104.

¹⁸P.S. Jaini, 103.

¹⁹The adherents of the *vaiśeṣika* and the *mīmāṃsā* philosophical schools suggested that knowledge is not an essential quality of the soul but only gets secondary association. This proposal is unacceptable to Jains because this would imply that the soul is primarily a non-thinking substance and as they believe substances and their qualities can not be separated without being reduced to mere abstractions. SS, 152.

or understanding and *Darśana* or perception. It is inseparable from and always present in *Jīva*."²⁰ These two are energized by *vīrya*, the potent quality of the soul which is potentially infinite. In its natural state the soul is entirely uninterested in the world of objects and only cognizes itself. In this state it is perfectly blissful, however, when its attention shifts to the objective reality, the bliss gets increasingly contaminated proportionally with the level of absorption into the world of objects.

Jīvas in cosmos or *loka* may therefore be both bonded (skt. *samsāri jīva*) or imperfect (skt. *karma jīva*) and emancipated (skt. *mukta jīva*) or perfect (skt. *śuddha jīva*).²¹ "Having the nature of consciousness by *Upayoga* – faculties of perception and understanding, *Jīvas* are of two kinds. One incarnate of the world, and the other, Liberated of heaven."²² The bonded souls may be further divided according to different criteria, commonly the number of senses various life-forms possess. "The great soul ... manifests in ten states of existence."²³

The most elementary type of sentient beings is the category that includes non-moving beings with one sense organ (skt. *ekendriya jīva*), this being contact. This category comprises of earth (skt. *prthvikāyika*), water (skt. *āpkāyika*), fire (*tejaskāyika*), air (skt. *vāyukāyika*) beings and plants (skt. *vanaspatikāyika*).²⁴ The last class, namely plants, contains the whole spectrum of vegetable types, from rudimentary to advanced. The most elementary kind of plant life is minute beings called *nigodas* that exist in collective clusters, being jointly brought into being and together passing away. Jains hold that *nigodas* permeate the whole cosmos and commonly occupy tissues of a variety of other living beings.²⁵ Certain *jīvas* have never adopted any

²⁰PAKS, § 40. "The qualities of *Jīva* are consciousness and *upayoga*, (perception and knowledge), which are manifold." (PAKS, § 16).

²¹"The spiritual qualities of *Jīva* are infinite. *Jīvas* assume different forms through the manifestation of these infinite attributes. Taking the point of world-space some souls through their complete manifestation may fill the whole world. Others are not so fully manifested. These are filled with false faith-blinding emotions, erroneous knowledge and perception. The former class of souls are free from these defects and are called the perfect ones. And the latter are the *Samsāri Jīvas* or the imperfect ones. Each class contains infinite number of individuals." (PAKS §31-32).

²²PAKS, § 109.

²³PAKS, § 71-72.

²⁴"Vitalised by *Jīvas* are the following bodies: Earth, water, fire, air and also plants. These are many in number. They yield to their respective *Jīvas* only one kind of feeling, contact; and that too associated with highly intensified stupor of ignorance." (PAKS, § 110).

²⁵In our part of the cosmos they may be found in tissues of plant, animal and human life forms. For that reason the Jain tradition does not merely prohibit taking

bodily form other than one of *nigodas*. As a result they have yet to differentiate their false belief and commence their pursuit of salvation.

The second, third, fourth and fifth states of existence refer to beings with two, three, four and five sense organs respectively. "Sea snail, cowrie shell fish, conch shell fish, mother o'pearl and earth worm are organisms which have two senses, touch and taste. Hence they are bisensic."²⁶ "The louse, the bug, the red and ordinary scorpion, the ant and other insects having three senses are triaesthetic."²⁷ "Again, the gadfly, the mosquito, the fly, the bee, the beetle and the dragon fly and the butterfly: these organisms experience, touch, taste, smell and sight; hence they are quadraesthetic – have four senses."²⁸ "Devas, human beings, hell beings, and higher animals: all these have five senses; colour, taste, smell, touch and sound."²⁹ In conclusion, states of existence from one to five are the five groups of one-sensed beings, states six to nine are the categories of two-, three-, four- and five-sensed beings. The final tenth state of existence is the liberated state of the *jīva*, namely *siddha*.

The Jain cosmos³⁰ is therefore pervaded with life. It is vertically divided into three main worlds, thus it is called *triloka*. The heavenly beings or *devas* inhabit the upper reaches (skt. *ūrdhvaloka*) or *devaloka*³¹ and the hell beings or *naraka* populate the lower realm (skt. *adholoka*) of hells or *narakaloka*. Human beings (skt. *manusya*) and animals (skt. *tiryāṅca*) are found in the middle world (skt. *madhyaloka*) which is the smallest of all three. The animal category is fairly broad and "refers to the sub-human creatures or lower animals of the zoological and botanical kingdoms..."³²

Karma theory

Jain philosophical texts state that in its mundane state, the soul is 'found with Karma' or in other words is attached to *karma*. In order to clarify this statement, it is important to expand on the Jain theory of *karma*. The reason for the soul's entrapment in the cycle of continuous rebirths is its *karmic* residue which leads to further rebirths in any one

lives of animals but also discourages one to partake in eating plants that are inhabited by *nigodas*.

²⁶PAKS, § 114.

²⁷PAKS, § 115.

²⁸PAKS, § 116.

²⁹PAKS, § 117.

³⁰From the 16th century on the Jain universe has been often portrayed as a human torso.

³¹Certain *devas* inhabit the middle realm as well.

³²SS, 148.

of the above listed states of existence. The Jain tradition does not maintain that the souls once were pure but have fallen. Quite the opposite, as mentioned above, the *jīvas* have been trapped in *samsāra* since indefinite times and therefore salvation awaits only purified souls at the end of a hard and laborious path. According to Jainism every soul (apart from certain *nigodas*) not merely has potential to assume innumerable states of existence but in truth already has.³³ However, their current bondage is not influenced by any external factors and is purely a consequence of their own actions and subsequent accumulated karmic matter.³⁴ *Jīva* in Jainism is therefore an actor, a *kartā*. This is the main distinguishing characteristic between the *puruṣa* of *sāmkhya* and *jīva* of Jainism. *Sāmkhya* maintains that *puruṣa* is non-active. However, Jains believe that it is illogical to attribute effects of actions to a soul that was not the initiator of those actions originally.³⁵ “*Jīva* as determined by its own nature created its own changes.”³⁶ “The soul which is thus the agent of its own Karma, and the enjoyer of the fruits thereof, as conditioned by its own Karma, gets blinded by the veil of ignorance and roams about in the world of *samsāra* which is limited for the faithful and unlimited for the unfaithful.”³⁷ The enjoyer or *bhoktā* is therefore the actor or *kartā*.³⁸ Similarly, they are also the knower or *jñātā*. This unity is reflected in the Jain methods of salvation that above all things rely on one’s own endeavour.

The karmic mechanism according to Jainism operates in a particular manner. The specific embodiments obscure the availability of *vīrya* or energy and actually divert this energy into producing certain vibrations of the soul that attract material particles, which hover freely in cosmos in an undifferentiated state.³⁹ These become karmic as they cleave to the soul. Jain ontological theory therefore considers the material dimension of the living monads to be a sort of a plaster that is their very own sediment. Particles of matter are alien to the immaterial soul and by adhering to it they affect the functioning of its

³³P.S. Jaini, 108.

³⁴“Being affected by the change in Karmic material *Jīva* experiences certain emotional states. Whatever emotional state thus appears in consciousness is due to the direct causal agency of *Jīva*.” (PAKS, § 57).

³⁵SS, 151.

³⁶PAKS, § 65.

³⁷PAKS, § 69.

³⁸“Thus from the real point of view the Self produces only his own Self. Again, know ye, that the Self enjoys his own Self.” (SS, § 83).

³⁹“The operation of the body, speech and mind is action.” (TAS, § 6.1) “The threefold action is the cause of the inflow of karma.” (TAS, § 6.2)

qualities.⁴⁰ As such they continuously soil the souls which are essentially pure and infinitely blissful. There are two types of karmic influx (skt. *āsrava*), either beneficial (which is caused by actions free of passions) or harmful (which is caused by actions carried out as a result of passions). Whereas the first kind of activity that is 'dry of passions' merely attracts the karmic matter, the latter – 'moistening' the soul with passions – causes it to actually stick to the soul, limiting or defiling it. "The activities of a person driven by passions cause long-term inflow (bondage) while the activities of a person free of passions cause instantaneous inflow (bondage)."⁴¹ Accordingly, it is only the unmeritorious karmic matter (*sāmparāyika karma*) that causes further rebirths. If the sediment surrounds the soul at the time of death, the soul will reincarnate in the circumstances appropriate to its *karma*. Once the *karma* has come into effect, it rejoins the undifferentiated collective from which it originally arose and where it remains until another pulsation draws it from there again. This concept of *karma* is hence an actual physical process that binds the soul to the material dimension.⁴² This differentiates the Jain *karma* theory from other cause and effect understandings of *karma* that are inclined to posit *karma* as a purely moral principle.

The dualism that is at the core of Jain *karmic* theory inevitably results in questions concerning the nature of the relationship of the living monad to the atomic material substance. Jains assert that the two substances are not reducible to one another nor to a third independent principle, yet they are not in complete opposition.⁴³ Chakravarti adds that *jīva* and *pudgala* are *sakriya dravyas*, meaning they can act as efficient causes.⁴⁴ "*Jīvas* and physical objects become *sakriya* or causal agents when determined by certain condition. The rest are not causally active. *Jīva* is active because of Karmic matter.

⁴⁰ H. von Glasenapp, *Jainism. An Indian Religion of Salvation*, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1999, 179.

⁴¹TAS, § 6.5.

⁴²The Jain karmic scheme is encapsulated in the list of categories of truth or so called *tattvas* of which Umāsvāmī mentions seven. "The categories of truth are: (1) souls [sentient entities], (2) non-sentient entities, (3) the inflow of karmic particles to the soul, (4) binding of the karmic particles to the soul, (5) stopping the inflow of karmic particles, (6) the falling away of the karmic particles, (7) liberation from worldly (karmic) bondage." TAS, § 1.4. Certain texts add two more, namely meritorious and unmeritorious *karmas*.

⁴³"These six Dravyas though mutually interpenetrating, and accommodating one another, and though getting mixed up in view of occupying the same space, yet they always maintain their identical nature without losing their respective qualities, general as well as special." (PAKS, § 7).

⁴⁴PAKS, 4.

Skandhas or physical bodies are active because of time.”⁴⁵ Taking into account the efficacy of both *jīva* and *pudgala* some Jain philosophers proposed that the changing accidental qualities of the two act as sort of auxiliary causes to each others’ modal modifications. In that sense soul and matter can indirectly interact.⁴⁶ This is a radical deviation from other schools of Indian philosophy that refused to accept any concrete relationship between soul and matter and therefore struggled in justifying the material bondage of the spiritual entity.⁴⁷

In accordance with the Jain karmic theory, the soteriological methodology that leads to the release of *karma* is likewise very physically oriented, i.e. the way of *tapas*, incorporating severe austerities and asceticism that aim at releasing the old *karma* and preventing the formation of the new. The ultimate objective of the arduous Jain path of purification is the attainment of complete extinguishment of *karma* which results in deliverance. “The elimination of all types of karma is liberation.”⁴⁸ The liberated state must primarily be distinguished from enlightenment or the realization of omniscience (skt. *kevala-jñāna*).

Jainism views enlightenment as the result of a process of self-cultivation in which an individual gradually progresses with the aid of a variety of religious practices from a state of inadequate perception of the world to the attainment of certain higher forms of knowledge such as the ability to be aware of other people’s mental processes until, with the elimination of all negative factors, there arises omniscient knowledge which is totally unique and unconditioned.⁴⁹

The Jain concept of omniscience has been a widely disputed topic on behalf of their philosophical and religious opponents as the notion implies knowledge of all infinite substances and their infinite modal modifications. The omniscience is reached by a gradual destruction of various types of *karmanas* which eventually leads to the attainment of right perception (skt. *samyak darśana*), right knowledge (skt. *samyak jñāna*) and right conduct (skt. *samyak cāritra*) as well as the elimination of all passions and emotions. An enlightened being or *kevalin* continues to exist and act in the world and is therefore called a *sayoga kevalin*, meaning an omniscient with activity. Before the biological death, a *kevalin* may enter a specific meditative state, namely *śukla-dhyāna* which terminates the activities of the body, speech and mind.

⁴⁵PAKS, § 98.

⁴⁶S.C. Jain, *Structure and Functions of Soul in Jainism*, Bharatiya Jnanpith: Delhi, 2006 [1978], 96-97. Jain philosophers have proposed a variety of answers to this dilemma. See also, 93-97.

⁴⁷N. Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, The Modern Art Press: Calcutta, 1951, 231.

⁴⁸TAS, § 10.3.

⁴⁹P. Dundas, *The Jains*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, 76.

This makes him an *ayoga kevalin* or a *kevalin* without activity. This state lasts merely a few moments which are followed by the souls' rise to the *siddha-loka*, the crescent shaped roof-top of the cosmos.⁵⁰ This happens because the soul is finally destitute of all *karmic* matter that had inhibited its natural upward movement. "When all karmic bondage is eliminated, the soul soars upwards to the border of cosmic space."⁵¹ Because of the loss of sedimentary matter, a cleansed monad is disembodied⁵² and disconnected from the material world.⁵³ As the soul transcends the bodily entity that had been bound within, it leaves behind all the activities that belonged to this non-spiritual dimension.⁵⁴ Besides, after attaining liberation, the *jīva* retains its individuality. As Chakravarti says, "Individuality and perfection are not incompatible."⁵⁵ The Jain tradition therefore refers to this liberated state 'on top of the world'⁵⁶ as a state of complete solitude, isolation, equanimity, wisdom and immobility. This is the final objective of every practicing Jain and the aspiration of the entire Jain soteriological system.

Jainism and Christian Gnosticism

The Jain understanding of the soul as a living substance confined by impure matter is echoed in contemporaneous early Christian ontology, specifically that of early Christian Gnosticism.⁵⁷ The word

⁵⁰The liberated soul does not go beyond the cosmic space into *aloka* as there is no medium of motion and therefore it is impossible for the soul to transgress the limits of the cosmos. Essentially there is nothing in a cosmic space except strong winds.

⁵¹TAS, § 10.5.

⁵²"So long as *jīvas* have embodied existence in the world of *samsāra*, attributes of colour etc., are present in them. The moment they liberate themselves from the *samsāric* bondage, these characteristics such as colour, etc., have absolutely no relation to them." (SS, §61)

⁵³As the liberated *jīva* is no longer bound by karmic matter, it technically becomes a non-causal substance or *niskriya*.

⁵⁴"Matter functions as the material cause of body, speech, mind and breath." (TAS, § 5.19)

⁵⁵PAKS, 23.

⁵⁶"When *Jīva* gets liberated from the bonds of Karma which are of different aspects of substance, duration, fertility, and extensity, he reaches the summit of the upper world..." (PAKS, § 73).

⁵⁷"Gnosticism' is the term given to several of the Christian streams that were to become known as 'heretical,' including those groups that were led by Basilides and Valentinus. Today it has become something of an umbrella term for a general dualistic movement that devalued the material world and laid a heavy emphasis on mystical knowledge." E.J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century. The Case of Tatian*, Routledge: London, New York, 2003, 17. The term is an anachronism and the 'Gnostic' branches of early Christianity did not refer to themselves as Gnostics: E.J. Hunt, 17. Since there was no fixed notion of orthodoxy during the times of the early

Gnosticism derives from a Greek word *gnosis*, meaning knowledge, primarily referring to a direct and intimate experience of the Divine. Therefore a *gnostikos* is one who possesses such knowledge. Building on a strictly dualistic doctrinal foundation,⁵⁸ Gnosticism similarly to Jainism seeks for a spiritual element in human beings (*pneuma*)⁵⁹ that transcends the subordinate material realm, which imprisons it. Both traditions are therefore other-worldly oriented and believe the spiritual substance to be trapped in the physical world which is primarily characterized negatively.

However, unlike Gnosticism Jainism does not seek the initial origin of the soul's entrapment and implies that its journey through innumerable births is without instigation, just like a golden ore has been forever embedded in the rock and is only yet to be unearthed. What is more, Jainism proposes that it is the soul's own activities that cause karmic matter to adhere to the spiritual living substance. Conversely, Gnosticism introduces a Creator of the material world who is inherently malevolent and in diametrical opposition to the Ultimate Divine Principle that is inherently benevolent. The Creator is clearly defined as the source of evil in the world. Despite the fact therefore that the Ultimate Divine Principle is considered to be the only real God, the Gnostics do not view the world to be the result of His own endeavours. Consequently, Gnosticism not only identifies the Creator to be the cause of imperfection in the world but as a result establishes the entire material world to be evil. Accordingly, all religious efforts of believers are aimed at transgressing the physical realm.

Hence, unlike Jainism the Gnostic doctrine operates within a triadic system of relationships between man, God and the world. Man is involved in an antagonistic relationship with the empirical world he lives in, a facet most similar to the Jain understanding of the soul's bondage. Furthermore there is a linkage between man and the Divine Being or God, an element that Jainism excludes. The Christian concept of God, be it Patristic or Gnostic, is something entirely alien to the Jain tradition. As has been pointed out, gods in Jainism occupy

Christian Church, the concept of Gnosticism as heresy must be used with caution: E.J. Hunt, 13. Currently, the predominating theories are in support of a pre-Christian origin of Gnosticism.

⁵⁸Several other religious traditions share a similar background that highlights the entrapment of the soul within the fetters of matter, one of the more prominent ones being Manichaeism. However, due to the constraints of space only the Gnostic tradition will be briefly considered here.

⁵⁹In Gnosticism only the spiritual aspect of human nature transcends the worldly realm whereas the *psyche*, i.e. his mental/psychical aspect remains inherently worldly.

the cosmic realm above humans but are just like them subjected to birth and death. They will therefore inevitably undergo a fall and effectively this descension is an indispensable prerequisite for their attainment of liberation that can only occur in a human form. The only subjects free from the cycle of rebirths within the Jain cosmic system are liberated souls which are fundamentally different from the Christian notion of God, since they are not only many but have all existed as human beings in their last lifetime. However, in the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus preaches that the Divine Being is not superior to humans. Quite the contrary, man is capable of becoming equal to Jesus. "He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."⁶⁰ Rather than establishing himself as an object of worship, Jesus therefore showed the path to the divine inside every human being through which one can be reunited with the Divine Principle. A Gnostic therefore, like a Jain, does not look upward but within and only thus can one find the path from spatial-temporality to eternity or better realize that one has always already been engaged in eternity. Moreover, as a teacher directly showing the path to transcend the material existence, Jesus is much like the Jain ford-makers or *tirthankaras*.

Lastly, there remains a crucial discrepancy between the two traditions in how each one of them comprehends the relationships between humans and other life forms in the cosmos. According to Jainism, objectification is detrimental to the soul's progress towards salvation, so the main focus of the soul is the realization of its inner nature and the attainment of perfect self-knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of all of its modal modifications. However, the empirical soul's apprehension of the life around it is specifically characterized. Rough objectification is substituted by a softer element, i.e. a clear recognition of the salvific potential of not merely every human but every living being.⁶¹ This aspect of their doctrine has an immense effect on one's place in one's surroundings as it softens the sharp division between humans and nature found in Gnosticism which has rather nihilistic implications. The Jain view of the universe brings humans and the environment they are situated in closer together. "If you feel every soul is autonomous you will never trample on its right

⁶⁰W.C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, Vol. I, The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 13.

⁶¹However, it must be pointed out that humans still remain the only beings that are capable of attaining enlightenment throughout their life. Therefore being born in the human form is most valuable.

to live.”⁶² This sheds new light on the Jain path to salvation and introduces the important aspect of interdependence into the Jain theory of the soul. “The Jaina philosophy...establishes harmony between religious and the scientific, between the spiritual and the physical, and between personal *independence* and social, economic and ecological *interdependence*.”⁶³ To conclude, according to Jainism the aim of an individual soul is not merely its autonomous soteriological endeavour, but it is also imperative for a soul to weave a web of ethical relations with other beings in its environment. In the words of Ūmasvāmī: “Souls render service to one another.”⁶⁴

⁶²N. Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, xvii.

⁶³N. Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, xix. “...realms of illusions, concepts and delusions represent a vital prerequisite in overcoming barriers and eliminating aberrations and fetters on the path of seeking the human essence and one’s place in the world.” M. Milcinski, *Strategije osvobajanja*, Sophia: Ljubljana, 2006, 3.

⁶⁴TAS, § 5.21.