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Multispecies Solidarity and Nonviolence

in Jain Practices of *Unselfing*

Contemporary political debates diverge on whether multispecies solidarity can occur *with* or only *on behalf* of more-than-human beings. The South Asian concept of nonviolence (*ahimsā*), notably developed in the Jain tradition, challenges this either/or approach. Jain cosmology, emphasizing universal sentience with karmic difference, offers a foundation for solidarity *with* other beings. Its account of reciprocal suffering and responses of carefulness and compassion provide a foundation for solidarity *on behalf* of other beings. Moreover, the Jain view provides a third alternative—solidarity *as* other beings—through practices of identity multiplication and cosmic merger missing in political accounts that presume a subject-centric “I think” as their onto-epistemic ground. Jain accounts of rebirth memory and fasting unto death provide modes of *unselfing* and egoic *unknowing* capable of inspiring new practices toward multispecies solidarity. Importantly, the Jain view maintains a clear sense of anthropocentric privilege, paradoxically occurring and reaching full expression only through multispecies nonviolence.

Feb. 19, 2025
4:00 pm CT

Herzstein Hall
Room 210

and via
ZOOM

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