

SACP 2024 Annual Meeting

Presentation Abstracts

Afaki Abdul Rahim, University of Karachi

“Fourfold Journey of the Unshackled Caveman and Asfār Arba‘ah of the Mystic Philosopher: The Plato-Şadrā Metaphysical Affinity”

This paper addresses the question of whether or not the implicit meaning of journey as concealed in Plato’s Cave-Narrative as expounded in The Republic converges with the notion of safar as construed by Şadrā in Asfār. The Plato-Şadrā convergence in terms of the meaning of journey is based upon their notion of transcendence as attached with the notion of truth. Both of our philosophers share the belief that the transcendental rise of the human self is to make the self accomplish the task of getting to the truth. And both are of the view that this transcendental rise, whether at the semiotic or semantic level of its hermeneutic plausibility, necessarily takes the form of journey. Şadrā explicitly states how a mystic philosopher is to accomplish the task of seeking the truth transcendently through four journeys namely (1) ‘from the creature to the truth,’ (2) ‘in the truth with the truth,’ (3) ‘from the truth back to the creature with the truth’ and (4) ‘in the creature with the truth.’ But in case of Plato’s cave-narrative the transcendental seeking of the truth of the unshackled caveman is not so explicitly described rather one has to deliberate to give it the form of a fourfold journey while interpreting how the caveman gets to the truth through the four steps of his entire movement. In this study I argue how Plato’s semiotics concerning the cave-narrative is pertinent to Şadrā’s semantics of Asfār in the nexus of metaphysical affinity one may find between their philosophical systems.

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Presentation Abstracts

Jemal Hussein Abdulle, Sichuan University, China

“CONFUCIANISM AND AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: Li 礼 (RITUAL PROPRIETY) AND SAFUU (MORAL VALUES) IN FOCUS”

This article aims to explore the relationship between Confucianism and African Philosophy, with a focus on the Oromo people of Ethiopia. The Oromo, an important African ethnic group, possess their own distinct cultural, linguistic, and philosophical perspectives that share similarities with Confucianism. However, there is a lack of substantial literature exploring the comparative aspects of Chinese and African philosophies, including the examination of Confucianism and Oromo philosophy. Thus, the primary goal of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of Confucianism and Oromo philosophy, specifically examining the concepts of Li 礼 (Ritual Propriety) and Safuu (Moral Values). Upon entering a subway station in China, one can observe a message on the train walls urging passengers to offer their seats to seniors, children, pregnant women, the sick, and the disabled. This request for cooperation and maintaining social balance reflects the application of Li 礼 (ritual propriety). According to Roger Ames and Rosemont (1998), Li guides individuals on where to be, when to act, what to do, how to act, and when to act, essentially directing both players and audience members. Li serves as a social grammar, fostering social equilibrium from grassroots to top political leaders. In order to fulfill the mission of Li, there is a family-based system of thought that fills all aspects of life, strengthening relational bonds and promoting cooperation. One can witness that most of Chinese people going back to their family during holiday especially on Chinese New Year. Similarly, the Oromo people in Ethiopia uphold Safuu, an essential moral value that emphasizes maintaining social balance by respecting human beings and other creatures that coexist. This concept aligns with the Chinese system of Li. The article will discuss Li and Safuu separately, followed by a comparison between the two. The concluding remarks will tie the findings together.

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Presentation Abstracts

Anna Aklan, Eotvos Lorand University, Department of Indology

“Niścitam. Various Vedāntin Interpretations of the 2nd Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā.”

The main aim of the paper is to understand the dynamics of tradition and continuation versus renewal and invention within the Vedānta school through a comparison of various commentaries written on the same text. “Yac chreyaḥ syān, niścitam brūhi tan me” (BhG II. 7) - “Tell me for certain which way the better is” begs Arjuna to Kṛṣṇa in his dilemma in the beginning of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā (BhG), and the Lord commences his teachings. The present paper compares various interpretations given by four major Vedāntin philosophers to BhG 2.: the Advaitin Śaṅkara’s Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya, the Viśiṣṭādvaitin Rāmānuja’s commentary of the same title; the Aupādhika Bhedābheda representative Bhāskara’s Bhagavad Āśaya Anusaraṇa Bhāṣya, and the Dvaita Madhva’s Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya and Tātparya Nirṇaya. Although all authors belong to the Vedānta tradition, they have fundamental differences in their views, and apropos of Kṛṣṇa’s revelations, each of them expounds the tenets of their own saṃpradāyas. Although the god’s words were intended to be “certain,” the exegetes interpreted them in radically diverging ways to explain their own soteriological and metaphysical doctrines, ranging from absolute monism (Śaṅkara) to strict dualism (Madhva), with two “combined” stances in between (Rāmānuja and Bhāskara), promoting various “best,” in some cases, “sole” ways to liberation: knowledge (jñāna), devotion (bhakti), or action (karma). The paper is a continuation of that delivered at the East-West Philosophers’s Conference in May 2024. While that one gave an introduction to the main tenets of the abovementioned schools and an outline of their interpretations of the 2nd chapter, the present paper is textually oriented, offers close reading of relevant passages, and discusses philosophical and philological nuances which yield to so diverging explanations of the same text.

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Presentation Abstracts

Ivan Andrijanić, Department of Asian Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb University

“The Nature of Vedāntic Interpretation of Upaniṣadic Texts”

The philosophical school of Vedānta is traditionally considered one of the six systems (darśanas) of Brahmanical philosophy in Indian doxography. At its core, Vedānta is based on the exegesis of the older Upaniṣads, making it fundamentally an exegetical and hermeneutic system (if we view exegesis as a practice of interpretation and hermeneutics as the broader philosophy and methodology of interpretation). In this presentation, I aim to explain the nature and principles of Vedāntic interpretation of the Upaniṣads through the framework of the opposition between finalist and operationalist interpretation as established by Tsvetan Todorov in *Symbolisme et interprétation*. A comparable dichotomy of approaches to interpretation has also been posited by other authors, such as Gajo Peleš (“monological” and “dialogical” interpretation) and H.G. Gadamer (“integrationist” and “reconstructive” interpretation). Simplistically speaking, Todorov asserted that in finalist interpretation, the commented text and some external impetus for interpretation represent two semantic values that result in an outcome predetermined and conditioned by that external impetus, much like Alexandrian allegoresis driven by Christian doctrine; the result of the interpretation must necessarily align with Christian teachings. In the operational approach to interpretation, the outcome is not predetermined and is the result of an analytical process, as seen in philology. Here, I would analyse Vedānta as an operational type of interpretation in which the subject of interpretation, the Upaniṣads, is subjected to sophisticated exegetical procedures to achieve the predetermined result: the principle of coherence (skt. samanvaya) of Upaniṣadic teachings. These teachings, however, are quite heterogeneous, as the Upaniṣadic texts developed over a long period across various Vedic schools. The outcome of the interpretation, namely the homogeneity of Upaniṣadic teachings on the first principle, brahman, is predetermined, as in Todorov’s operational interpretation. However, what I will argue, in addition to outlining the Vedāntic methods and principles of establishing the philosophical coherence of the Upaniṣads, is that the result is anything but dogmatic. In defending the teachings of the Upaniṣads against probable Buddhist and other heterodox non-Brahmanical critiques for incoherence, Vedāntic interpreters developed a rational and refined system characterized by ingenuity and creativity.

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Presentation Abstracts

Geoff Ashton, University of San Francisco

“The Concept of Nature in early Indian Philosophy: A Comparative Study of Buddhist ‘Dharma’ and Sāṃkhya ‘Prakṛti’”

Sāṃkhya is typically included amongst the orthodox schools (darśanas). And throughout its history—which some scholars ground in the early Upaniṣads—it has frequently been read through its likeness to Vedānta (or at least, Vedāntic themes). However, there is much to suggest that Sāṃkhya is rather heterodox: in its attitude toward Vedic scripture and Brahmanism, its philosophical differences with Vedānta, and also its striking likeness to anti-Vedic darśanas. This paper examines Sāṃkhya’s curious place in-between the orthodox and heterodox camps of classical Indian philosophy. It explores this by considering parallels and juxtapositions between Sāṃkhya and Buddhist philosophies, specifically, their philosophies of nature (prakṛti and dharma, respectively). From this, the paper suggests ways in which Sāṃkhya offers a sophisticated—and quite possibly, heterodox—philosophy of nature that neither Vedānta nor Buddhism can appreciate.

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Presentation Abstracts

Emma Lavinia Bon, Università del Piemonte Orientale

“The Fold of the Whole. David Bohm’s Implicate Order in the light of Kashmir Shaivism’s Concept of Consciousness”

In his essay *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, physicist David Bohm develops an ontological view that seeks to overcome the mechanistic model and classical dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, consciousness and matter. The mechanistic order, he states, consists of entities external to each other, existing independently in different areas of space and time. To this order, which he calls the explicate or unfolded order, Bohm replaces an implicate or enfolded order, in which “everything is enfolded into everything”. Employing the conceptual polarity of *im-plicatio* and *ex-plicatio* – the two “modes” of *plicare* (to fold) – which in Western metaphysics has been employed by Cusanus and more recently, through a reference to Leibniz’s monadology, by Gilles Deleuze, Bohm conceives of implicate order as the common ground for both consciousness and matter. This wholeness is conceived as a flux: a “holomovement” in which the implicate order enfolds in different ways, thus producing the manifest universe. The Cartesian conception of *res cogitans* as incompatible with empirical extension suggests, for Bohm, that consciousness itself must have the structure of the implicate order. This conception of consciousness as an implicate order unfolding dynamically in multiple forms finds an intriguing parallel with Kashmir Shaivism’s conception of Absolute Consciousness as a universal movement of contraction (*nimeṣa*) and expansion (*unmeṣa*). As stated in the *Spandakārikā*, the outflow of the manifest and explicate qualities (*guṇa*) is grounded in the undivided, pulsating flux of one and the same Consciousness whose activity is, precisely, that of a folding and unfolding. The whole universe springs from the movement of a universal vibration – *sāmānyaspanda*, or Bohm’s holomovement – without separating from it. A comparison between the two perspectives – without ignoring the significant differences – can help overcome the dualisms between matter and consciousness, object and subject, the manifest and the non-manifest, as well as the fragmentation of knowledge that tends to separate science and philosophy.

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Presentation Abstracts

Ivana Buljan, University of Zagreb

“Attuning one's ears“ or becoming “the single individual“? Kierkegaard and Confucius on the individual and self-cultivation”

In my presentation, I will compare the ideas of Kierkegaard, a 19th-century Danish philosopher, and Confucius, a 5th-century B.C. Chinese Master, on the topic of the individual and self-cultivation. Specifically, I will explore the relationship between individuality and relationality, self and other, abstractness and concreteness, and real and hypothetical in their respective works. Despite their different backgrounds, I argue that their starting points, motivations, and philosophical insights share many similarities. Additionally, I will highlight how their differing understanding of the individual can be useful in contemporary discussions on the concept of self.

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Presentation Abstracts

Sung-Hwan Cho, Wonkwang University

“Between Political Outrage and Religious Reverence (gyeong 敬), Learning from Donghak Peasant Revolution (1894)”

In 1894, the Donghak Peasant Revolution erupted in Jeolla Province, Korea, in response to the exploitation by corrupt officials. Initially, it was a religious movement focused on spiritual practice rather than political upheaval. However, the deep-seated resentment among common peasants propelled it into a full-scale revolution. This uprising had a philosophical foundation that transformed peasant resentment into a form of religious reverence, honoring both humans and nonhumans as heavenly or divine beings. Jeon Bongjun inspired his peasant troops to embody this reverence and urged them "to win without killing if possible." Despite its failure due to the intervention of the Japanese army, the spirit of the Donghak Peasant Revolution endured in Korean history, embodied by the minjung (the oppressed), and resonating in movements such as the peaceful Candlelight Movement of 2016.

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Presentation Abstracts

Dobin CHOI, Leiden University

“Critical Investigations on Human Nature of Ito Jinsai and Dasan Jeong Yak-yong”

I examine the understanding of human nature by Ito Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, 1627–1705) and Dasan Jeong Yak-yong (茶山 丁若鏞, 1762–1836). Critically investigating the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian account of human nature as Principle (li 理), both philosophers share a scholarly aim of restoring the original thoughts of ancient Confucianism. Ito Jinsai, who pursued kogigaku (古義學), “the learning of ancient Confucian meanings,” argues that human nature is represented by “physical disposition (kishitsu 氣質),” as he comments in Gomojigi (孔孟字義 (1683)) by stating, “Mencius thus likened the goodness of human nature to water’s physical tendency to flow downward.” This perspective can substantiate the association between the goodness of human nature and sentiments without relying on metaphysical assumptions. However, considering individuals’ different actualizations of physical dispositions, this view demands a loosening of Mengzi’s general validation of the goodness of human nature to some extent. In contrast, renowned as the sole philosopher in Joseon Korea who openly discussed the philosophical views of Ito Jinsai and other Japanese Confucian scholars, Dasan similarly conducts critical investigations of Neo-Confucian metaphysical approaches to restore “the learning by Zhu-Si waters (洙泗學),” where Confucius taught his disciples. Dasan argues that human nature is understood through giho (嗜好)—taste sentiments and desires—rather than as Principle in his Maengjayouyi (Brief Commentaries on the Mengzi (孟子要義 1814)). Through a comparative examination of both philosophers’ accounts of human nature, I argue that Dasan develops Ito Jinsai’s material account of human-nature-as-physical disposition to propose an empirical account of human-nature-as-psychophysical taste. This perspective can simultaneously validate both identical moral potential and sentimental variations of individuals.

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Presentation Abstracts

Aaron Creller, University of North Florida

“Is a Pluralism that is Plural an Inauthentic Pluralism?: A (Possible) Daoist Critique of Pluralism”

This paper seeks to construct an argument from Lao-Zhuang Daoist sources to undermine pluralism. It begins by articulating a few examples of pluralism, viz. juridical pluralism in the Islamic Fiqh tradition and the ontological pluralism within the Jainist *anekānta-vāda* tradition. Within Fiqh, Muslim jurors within different schools acknowledge the validity of each other’s juridical interpretations, generating a pluralistic account of a real but not-directly knowable Shari’ah, or God’s law. The Jainist allegory of the blind men and the elephant illustrates the pluralism of *anekānta-vāda*, in which different philosophical schools with apparently mutually exclusive arguments are maintained as incomplete truths about the world. After using these to construct a tentative definition of pluralism, I offer an argument using anti-naming resources within Daoist sources to show why pluralism as a method of generating methodological tolerance leads to inconsistencies associated with naming things. Finally, I contrast this Daoist argument against pluralism with a dogmatic argument against pluralism grounded in absolute realism. The absolute realist critique argues that the correspondence between reality and experience is sufficient to eliminate the need for pluralism. Any pluralist claim, according to this view, will backslide into relativism. I conclude by articulating how the Daoist argument differs and consider the implications as they related to grounding pluralism in a shared but imperfectly known world.

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Presentation Abstracts

Michael Dufresne, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

“Purity and Color: On Wang Guowei’s Theory of Jìngjiè 境界”

This paper offers a theoretical analysis of the concept of jìngjiè 境界 (lit. “realm” or “world”) as it appears in Remarks on Lyrics from the Human World (Rénjiān cíhuà 人間詞話), a work of poetic criticism by the late Qing/early Republican scholar Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927). Compared to his other theories, much research has been done on Wang’s concept of jìngjiè, especially in Chinese but also in English. That said, the aim of this paper is not to reiterate what has already been said, but to offer a novel understanding of this theory based on Wang’s own words, as well as those of the theorists who inspired him. Specifically, this paper seeks to defend the following claim: jìngjiè is a concept in the lineage of Chinese poetics that expands the theories of traditional critics like Shao Yong, Yan Yu and Wang Shizhen by making space for subjectivity to stand alongside objectivity (i.e., detachment and disinterest) as a legitimate poetic/aesthetic value. To the extent that Wang makes use of Western aesthetic ideas, jìngjiè can also be understood as an attempt to reconcile the Kantian-Schopenhauerian emphasis on disinterested contemplation with Nietzsche’s celebration of unbridled passion. Although Wang considers objectivity and subjectivity to be equally valid as aesthetic values, he undoubtedly prioritizes the latter in his Remark on Lyrics, allying it with the relatively underappreciated genre of traditional lyric poetry (cí 詞). In this respect, jìngjiè may be understood as an effort to add “color” (cǎi 彩) to a poetic/aesthetic tradition otherwise dominated by “purity” (qīng 清).

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Presentation Abstracts

MIHAI-IONUT FAT, Independent (former PhD, Peking University)

“Yielding in Equanimity towards Bliss: A comparative approach to the concepts found in Zhuangzi’s Inner Chapters, Buddhist Pali discourses of Sutta Nipāta and the Stoic discourses of Epictetus”

Contemplative philosophical traditions like Taoism, Buddhism and Stoicism would often emphasize “equanimity” as a premise for attaining the state of a “blissful” human existence. Both concepts appear as central to the later developments of these schools and at the core of their practical approach towards reality in adopting an attitude concerning worldly life. The related scholarship has rarely paid attention to the earlier development stages of this relationship, “equanimity” and “bliss” being often treated separately and the function of “yielding” to a higher governing principle being overlooked. The present study employs the most relevant portions of the earliest textual material, belonging to the above mentioned traditions, in which the occurrence of the two concepts can be found, aiming to comparatively explore the relationship between them and the way in which the idea of yielding to a governing principle provides a new understanding of the logic behind this relation. To this scope, the arguments presented are relying upon seminal texts like Zhuangzi’s Inner Chapters, Buddhist Pali discourses contained in Sutta Nipāta and the Stoic discourses of Epictetus, as a foundation for the research. The results of this research have shown that “equanimity”(changxin 常心, uppekhā, ἀταραξία) and “bliss”(zixi 自喜, sukha, εὐδαιμονία), in their articulated expressions, formulated according to each philosophical system, are actually inextricably related to each other and have played a major role within each current of thought, since the beginning of their evolution, forming a common feature for seemingly different contemplative traditions.

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Presentation Abstracts

Raquel Ferrández Formoso, University Institute of Distance Education, Madrid

“Death is also a dream. Perception and intersubjectivity in the Yogavāsiṣṭha and the plays of Calderón de la Barca”

The mind is a corpse that kills and gives life, a flash (churita) of the power of consciousness (cit-śakti) creator and destructor of universes, temporalities and realities. The Mokṣopāya (10th CE), better known as Yogavāsiṣṭha, invites us to question all our ontological beliefs through extraordinary stories, narrated by Vasiṣṭha to his disciple Rāma. Reading this voluminous Sanskrit text in the light of one of the most famous plays of Spanish Golden Age theater, Life is a Dream by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, this presentation would like to appease the existential anguish of Segismundo, who does not know whether he is asleep or awake and suffers from the ephemeral nature of the world's values. If he were to become a disciple of Vasiṣṭha, this Christian prince would immediately abandon his worries and learn that the answer to all his concerns is only in his consciousness (cit-mātra).

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Presentation Abstracts

Melchor John Francisco, Independent Scholar

“Intra-Active Agential Cuts and the Materialization of the 1986 People Power Revolution as an Entangled Socio-Technical Phenomenon”

This paper presents an initial interdisciplinary analysis of the 1986 People Power Revolution in the Philippines as a mechanical cyborg assemblage, materializing the historical boundaries and properties of ideological aspirations, featuring the sociological navigation of techno-human inseparability, being transformed by the ontological choreographies. Classic Revolution is seen as a resistance against the existing power structures, emphasizing the spirit of individuals, calling for social reforms, and radicalizing the anthropocentric recreation of democratic order. But, at times, the conventional genetically grounded framework of revolution as a progenitor of resistance motion signals the pathway of complex systems, bridging the point of networks that seek to lighten the revolutionary situation. Drawing from Karen Barad’s Agential Realism, the analytic frame of construction transitions from spatiotemporal coordination of revolution to heterogeneous engineering networks, attempting to demystify an array of materials, e.g., lived bodies: social agents, and techniques, e.g., technological apparatuses: how material-discursive practices enabled the materialization of autonomy and ideology against Marcos dictatorship. This employs a diffractive methodology that closely examines insights from various sources through one another. A comprehensive corpus of archival records, oral reports, and audiovisual materials will be collected and validated through the iterative process of theorization, mapping the topology representing diverse perspectives and elements of actants involved. In dealing with the determination of power differentials, the relational phenomenon focuses on the symmetrical analysis of the entanglement of intra-actions scale, where the material networks such as political leaders and protesters are seen as human actants, whereas, the religious movements, public spaces, and communication technologies are depicted as non-human actants, which both share internal meaning systems, i.e., activation of signals and technological artifacts, showing bodies of forces (barricades or shields, claps or chants, Radio Veritas, media portrayals) that define the 1986 People Power Revolution in the Philippines.

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Presentation Abstracts

Julius Geissler, University of Oxford

“Conceptual Rationality and Skilful Performance in the Zhuangzi”

Among the numerous stories and fables that constitute the early Chinese text known as the Zhuāngzǐ 莊子, many present human beings with extraordinary skills and capabilities, celebrating their effortless and elegant responsiveness to their environment. Such skillful performance is often contrasted with the clumsy attempts at doctrinal and propositional knowledge that are repeatedly mocked and criticized in the Zhuāngzǐ corpus. Against the background of the text’s skepticism regarding language, discursive reason, and argumentation, the skillful and fully cultivated person is often portrayed as in no way relying on her rational or conceptual capacities – call this the anti-conceptualist reading (ACR). This paper aims (i) to push back against ACR by arguing that there are good philosophical and textual reasons to make space for conceptual rationality in an interpretation of skill in the Zhuāngzǐ, and (ii) to develop an account of such conceptual understanding through textual exegesis. In Section 1, I introduce the key characteristics of skillful perception and agency and how ACR interprets these. While I concur with the view that Zhuāngzǐ is skeptical of conscious propositional deliberation and argumentation, I argue against inferring that conceptuality and rationality as such are absent from the agent’s skillful performance in Section 2. I posit that skillful performance constitutes a distinctive achievement of the practical intellect, which ACR struggles to account for. I argue that a theory of Zhuangzian skill can preserve the non-inferential character of the immersed agent’s skillful perception while adequately accommodating its status as an epistemic achievement by rejecting a narrow view of conceptual rationality as exclusively connected to the deliberative activity of a detached subject. Section 3 develops an account of what such non-propositionally articulated conceptual understanding amounts to by means of close textual analysis of the notion of lǐ 理 (“pattern”), which I identify as a lexical candidate to anchor an account of conceptual structuring of the skillful person’s understanding. I argue that lǐ are best understood as response-dependent properties whose realization depends on human sensibility and conceptual capacities. The text indicates that human beings’ conceptual capacities do not primarily fulfill a mediative or representational function but rather constitute a mode of practical orientation. Humans’ grasp of lǐ can be continually improved and cultivated through the kinds of activity that the text illustrates in the skill stories. This account, I propose, furthers our understanding of Zhuāngzǐ’s views of the good life, suggesting that Zhuāngzǐ put forward a sophisticated ethos of growth.

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Presentation Abstracts

Frédéric Girard, The French School of the Far East, Paris

“Critical Interpretation of Mind-Only by Dōgen”

Dōgen criticizes Chinese Buddhism which adopted the «mind» yixin 一心 as the «unique reality», yixin fajie 一眞法界, central concepts of the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna, Dasheng qixinlun (Dq) and its original enlightenment doctrine, without respect for the vacuity which expresses the continual evolution and movement of things. In this respect, Dōgen interprets the famous formula of the Avatamsakasūtra, «The triple world is only mind» in his own way but faithfully to the meaning of the original text. His interpretation differs on the fact that the triple world is not the world of desire, sensible or suprasensible, as the prevalent tradition of Genshin did, but is that of the mind, the Buddha and the sensible beings states (and even others states as they exist). This view of Dōgen is qualified as a phenomenism and is sometimes assimilated to a mere adoption of the original enlightenment conception of the Dq. Nonetheless, is it not necessary to take in consideration the Chan conception, for instance of Mazu (709–788), that the perception of objects is an opportunity to manifest the Buddha nature that things carry within themselves and that everyone carries within themselves? The mind is not the mind in itself but the mind of something. Seeing things allows to see in oneself its nature. The cognitive activity of perception and conception is that of a Buddha nature which reveals the nature of each being simultaneously. Man does not see the Buddha-nature by scrutinizing in oneself, but it is by perceiving an object, a flower, that he sees oneself, and the Buddha-nature of the flower and oneself. This phenomenism goes beyond the original enlightenment of Dq, for Dōgen has experimented the Chan apprehension of things through his Chinese experience.

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Presentation Abstracts

David Grant, Palacky University Olomouc

“Body and Expression: Understanding Language with Nishida Kitarō and Max Müller”

This paper attempts to examine several texts by Nishida Kitarō in which he explicitly expounds on the nature of language, and to provide an analysis of several recurring themes in his rendition. The relationship of Nishida’s thought to the notion of language is an interesting one. In his thinking, he attempted to provide a philosophical articulation to that which goes beyond the confines of human intellect, i.e., which precedes judgements and meaning. Thus, on the one hand, Nishida did not directly focus on the nature of language to a great extent as his interest lied in the realm lying beyond it. On the other hand, by placing it in his overall philosophical framework he was able to provide a certain understanding of its nature. What is more, together with his growing interest in what he termed historical world (rekishiteki sekai), Nishida had to tackle the questions concerning the nature of language as he had to philosophically account for relationship between many individuals. In this paper I will attempt to interpret Nishida’s explicit comments on the nature of language, on the background of several of his concepts related to it, especially expression (hyōgen) and body (shintai). The central aim of the paper is to examine Nishida’s references to the thought of Max Müller and his notion of the language as the “body of thought”.

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Presentation Abstracts

Stephen Harris, Leiden University

“Virtue as a Cross-Cultural Category: Śāntideva and the Virtue of Patience (kṣānti)”

This talk draws on the characterization of the virtue of patience (kṣānti) by the 8th century CE Madhyamaka philosopher, Śāntideva, to argue for the cross-cultural applicability of the category of virtue theory to Buddhist ethical thought. I begin by responding to two objections to using the concept of virtue to engage with Buddhist thinkers. First, I consider the concern that Buddhist metaphysical commitments to selflessness and radical impermanence entail they cannot be understood as developing a rich account of virtuous character. In response, I argue that the Abhidharma Buddhist account of reliably repeating casually connected mental states provides a sufficient metaphysical basis for theorizing conventionally existing virtuous habitual dispositions, for authors such as Śāntideva. Second, I consider the objection that Śāntideva’s thought is best understood as a consequentialism, committed to the impersonal maximization of happiness. Such characterizations, however, are controversial, and risk imposing foreign commitments on Śāntideva’s ethical thought. Moreover, consequentialist theories can also give an important role to virtue; therefore, we need not settle the question of whether Śāntideva is a consequentialist to engage with his conception of virtue. Instead, I argue that we can engage more naturally with Buddhist moral philosophers by using the broader, more inclusive category of virtue theory, as characterized by Julia Driver. For Driver, a virtue theory is any systematic account of the virtues and their role in moral life. Significantly, any moral theory may develop a virtue theory; for instance, a universal consequentialist might hold that virtues are those qualities that help the agent maximize good consequences, and a deontologist can theorize the importance of virtue in performing one’s duty or following the relevant rules. Using this concept, therefore, allows us to consider the insights of Buddhist thinkers like Śāntideva without situating them in relation to ongoing debates as to whether consequentialists, deontologists or virtue ethicists provide the most adequate theory of right action. In illustrating these points, the talk takes as its case study Śāntideva’s understanding of the virtue of patience, the disposition to remain mentally tranquil in times of difficulty. I show how Śāntideva develops patience to benefit its possessor, by eliminating anger, which he argues always damages its possessor, as well as by enabling the virtuous person to endure any amount of physical pain without mental suffering. The refinement of desire is also central to Śāntideva’s account of patience, given that he claims that anger can only be fully overcome when selfish desires have been transformed into compassion for all beings.

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Presentation Abstracts

Li He, Xiamen University & University of Munich

“Explanatory Confucian Perfectionism: Harmonizing Modern Liberalism with Confucian Values”

This article explores the feasibility of political Confucian perfectionism in modern East Asian societies, emphasizing its harmonization with widely accepted liberal political values. Despite Confucianism’s historical socio-political influence, contemporary East Asia increasingly embraces non-Confucian liberal values, challenging Confucianism’s relevance. This study addresses how a reformed Confucianism can adapt while retaining its core identity and defends the stance of political Confucian perfectionism. The discussion begins by outlining four normative stances of Confucian perfectionism: political Confucian perfectionism, political Confucian anti-perfectionism, comprehensive Confucian perfectionism, and comprehensive Confucian anti-perfectionism. It critiques Sungmoon Kim’s assertion that only comprehensive Confucian perfectionism is viable, proposing instead a new form called Explanatory Confucian Perfectionism. This approach integrates Confucian values with political neutrality, maintaining civic virtue independence. The article concludes that political Confucian perfectionism is achievable, aligning Confucian moral values with modern political frameworks without compromising Confucian intelligibility. By offering a Confucian explanatory theory of shared moral and political values, it demonstrates that political Confucian perfectionism can coexist with political values prevalent in contemporary East Asian societies. This integration ensures both philosophical coherence and practical applicability, presenting a viable path for modern Confucian political philosophy.

SACP 2024 Annual Meeting

Presentation Abstracts

Steven Heine, Florida International University

““The Shadow of the Whip””: Memento Mori in Dōgen’s 12 Fascicles Collection”

This paper offers a reexamination and reevaluation of the philosophical meaning and significance of Dōgen’s 道元 (1200-1253) last text that was left unfinished shortly before he died and was lost for centuries after that. The main message of the work concerns the inviolability of karmic causality (inga 因果) and the need to offer sincere repentance (zange 懺悔) for offenses committed. For various reasons, I refer to the final text as the 12 Fascicles Collection (Jūnikanbon-shū 十二卷本集) instead of using the customary moniker of the “12-fascicle Shōbōgenzō” (Jūnikanbon Shōbōgenzō 十二卷本正法眼藏), which implies it is one of several versions of Dōgen’s masterwork. The title of this paper, drawn from a passage in the “Shime (Four Horses)” fascicle of the Collection, highlights that a true Buddhist practitioner learns to respond to an awareness of the imminence of finitude and mortality like a proverbial splendid horse that spontaneously “races off upon seeing the shadow of the whip” (mi ben’ei nigyō 見鞭影而行). This image suggests the steed does not suffer the rider’s reprimands or, to put it another way, a true aspirant need not be prodded to obey the law of causality because he knows how to conduct himself in a principled way in every circumstance. The 12-Fascicles Collection should also be seen as the result of Dōgen’s effort to curate the legacy of his general instructional outlook by rewriting or recasting some of his earlier essays and themes while crafting a timeless primer of basic Buddhist tenets. Its memento mori approach has a resonance with Kamakura-period deathbed practices and morality tales (setsuwa bungaku 說話文学).

SACP 2024 Annual Meeting

Presentation Abstracts

Peter Hershock, East-West Center

“CONSCIOUSNESS DIGITALLY EXTENDED: AN EVOLUTIONARY AND ETHICAL FRONTIER”

Artificial intelligence and the digital transformation are widely regarded by techno-optimists as driving a 4th Industrial Revolution that will set humanity on a glidepath into utopian futures in which choice becomes utterly frictionless. Through a contemporary interpretation of Mahayana Buddhist conceptions of interdependence, karma, and consciousness, I will argue that matters are not so simple. Artificial intelligence and the digital transformation are vastly expanding experiential freedoms-of-choice, and intelligent technology does have transformative problem-solving potentials. But intelligent technology is also placing at risk our capacities to pursue true freedom-of-attention and freedom-of-intention, without which there can be no relationally enacted pathways to liberation. During the Buddha’s lifetime, a fundamental conceptual and karmic block to liberation was belief in an abiding, individual self. The teaching of non-self was directed toward dissolving that block. Today, it is just as crucial to challenge the belief that consciousness can be reduced to brain function. The “hard problem” faced by neurocentric, reductionist theories of consciousness—accounting for how mind arises out of matter—is an explanatory “black box” that also separates the “subjective” domain of personal experience from the “objective” domain of the algorithmically-orchestrated attention economy, thereby reducing the relation between those domains to one of mere correlation, not causation. That vastly narrows ethical engagement with their interplay. Improvising on Yogācāra theorizing and contemporary neuroscience, I will forward a nonreductive and nondualist conception of consciousness as the coherent differentiation of sensed and sensing presences, and more fundamentally of the realms of matter and what matters. This enables seeing human brain-body-environment systems as the evolutionary residue of consciousness mattering—the karmically configured infrastructure of human consciousness, not its cause—and compels greatly expanded ethical engagement with ongoing synthesis of human and machine intelligences as a mass experiment in hacking the digitally extended infrastructure of human consciousness. The paper will conclude with an appeal to resist the hacking of human consciousness and to retool the karmic engines and computational factories of the 4th Industrial Revolution to enhance our prospects of realizing more equitable and liberating futures for all.

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Presentation Abstracts

Marzenna Jakubczak, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Institute of Culture

“Sāṃkhya-Yoga and J.N. Mohanty on the Sense of Self”

Jitendra Nath Mohanty (1928-1997) was one of the contemporary philosophers who willingly discussed comparative issues and traced the encounters of philosophical ideas. This outstanding expert in both phenomenology and the analytical tradition, as well as classical Hindu darśans, is the author of, among others, *Phenomenology. Between Essentialism and Transcendental Philosophy* (1997), *Explorations in Philosophy. Indian Philosophy* (2001), and *The Self and Its Other* (2002). Mohanty argues for a comparative approach in discussing the philosophical concepts of the East and the West. According to him, intercultural reflection does not differ significantly from intracultural one, that is an adequate understanding of one's own cultural circle from a diachronic perspective. In my paper, I focus on a comparative analysis of the idea of the layers of selfhood developed by Mohanty and the relevant views presented by the thinkers of classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga.

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Presentation Abstracts

Guangzuo Jia, Tohoku University, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

“Discourse on the Method: The “Human Road” and History of Cultural Exchange Between China and Japan in the 17 Century”

This paper explores methodological approaches for studying cultural exchanges between China and Japan during the 17th century. Cultural exchanges between China and Japan have shaped intellectual history, yet methodological challenges persist. Initially, discussions centered around the “Silk Road” framework, emphasizing material exchanges along ancient trade routes. However, Wang Yong astutely pointed out that fixating solely on tangible goods fails to encompass the richness of cultural interactions. Instead, he advocated investigating book exchanges between China and Japan. Ōba Osamu’s work exemplified this approach, highlighting the pivotal role of classical texts in shaping cross-cultural interactions. The “Book Road” gained prominence as scholars compiled anthologies and dissected textual influences. “Book Road” proved especially effective in researching Japanese figures who briefly traveled to China and returned with influential books, such as Saichō and Ennin. However, the “Book Road” faced limitations. It struggled to account for figures like Yinyuan Longqi and Duli Xingyi—Ming loyalists whose impact on Japanese culture manifested through direct interactions with locals, artistic expressions, and shared practices. The “Book Road” alone could not fully unravel their complex influence. In this paper, I positively examine representative cases where book exchange alone falls short in grasping the depth of cultural exchange during that time. I acknowledge that prevailing books were indeed promoted by key figures. The comparative analysis underscores the “Human Road” as superior—it bridges the gap left by the “Book Road,” allowing us to appreciate the intricate network of connections that shaped intellectual history.

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Presentation Abstracts

Tao Jiang, Rutgers University

“Politics of the Personal in Zhuangzi's Philosophy”

One of the most consequential developments in the history of Chinese moral-political philosophy is the valorization of the public domain (gong) and its attendant values, e.g., public-spiritedness, selflessness, fairness, and justice, etc., against the private domain (si) and its associated values, e.g., personal freedom, self-advocacy, and personal integrity (according with one's natural endowment and inclinations). The latter group is often dismissed as selfish or self-centered. Mencius famously condemned the Mohist advocacy of impartial care (jian ai) as unfilial (wu fu) and the Yangist value of self-advocacy (wei wo) as denying the monarch (wu jun). What is especially interesting in this Mencian denunciation of the Mohists and the Yangists was that he was focusing on the familial and the political domains, with the values of the personal domain completely reducible to the familial and the political ones. Zhuangzi's philosophy was echoing the Yangist sentiments of valorizing the personal domain, especially personal freedom. The marginalization and internalization of the Zhuangist imagination of personal freedom in Chinese history means that the personal qua personal, not the personal qua familial-social-political, was largely absent in the moral-political deliberations by many or even most Chinese thinkers in history, even though the reflection on the personal domain flourished in the spiritual discourse. In other words, there was little space for the personal domain in the pre-modern Chinese moral-political discourse. In this paper, I seek to explore a Zhuangist imagination of the personal realm within the moral-political discourse in order to make the Zhuangzi a more attractive, and indeed more viable, resource for the contemporary Chinese moral-political deliberations on the personal domain. I will argue that Zhuangzi's rich deliberation on the personal dimension of our moral-political life can be better appreciated as the defense for the personal, against the stigma of selfishness automatically associated with it. Essentially, it is a way to retrieve a uniquely Zhuangist conception of a person that resists the suffocating socialization which entails internalizing prevailing social values.

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Presentation Abstracts

Dimitri Khudiakov, Shenzhen MSU-BIT University

“The Tangut (Xi-Xia) Translation of the Mencius: A Study of Tangut Comments and Translation Techniques”

One of the most challenging aspects of philosophical encounters is the issue of translating philosophical terminology and concepts. Essentially, East Asian Confucian terminology did not need to be translated into other regional languages, as it was adopted alongside the corresponding writing system (i.e. Chinese characters) and associated canonical literature. These elements were introduced as a single package. The situation was quite different for the Tangut language and cultural context, which existed at the crossroads of several major cultures: Chinese, Tibetan, and Central Asian. In the 11th century, the Tangut people developed their own unique logographic script, which they later used to translate a number of canonical and sacred texts, including the Lunyu (Analects) and Mengzi (Mencius), into their language. Since the characters of a highly developed logographic writing system are supposed to be able to directly represent complex and abstract ideas, Tangut scholars and translators immediately faced the challenge of interpreting the philosophical concepts of Chinese and Indian cultures. The Tangut texts of Lunyu and Mengzi have survived in fragments, but they are sufficiently extensive to allow for certain inferences regarding their interpretative and translational approaches. Fragments of chapters II, III, and IV of the Mengzi text have been preserved, with the latter containing commentaries. Our presentation will primarily focus on an analysis of Tangut philosophical terminology in the surviving translations, as well as some of the Tangut commentaries.

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Presentation Abstracts

Seonjung Kim, Florida State University

“Shu(恕) in the Analects as the Self-Corrective Process”

In this paper, I argue that shu in the Analects, namely, the maxim "do not do unto others as one does not wish oneself," should be understood as a gradual self-corrective process rather than a simple injunction. Some scholars believe that shu can serve as a practical guide in deciding how to behave, especially when the conundrum of how one should treat others in certain relationships appears. However, a question arises about how imperatives such as “do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire” or “if wanting to realize oneself, help others to realize themselves” can be a method to search for moral appropriateness in specific situations. I will first focus on two problems in understanding shu and look at how previous studies have addressed them. First, these injunctions might seem to encourage merely a projection of subjective preference onto others. Second, even if one succeeds in inferring what others want by analogical reasoning, it might not be morally appropriate to act according to it. Central to this examination is a review of the validity of different positions on how one can determine moral appropriateness through shu. Through critical examination, previous views appealing to traditional values (Fingarette), intuitions (Lau), or rituals as external criteria (Ivanhoe) all turn out to be problematic. Then, an alternative understanding of shu that can be read from the Analects will be presented based on the revealed limitations of previous studies. In particular, I present that through shu as a self-corrective process based on interactions, a moral agent can develop the capacity to discern moral appropriateness in specific situations.

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Presentation Abstracts

Wojciech Kościuczyk, Doctoral School of Humanities and Art at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

“Defining Self: A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Minimal Self in Light of Buddhist No-Self Theory”

At the heart of the Buddhist no-self theory is the belief that there is nothing permanent and unchanging that is the ultimate essence of the individual. According to this concept, an individual being is a composite of impermanent psychophysical components. However, none of these elements qualify as a permanent self. Nowadays, this idea grows in popularity among Western researchers, who, inspired by Buddhist thinkers, try to explain conscious experiences without assuming their permanent foundation. Nevertheless, some philosophers criticize this approach, arguing that currently few researchers view the self as a permanent, singular and independent entity. According to these critics, such a definition is tendentious, and a concept that completely denies the existence of the self is incorrect. They propose to change the understanding of this notion and introduce pre-reflective or minimal forms of the self. In this presentation, I will defend the no-self concept and argue that the intuitive view of the self as a permanent and independent basis is still present. I will also contend that such a view is reflected in the concept of the minimal self, resulting in some inconsistencies. On the one hand, the understanding of the self as a permanent and unchanging entity is criticized, and it is proposed to understand it as a primary feature of dynamic experience. However, on the other hand, minimal self tends to be described as unchangeable, despite changing experiences. I will attempt to show that one of the reasons for these contradictions may be cultural thinking habits that cause a search for justification for a specific intuition, rather than considering the validity of intuition itself. Exploring this issue through comparative analysis allows to understand different perspectives and also helps recognize limitations that burden our thinking, which can result in alternative perspectives on the study of philosophical problems.

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Presentation Abstracts

Zuzana Kubovčáková, Masaryk University Brno

““A Moon Follows a Moon:” The Practice of Language in Dōgen’s Thought”

The language of the Japanese Zen master Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) is known to be difficult and impenetrable. In his seminal collection of sermons, *The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (Shōbōgenzō, 正法眼藏), besides introducing Japanese vernacular into the contemporary Buddhist discourse for the first time, Dōgen makes simultaneous use of classical Chinese and Japanese alongside with specific Chan/Zen phrases and his own expressions that he coins, the combination of which has posed a challenge to readers and translators alike. In this paper, I intend to explore Dōgen’s language as part of the fabric of his teaching, and advocate the practicality of Dōgen’s language on par with seated meditation zazen 坐禪, monastic work samu 作務, and ritual ceremonies fugin 諷經. While scholars view Dōgen as a mystical realist (Kim 1987), poet of impermanence (Heine 2023), or spontaneous non-thinker (Wrisley 2023), I would like to propose the idea of the Japanese Zen master whose expounding of the Buddha dharma stems from his original, multididactic, and nondual use of language. Starting with the fact that one of the terms that denote the Buddhist path or way (道) is also employed to signify “word,” “expressions,” or “saying,” I would like to highlight Dōgen’s thought by means of linguistic exploration of a number of his distinctive expressions from various fascicles of the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* – particularly “Being-Time,” “Mountains and Waters Sūtra,” “The Moon” – to illustrate the semantic uniqueness and inventive wordplay that lie at the basis of his teaching.

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Presentation Abstracts

Li-Fan Lee, Leiden University

“Perspective as an Hermeneutic Issue in the Zhuangzi and Nietzsche”

Conflicts, especially that between different cultures, seem avoidable should the involved parties “understand” each other. The concepts of perspective and perspectival change provide a convenient analogy for cross-cultural understanding, that each culture is thought to possess a perspective and understanding follows the shift of perspective from a familiar one to that of another culture. The strengths and limits, more importantly the philosophical-ontological implications, of this analogy, deserve further investigation. The thoughts of both Nietzsche and the Zhuangzi have been considered as imbued with perspectivism and can help illustrate the issues. Both the Zhuangzi and Nietzsche propose that the nature of perspective, perspectival change, and the accompanying “understanding” is not in a conventional epistemological sense, but deeply ontological, relational, and hermeneutic. The Zhuangzi acknowledges the difficulty of transcending one’s own perspective yet embraces that possibility as shown by the notion of “pivot of Dao” and the thesis of “equalizing assessments of things”. While often demonstrating change of perspective in his (early and middle) writings such as *On the Genealogy of Morality*, the late Nietzsche leaves a more complicated picture of the ontological-physiological operation of perspective when life as will to power attempts to “digest” an alien other. Unconventional prescriptive resources can therefore be found in both to encourage perspectival change: for the Zhuangzi, it is to exercise our authentic nature, while for Nietzsche, destroying and dismissing foreign others without proper “digestion” risk losing valuable nutrition for self-strengthening through self-overcoming, a fundamental operation of life as will to power. The key difference seems to lie in their evaluations of conflict as a philosophical question, which poses an open question to readers today: What relation(ship)s and forms of conflict do we allow ourselves to have with each other?

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Presentation Abstracts

Lilith LEE, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

““And never the twain shall meet”: Promises and Pitfalls of Comparative Philosophy in fin-de-siècle Colonial Singapore”

The Chinese majority in the Straits Settlements was of significant interest for the British Empire, as well as (Imperial and Republican) China at the turn of the 20th century. Given the colonial administration’s general lack of familiarity with Chinese culture and thought, the Straits Philosophical Society (1893–c.1921) was founded with an expressed aim to have open and “critical discussion of questions in Philosophy, History, Theology, Literature, Science, and Art.” This was inaugurated as a space wherein “the subject of each paper [presented] should be of such a nature as may lead us to exercise our powers of observation more than we do,” by taking into account “the totally different powers of observation developed” by “the various nationalities in Singapore.” Led not only by European colonists but also two local Straits-born Chinese LIM Boon Keng and TAN Teck Soon, the Society was effectively an (unfortunately overlooked) institution wherein anglophone comparative philosophy “East and West” was regularly practised at the turn of the 20th century. What little attention to LIM and TAN’s contributions to the Society has largely read them together as either beholden to colonial enframing or engaged in cultural recovery—but neither such approaches has adequately paid attention to the comparative methodologies that tacitly underlay their engagements: LIM’s medical- Confucian approach and TAN’s a Daoist-idealist approach. In this paper, I argue that approaching LIM and TAN’s distinct negotiations between Anglo-European and Chinese philosophical traditions as hopeful yet frustrating exercises of comparative philosophy can not only help us better see their importance as world philosophers at imperial peripheries, but also provides us with an important, historical case study of the promises and pitfalls of comparative philosophy in the shadows of not only Eurocentrism but Chinese nationalism.

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Presentation Abstracts

Wonjean Lee, Yonsei University

“Moon over Water: Emotion (jeong 情) and Relationality (yeon 緣) of Korean Confucianism and Neuroscientific Understanding”

The Four-Seven debate of Korean Confucianism evokes the allegory of the moon in the sky and its reflection in water. The relationship of the Four Beginnings and the Seven feelings is that of the moon and its reflection on water. As the water sloshes, the reflected image of the moon does so, but the moon is not shaken. Analogously, the Four Beginnings could be construed as background emotions, which are, according to Antonio Damasio, deeply intertwined with physical responses to emotions as somatic signals. Neuroscience also supports this theory that our rationality is deeply intertwined with emotion. Even rationality can be viewed as a nuanced understanding of emotions. This neuroscientific perspective aligns with the insights of the Four-Seven debate.

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Presentation Abstracts

Michiel Leezenberg, Dept of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam

“Before Philosophy? Rethinking Ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek Wisdom Traditions”

This paper explores the relation between ancient Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions of ‘wisdom literature’ against the background of Pierre Hadot’s distinction between philosophy as a way of life and ‘philosophical discourse,’ or what some would call academic or scholastic philosophy. Ancient Near Eastern traditions of wisdom literature have long been known, but have generally been studied in religious and religion-historical rather than philosophical terms. They may also be studied as philosophical, however, but specifically as embodying a way of life rather than a more theoretical or ‘scholastic’ of knowledge. Moreover, it has recently been argued that ancient Mesopotamia also knew a tradition of theoretical philosophical thinking, but that this tradition of thought was of a hermeneutic or semantic rather than natural-philosophical in character. I will discuss these currents of thought and discuss their relevance for Hadot’s view of philosophy and its history.

SACP 2024 Annual Meeting

Presentation Abstracts

Chiara Mascarello, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

“Contemplative Practices: From Ancient Tibet to Contemporary Research”

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition offers a rich array of practices aimed at developing cognitive-emotional aspects, including refined attention regulation, the generation of conducive internal states, and tools for deconstructing misaligned interpretative models. These practices could be classified into three families - attentive, constructive, and deconstructive -, based on the primary cognitive mechanisms involved. Modern societies can draw inspiration from these practices to promote sustainable and “immunologically” effective lifestyles in response to current challenges. The field of Contemplative Studies is emerging to explore these practices and their relevance to today's context. This contribution will examine each of the three practice families, demonstrating how these exercises can be interpreted, studied, and taught within the field of Contemplative Studies. An initial wave of introducing contemplative practices into secular societies focused on attention regulation practices; a second wave centered on constructive practices related to prosocial Mahāyāna attitudes; and now we can perhaps foresee a third wave focusing on deconstructive practices for their potential in cognitive re-evaluation of reality- and self-models. This triad will be discussed in relation to the training in ethics, concentration, and wisdom that we can find in Buddhism. The goal is to discuss how the Tibetan Buddhist tradition's contemplative arsenal can be seen as a valuable resource for contemporary issues within the framework of the emerging field of Contemplative Studies.

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Presentation Abstracts

Quinn McGarrigle, West Chester University

“The Veil is the Face of God: Unity of Being in Advaita Vedanta, Ibn-Arabi, and Meister Eckhart”

'Unity of being' as a religious and philosophical concept has developed in traditions separated by wide spans of history and geography. That the varied expressions of unity of being are a compelling and worthwhile subject for comparative religious work is attested to by the wealth of scholarship devoted to the topic. Such comparative projects always, however, risk flattening otherwise rich philosophical distinctions in the pursuit of symmetry. This risk is magnified when the subject of comparison is itself unity of being, not least of all because the resonance of the concept between otherwise distinct traditions is often truly remarkable. Nonetheless it is necessary to maintain a prudent skepticism to avoid equivocating inter-religious concepts that may appear correspondent only in isolation from the rest of the theological framework from which they originate. My proposed paper is a largely straightforward comparative study of 'unity of being' as a concept fundamental to the tradition of Advaita Vedanta, and central to the works of medieval thinkers Ibn-Arabi and Meister Eckhart. This study is framed with reflections on the scholarly responsibility for skepticism in such a comparative project, with particular attention to the history of Orientalist scholarship in mischaracterizing the relationship of Sufi practices to Islam more broadly. My comparative analysis is informed by this proposed skeptical framework, considering the potential discrepancies in a unity of being derived from a personified God in Ibn-Arabi and Meister Eckhart, as compared with the depersonalized metaphysical principle expressed in Advaita Vedanta. This is done with full appreciation for the significance of the striking commonalities that do exist. Rather than detracting from this resonance, by contextualizing the point of comparison I seek a cultivation of humility with respect to the depth of the religious thought from which these comparisons are drawn.

SACP 2024 Annual Meeting

Presentation Abstracts

Antoaneta Nikolova, South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

"Destiny as a necessity and as an opportunity"

The article discusses two visions of destiny developed respectively in Old Greek and Old Chinese mythological thought. It argues that while the Old Greek thought understands destiny as a single inevitable path that could not be avoided, the Old Chinese thought presented in oracle bones and divination practices regards it as the best opportunity among many others that could be followed. The main aim of the article is to reveal how these mythological visions are interpreted in philosophical concepts and to compare different visions of reality that follow from these different visions of destiny.

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Presentation Abstracts

Minjung Noh, Lehigh University

“Manufacturing Pseudo-Religion and Policing of Self-Cultivation: Regulations of Propagation ((布教規則, 1915) under Japanese Occupation of Korea and Category of Religion”

In 1915, the Governor-General of Chōsen promulgated the Regulations of Propagation (布教規則) with the aim of categorizing and exerting control over religious groups in Korea. Within these regulations, the colonial authority stipulated Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity as the sole legitimate religions. However, numerous Donghak-derived groups, such as Cheondogyo (天道教) and Daejeongjyo (大倮教), were categorized as “pseudo-religion (類似宗教).” This administrative dichotomy between recognized religions and those deemed pseudo resulted in a system of unequal treatment. Legitimate religions fell under the purview of the bureau of religion, while pseudo-religions were subject to regulation by the police department under the administration of the Governor-General of Chōsen. This paper posits that such colonial distinctions ultimately eroded the status of the Korean religious tradition of self-cultivation, as emphasized by Donghak-derived religious groups. The Western framework of religion, introduced, translated, and imposed by the Japanese colonial regime in early twentieth-century Korea, formed a part of colonial modernity that constrained the diversity of religious thought. Notably, Japanese ethnographer Murayama Chijun (村山 智順, 1891-1968), serving as deputy researcher within the Governor-General of Chōsen, portrayed authentic religions as centered around monotheism, individual discovery of the divine, and a trajectory towards unity in his state-sponsored work, *The Pseudo-Religions of Chōsen* (《朝鮮の類似宗教》, 1935). Donghak’s concept of self-cultivation, exemplified by principles such as “Governing the mind and straightening the life-energy (守心正氣),” and its association with the broader social movement (廣濟蒼生), were viewed as diverging from Japanese authority’s norms. Consequently, the Japanese colonial perspective on religion in Korea emphasized the internalization and privatization of religious practices, divorcing them from societal engagement and the Korean people’s struggle for independence. This outlook also facilitated a selective interpretation of secularism and freedom of religion, thereby establishing a unique system for regulating religions in Korea during the initial decades of the twentieth century.

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Presentation Abstracts

Monika Nowakowska, University of Warsaw

“Threads of life and strands of (after)life”

The point of our departure is the story of one of the background heroes of the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata, an ascetic Jaratkaru, who desisted from starting a family and producing offspring, and in result in his wanderings around the earth came to a hole in the ground in which his ancestors were hanging heads down by a rope of strands of grass, secretly eaten into on all sides by a rat. The image of hanging down ancestors is repeated in the epic within the story of another powerful rishi, Agastya.

This paper is a speculative attempt at grasping at the fleeting ends – at least in the world of South Asia – of the conceptualisation of human life and afterlife as on the one hand a woven, i.e. produced thread, or on the other hand a fibre, i.e. natural strand, a plant. In other words, we try to identify linear, finite visions of human life – either individual or familial, in terms of their eschatologies and mental imageries, which can be traced in early Indo-Aryan sources, starting with our indirect bits of knowledge about the beliefs of Ajivikas, in some aspects resembling the concept of Moirai of Greece. The objective of the paper is to place together and analyse the infrequent attestations firstly of the idea of destined or predestined human lifespan, imagined as a thread or strand, and secondly of the conviction that the fate can be mitigated to some degree, at least in case of afterlives. In the conclusion, we point out the ethical – historically most important – dimension of the analysed beliefs.

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Presentation Abstracts

Karen O'Brien-Kop, King's College London

“Towards a philosophy of lived religion: South Asian contributions to pluriversal epistemology”

The ongoing tasks of proving that religion can be rational and that experience can be a basis for reasoning are legacies of modernist epistemology. Griffioen frames this as the project to prove that theistic belief can ‘amount to factual religious knowledge’ (Griffioen 2022). Yet while religious epistemology is recognised in systematic theology and philosophical theology, it rarely coincides with the study of lived religion. In analytic philosophy of religion, epistemology has been confined to doctrinal beliefs (e.g. proofs of God) and has ignored religion as a social phenomenon (Griffioen 2022). It is hoped that some of the tools of Indian philosophy of religion used in this paper may contribute towards establishing a philosophy of lived religion. Lived religion as episteme rests on religious epistemologies that offer distinct processes and bases of inquiry that function differently from, say, social or political epistemologies. Religious epistemology can challenge dominant assumptions by positing embodied rationality – bodily reasoning, bodily certainty, bodily validity and so forth. In Indian philosophy reasoning and experience are rarely separated, but this goes beyond the basic points that rationality is not mere mentality or that the mind-body unit is ontologically nondual. Take, for example, syllogistic reasoning in early India in which the five-stage syllogism includes the stage of experience. This is known as the principle of invariable concomitance, and experience always informs logically reasoned conclusions. Drawing on early Hindu and Buddhist philosophy in Sanskrit, this paper explores a philosophy of lived religion that investigates belief as both mental and bodily, existent in material interactions between bodies and environments, as well as in intersubjective sociality. Beliefs are thus located and dispersed outside of individual cognition, formed in community interspaces and interstices, existing in non-linguistic as well as linguistic modes, being both expressible and non-expressible. Centering South Asian perspectives (O’Brien-Kop, Ren, Rippa 2024) is a step towards cultivating pluriversal epistemologies that eschew universal reasoning about how knowledge is formed. Griffioen, Amber L. 2022. “Rethinking Religious Epistemology”. *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 14 (1):21-47. <https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.2022.3290>. O’Brien-Kop, K., Ren, X. and Rippa, A. (2024), 'Cultural mobilities and cultural heritage: concepts for an Asia-centric approach', *Journal of the British Academy*, 12(Issue 1 & 2) <https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/012.a12>

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Presentation Abstracts

Jea Sophia Oh, West Chester University of Pennsylvania

“Reverencing (gyeong 敬) ‘the Triple Material Potencies (samjae 三才)’, Relocating the Divine Immanence via Eastern Learning (Donghak 東學)”

This study contributes to an ongoing theological discourse of “omnipresence” in Donghak and process philosophy to help further shift our Anglo/anthropocentric paradigm to a more inclusive anthropocosmic and ecocentric ethics that can be practiced and refined for relocating and expanding the hermeneutical horizons of divine immanence in our present time. Donghak is Korean indigenous philosophical and political movement in modern Korea beginning 1860s, founded by Su-Un (1824—1864) and succeeded by Hae-Wol (1827—1898). Donghak’s life-centered philosophy and decolonizing movements were inspired by the teachings of Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, Korean shamanic sensibilities, and Christianity but suspicious of class-based hierarchies in ethical practices. The ethico-religious stance of Donghak is directed to heaven, human persons, and the myriad things. Donghak’s notion of reverencing the triple material potency of heaven recognizes nature not only by foregrounding the locus of divine immanence, but also as invoking the divine by calling bap (rice) hanul (the divine).

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Presentation Abstracts

Margus Ott, Estonian University of Life Sciences

“Chinese philosophy and complex adaptive systems”

Complex adaptive systems (CAD) have challenged certain traditional Western metaphysical and scientific idea(l)s: that the whole is the sum of its parts, focus on linear causal chains, predictability (at least in principle, by a suprahuman mind), individual responsibility for actions, etc. Instead, CADs are based on non-linear causal links that create emergent properties in a system that cannot be reduced to its parts alone, and “responsibility” in such systems cannot be attributed to a single agent, but agency and responsibility is always distributed (cf. M. Valmisa’s “swarm agency”). Such systems often cannot be predicted, since they can be extremely sensitive to the initial conditions, and there is a limit to how precisely these can be determined. The paper claims that there is ample support for such ideas in traditional Chinese philosophy: the centrality of relations in a system (e.g. yinyang, wuxing, etc.), non-linear effects (cf. Sunzi), emergent properties and patterns (cf. Confucius, and many others). Hence, the ideal is not that of a scientist or computer who could, in Laplace’s manner, calculate the future of our universe, a “metric scholar”, but someone who is sensitive to huge amounts of contextual relations involved in a system, and is able to react in an adequate manner in the given situation, a “topological sage”. On the other hand, it can also liberate the Chinese thought from its too “metric” reterritorializations (e.g. on numbers 2, 3, 4, 8, etc.).

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Presentation Abstracts

Iljoon Park, Wonkwang University

“Exploring the Korean Social Emotions of ‘Jeong’(情) and ‘Heung’(興) in the Age of Digital Network and AI”

In the digital age, despite increased interconnectedness, individuals often feel isolated, highlighting the need to cultivate a collective self—termed "sympoiesis." This concept emphasizes that no being exists in isolation; instead, individuals must extend themselves to form connections and shape a collective existence. Central to this is restoring our "connective self" and nurturing our ability to coexist within interconnected networks. Korean emotions such as "Jeong(情)" and "Heung(興)" exemplify this interconnectedness, binding individuals and fostering vitality and joy. In today's digitally networked societies, marked by fragmented connections and divisive politics, cultivating these emotions is essential for promoting collective well-being. Looking ahead to a future with artificial intelligence, fostering these emotions becomes crucial for establishing symbiotic relationships between humans and AI.

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Presentation Abstracts

Jinwoo Park, Sungkyunkwan University

“Evaluating the Moral Political Tradition of Early China: The Conception of Xian (賢) and Political Meritocracy (xianneng zhengzhi 賢能政治)”

The aim of this article is to critically examine the assertion that China inherently possessed a political tradition that valued morality: political meritocracy (xianneng zhengzhi 賢能政治). To verify this claim, the paper investigates whether the relationship between morality and political ability was intrinsic or developed through philosophical and historical changes. By examining the concept of the ideal character, xian 賢, this research examines the tradition of the elevation of the worthy (shangxian 尚賢), which is presented as evidence for this moral tradition. The concept of xian, which gained prominence as a notion of “comparative advantage” for determining suitability for social status, is scrutinized in the texts of the Spring and Autumn Period. The Chunqiu Zuozhuan (春秋左傳) and Guoyu (國語) demonstrate that xian was initially employed to justify political status; its scope expanded to emphasize the search for talent, highlighting the theory of elevating the worthy. The Analects (論語) illustrate how this process, combined with the evolving meaning of virtue, began to incorporate aspects of moral character; but Confucius does not put the emphasis on xian. The concept of elevating the worthy is identified as a fundamental tenet in early Chinese political thought and is considered the cornerstone of the moral political model. However, this analysis reveals that the ideal of xian, presented as a Chinese tradition, was formed out of political necessity during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods rather than being an inherent tradition. Thus, the conception of xian in early China reflects a dynamic interaction between evolving philosophical ideals and historical exigencies. This study concludes that the ideal of xian, though presented as a longstanding Chinese tradition, was significantly shaped by the political needs of its time.

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Presentation Abstracts

Kyle Perreault, West Chester University graduate student

“Hegel and Śaṅkara: A Dialectical Movement Towards Brahman”

An issue of incommensurability between the philosophy of Georg Hegel and Śaṅkara presents itself when considering Hegel’s Eurocentric bias toward history and his negative view of Indian philosophy. The first section of this paper will argue that despite Hegel’s negative views towards Indian philosophy, this does not preclude a comparison between Hegel’s philosophy and the Advaitic philosophy. This section will describe Hegel’s negative views toward Indian philosophy and his misunderstanding of the Indian concept of dharma. It will be argued that Hegel’s negative attitude was reactionary to European pressures of Kantian ethics and German Romanticism. With this established, the following sections will demonstrate how key philosophical themes within Hegel’s overarching philosophical movement align with the philosophy of the Advaita Vedanta. Hegel’s key component of sublation within his dialectical movement will be examined. It will be argued that this dialectical movement can be compared to the philosophical movement of neti neti within the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. Understanding the role of sublation within the dialectical movement is key to understanding where Hegel found solidarity between his philosophical movement and Indian philosophy: Hegel’s Spirit and Brahman of the Advaita Vedanta will be compared by exploring Hegel’s pronouncement of the death of God and his interpretation of the Advaitic text the Bhagavad Gita. The death of God allows for the Spirit to return to itself which can be compared to Brahman returning to Brahman. This return culminates in the Advaitic concept of mokṣa. In the final section, this author will provide an original comparison between this Advaitic concept through Hegel’s famous Lords-Bondsman Dialectic. It will be illuminated how the freedom of self-consciousness synthesized through the bondsman’s experience of himself in the world around him through his works is comparable to the synthesis of “freedom from” to “freedom toward” within the movement in mokṣa.

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Presentation Abstracts

Grzegorz Polak, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

“What are the philosophical implications of the accounts of sudden spiritual breakthroughs in early Buddhist texts? A reconstruction through a comparative approach”

Historically dominant approaches within Buddhism usually conceptualize spiritual progress and subsequent transformative experience in a relatively linear, almost quantifiable manner as an accumulation of positive factors and removal of negative ones through gradual practice understood as an implementation of particular methods or techniques. Once these factors (such as concentration or insight) reach a sufficient strength and a certain threshold is breached, transformative experience is expected to occur. However, within certain Buddhist traditions one encounters unusual accounts of transformative experiences which appear to be impossible to be conceptualized in such a way. These accounts present sudden spiritual breakthroughs that are not directly connected or correlated with any particular form of deliberate, gradual practice, but seem to occur unexpectedly and do not follow any clear patterns or logic. While the accounts of such breakthroughs are commonly associated with Chan and Zen traditions, in this paper I shall particularly focus on relatively little-known accounts in the early Pali texts which show Buddhist practitioners undergoing sudden and unexpected spiritual transformations in often very dramatic conditions. As I shall argue, these accounts imply some very interesting ideas regarding mental functioning, the mechanisms of psychological transformation, transparency of mental states and their availability to introspection. Some of these ideas parallel to a certain extent some recent developments in philosophy of mind and cognitive science and I shall discuss these similarities in my paper.

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Presentation Abstracts

Roy Porat, LMU Munich

“Is it possible that "On Hard and White" is a Warring States text after all? Gongsunlongzi, Zhuangzi, and the dubious yinshi”

The paper seeks to point at an unexpected connection between two essays traditionally attributed to thinkers from the Warring States period: “On Equalizing Things” (Qiwulun, hereafter QWL), the second and most influential chapter of the Zhuangzi, and “On Hard and White” (Jianbailun, hereafter JBL), the fourth essay from the Gongsunlongzi. While traditionally the first text was seen as referring to the latter, since A.C. Graham's work in the late 1950s it is widely accepted – at least by European and American scholars – that “On Hard and White” is not an authentic Warring States text, but a much later forgery pieced together from bits of the Mohist Dialectics, and possibly also the Qiwulun itself. In my talk, I will attempt to swing the pendulum back by proposing that at least some parts of the JBL actually predate the composition of the QWL, drawing, ironically, from another work by Graham - namely, his analysis of the term yinshi 因是 (“going along with this/right”) in the QWL. First, I will point at the problem with the common depiction of yinshi as epitomizing the Zhuangzian notion of liberation, suggesting that the term was actually used by the author of the QWL as a reference to the techniques and methods of his Mingjia opponents. Second, I will claim that certain parallels between the QWL and the JBL – including explicit usage of yinshi in both texts and a similar use of the structure [A不若B] – suggest that the author of the QWL deliberately echoed the relevant lines from the JBL. Finally, I will explain why the opposite direction of borrowing (from the QWL to JBL, as suggested by some scholars) is unlikely, suggesting instead that at least some parts of the JBL – a text that has been compared to idealists like Kant, Fichte, and Schopenhauer, and which Graham himself said would have had revolutionary importance if it had indeed been from the pre-Buddhist era – are indeed from the Warring States period.

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Presentation Abstracts

Melko Rasica, Independent scholar

“What is the Essence of a Human Being? Platonist and Vedantic Perspectives on Anthropology”

In a comparison between the Greek and Indian philosophical traditions it can be noted that many good similarities exist between two specific schools, namely Platonism and Vedanta. This presentation will look closely at one fundamental issue which ties many topics parallels together, namely the question what constitutes the essence of a human being. Both schools provide a sophisticated analysis and model of the structure and the different layers which constitute a human being. In both schools this structure is also a reflection of the larger cosmos and involves a specific and structured path for the application in life, which is spiritual practice. We will examine the similarities and differences between the two models specifically through the question what is considered the essential part of a human being, the true Self. This comparison is based mostly, but not exclusively, on texts which are considered as introductory in the curricula of both traditions, namely the first Alcibiades together with its commentaries by Proclus and Olympiodorus and the Tattva Bodha and Ātma Bodha of Śankaracarya together with their commentaries. The reason is that such introductory texts state most clearly and simply the fundamental principles of the respective traditions. In the Platonic tradition, and specifically in the Alcibiades, the essence of a human being is identified with the soul (psuchē) while the body (soma) is regarded as the instrument of the soul. Neoplatonic anthropology is based on Plato's tri-partite model, but also incorporates Aristotelian elements. The ultimate goal of philosophy is for the soul to transcend of the material world and unite with its infinite source and origin. Advaita Vedanta divides the individual human being (jīva) into three parts: the gross body (sthula śarīra), the subtle body (sūkṣma śarīra), and the causal body (karana śarīra). However, none of these layers constitute the true Self which is beyond all bodies. It is identified as pure, unconditioned consciousness, Ātman, which expresses itself through the different bodies which are its instruments. The end goal of Vedanta is realizing one's true Self and ending false identification with the three bodies.

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Presentation Abstracts

Jana Rošker, University of Ljubljana

“A New Approach to (post)comparative transcultural philosophy: the method of sublation”

Abstract Against the bleak backdrop of a globalized but increasingly fragmented world, today's academia has a crucial role to play in developing and promoting new models of exchange that can foster a more stable and interconnected global community that embraces and values diversity. This is especially important given the current state of the world, where issues such as social and political divisions, economic inequality, and environmental degradation are increasingly pressing. By imagining, crafting, and advocating for new models of exchange, academia can play an important role in addressing these challenges and working towards a more just and equitable world. Therefore, the main objective of the proposed presentation is to enhance and promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge between different cultures and traditions by elaborating and improving existing models for intercultural comparisons of different theories embedded in the domains of different cultures. In this regard, my primary goal is to introduce and describe my current research work, which centres on re-interpreting Chinese philosophy by implementing an innovative approach suitable for transcultural philosophical comparisons. To commence this undertaking, I was compelled to address certain issues, leading me to seek a novel methodology for transcultural research. This presentation will thus begin by addressing the enduring challenges in transcultural philosophical comparisons. It will then critically examine the recent and ongoing research in Chinese comparative philosophy, with a focus on the emerging "post-comparative" paradigms. The latter part of the paper will explore the function and operational mode of the sublation method.

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Presentation Abstracts

Agnieszka Rostalska, Ghent University

“The first great political realist? A philosophical reassessment of the Arthaśāstra”

The most prevalent comparative scholarship on the Arthaśāstra [AŚ] acclaims its author, the legendary Indian thinker Kauṭilya, as the first Political Realist. The prominent social theorist M. Weber characterizes AŚ's political 'ideology' as truly radical Machiavellianism and asserts that compared to Kauṭilya, “Machiavelli's prince is harmless, even benign.” More recently, R. Boesche (2002) acclaims Kauṭilya as one unscrupulous political realist - advocating that ends justify means and recommending “harsh aspects of political domination such as spies, the assassination of enemies, and torture.” My goal is to evaluate Boesche's arguments in order to determine if this 'Western' label applied by him accurately describes the AŚ's objectives. This paper is a philosophical reconsideration of the first and most prominent Indian treatise on statecraft. As the recent philological scholarship suggests (McClish 2019, Olivelle 2013, Bronkhorst 2011) [against what is repeatedly evoked in the other secondary literature], AŚ was not a single-authored treatise by Kauṭilya, nor was he a Brahmin and political advisor of the emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Furthermore, its content underwent several stages of redactions and interpolations. Drawing upon current research, I examine the fundamental philosophical concepts underpinning the text's layers, with their meaning and context in 1st-2nd century CE India. By the same, I refer to the Jain, Buddhist, and Brahminical identities, which directly and indirectly appear in the text and shape the socio-political context at the time of AŚ's redaction. I argue that the alleged author(s) of the AŚ was not an unscrupulous political realist mainly concerned with power and motivated by self-interest, as maintained by scholars suggesting the Machiavellian alignment. Instead, he was a thinker committed to the well-being of all and a supporter of the harmonious functioning of a cosmopolitan community.

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Presentation Abstracts

Ewa Rzanna, Institute for Documentation and Study on Polish Literature

“The Price of adaptability: Qu Yuan’s Fisherman and the challenge of the external”

In the paper I carry out a philosophical interpretation of the Fisherman dialogue, hypothetically authored by Qu Yuan, focusing on the problem of an individual in confrontation with, and in optimal response to, the challenge posed by the fluctuating nature of the external world. By exposing the ethical/political, epistemological and ontological layers of the argument contained in the text, I aim to delineate the theoretical and practical dimensions of the “inside” vs “outside” problem, as well as lay out possible strategies adapted by an intellectually and morally sovereign agent in her dealings with the external opposition and resistance to her thought and will. In order to contextualize my analysis, I refer to the relevant sources derived from Confucian, Daoists and Chinese folk traditions, supplemented, however, by parallel texts authored by Western thinkers, both ancient and modern. In the final part of my investigation, I turn to some contemporary literary texts in an effort to utilize their metaphorical devices to suggest tentative solutions to the philosophical dilemma faced by the protagonists of Qu Yuan’s dialogue.

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Presentation Abstracts

Heejung SEO, Sun Yat-sen University, China

Harvard University, US

“Toegye’s and Motoori Norinaga’s Understanding of Human Emotion”

Korean Neo-Confucianist Toegye 退溪 (Yi Hwang 李滉, 1502-1571) in the Chosun Dynasty and the initiator of Japanese “National Learning” [koku gaku 國學] Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1803) in the Edo period, who both were influenced by Zhu Xi, desperately tried to find the solution how to bridge the gap between ideal and reality. In particular, they were fully aware of the importance of li 理 and qing 情, two of the most important concepts in Song Confucianism, which was a universal system integrating knowledge, ideology, and politics at that time, so it can be assumed that they shared the same ideological background. Although they developed their central thought in different directions along the two axes of these concepts, in the end, they had the same objective, that is to achieve stability of society. Based on the similarities their thinking shows, it is appropriate to make a comparative study of the two philosopher’s ideas. Toegye concluded that all the basic elements of this world, which are also present in each individual, are composed of the four cardinal virtues [siduan 四端] and the seven emotions [qiqing 七情]. Thus, to solve the conflict between li 理 and qing 情, the individuals have to face specific conflicts such as junzi 君子-xiaoren 小人, tianli 天理-renyu 人慾, and others. Also, it is necessary to suppress personal emotions and desires and control them well, so that the personality can be developed in a good and honest way. When following these steps, people can control all their emotions and eventually achieve the status of tianli. On the other hand, the world according to Motoori's thinking is a world without any awareness of boundaries between li and qing. Because faith is a constituent in every individual mind, therefore humans are already good and honest as a community. This idea of community has the following implications: Since the members of the community are under the protection of their own gods, all of their acts in the community receive divine legitimacy. Consequently, individuals made their gods responsible for their moral distress between good and evil. The existence of other countries outside of the good and honest community represents the absolute evil to their society, which influences the existence of their community increasing the cohesion between the members and reinforcing their values, especially goodness and honesty.

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Presentation Abstracts

Téa Sernelj, University of Ljubljana

“Li Zehou’s reconception of Emotions in Confucian Rituality”

In Confucianism, emotions (qing 情) are central to the framework of rituality, serving as both the foundation and guiding force for ethical and social conduct. Emotions are interpreted through five dimensions, each providing a distinct perspective on their nature and function. As "innate instinct," emotions are intrinsic cognitive attributes and physiological responses forming the natural basis of human behavior. Interpreted as desires, emotions emphasize the necessity for regulation and restraint, aligning individual impulses with social harmony. The dimension of Qi (氣) situates emotions within a broader cosmological context, viewing them as dynamic forces with specific origins and paths. The most pivotal interpretation is that of emotions by nature (性), harmonizing emotions with human nature and embodying unity and the potential for ethical cultivation. This allows Confucianism to seamlessly integrate "nature" and "emotion," while sometimes subordinating emotional impulses to rational principles. Additionally, emotions are understood through Yin (陰) and Yang (陽), linking emotional experiences to cosmic principles and the order of heaven. Within this complex framework, ritual (禮) is deeply rooted in emotional psychology, designed to cultivate and express appropriate emotions, reinforcing ethical norms and social order. Thus, the foundational emotional psychology of ethical life becomes the premise for Confucian social rituals. Emotions serve as both the raw material for moral development and the medium for achieving and sustaining ritual propriety. This interplay between emotion and ritual underscores the holistic nature of Confucian ethical practice, where cultivating emotions through ritual fosters a harmonious and orderly society. Li Zehou, a prominent Chinese philosopher, offers a unique interpretation of emotions in Confucianism, emphasizing their historical and cultural evolution within the ethical framework. He highlights the dynamic interplay between emotions, rationality, and cultural-historical context, stressing the importance of integrating emotions into the broader ethical and social framework. Li underscores the role of rituals and self-cultivation in achieving emotional and moral harmony, providing a nuanced understanding of emotions in Confucian thought.

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Presentation Abstracts

Federica SGARBI, Doshisha University (Japan)

“D.T. SUZUKI AND THE MYSTICISM OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG”

D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966) is a Japanese scholar well known for the dissemination of Buddhism in the West. However, there is a field of study that D.T. Suzuki diligently cultivated but generally neglected in terms of research: his investigation about the Swedish scientist and Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). D.T. Suzuki was a devoted scholar of Swedenborg, finding in him a reference point for overcoming the spiritual crisis that Japan was experiencing at the end of the 19th century. D.T. Suzuki's investigation about Swedenborg offers two very important points in terms of scientific research: 1) an original contribution on the subject of philosophy and history of religion 2) a new and original interpretation of Swedenborg who is known mostly for Kant's critique to his thought than for his own work. The paper aims to develop them, focusing on the similarities that D.T. Suzuki pointed out between the work of the Swedish mystic and Buddhism, starting from the investigation of the two works that Suzuki wrote about Emanuel Swedenborg: 『スエデンボルグ』 (1913) and 『スエデンボルグ(その天界と他力観)』 (1924).

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Presentation Abstracts

Dimitry Shevchenko, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“Vedānta in Vācaspati Mīśra's Mīmāṃsā”

The topic of the proposed talk is Vācaspati Mīśra's (tenth century) discussion of Vedānta in the Nyāyakaṇikā - his earliest work written from the perspective of the Mīmāṃsā system. Vācaspati flourished in nearly all Brahmanical philosophical traditions, on which he composed commentaries and independent treatises. It remains a puzzle why Vācaspati has chosen to engage sympathetically with such different systems as Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, and Yoga and how he could consider the adoption of conflicting views expressed in these systems to be coherent. In this presentation, I will explore how Vācaspati's early engagement with one system – Vedānta - from the perspective of another - Mīmāṃsā - provides a clue to his entire polyvocal project. The Nyāyakaṇikā is a commentary on Maṇḍana Mīśra's (seventh-eighth century) Vidhiviveka. The main topic of the latter work was inquiry into the nature of Vedic injunctions. Contrary to Prabhākara, for whom injunctions had the power to drive the hearer towards performing prescribed rituals, Maṇḍana agreed with his predecessor Kumārila, who argued that no power can force someone to act unless that person understands a personal advantage in such an action. Maṇḍana maintained that Vedic injunctions merely inform about the "knowledge of accomplishing a desired goal" (iṣṭasādhanatājñāna). This weaker formulation of Vedic injunctions in terms of instruction (upadeśa) rather than an obligation (kartavyatā) allows Vācaspati to accept Vedāntic interpretation of Upaniṣadic statements about the knowledge of brahman as the means of liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The Upaniṣadic statements are different in kind from the ritualistic injunctions and provide knowledge about reality rather than serve a role in the performance of rituals. Vācaspati preserves the distinction between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta and at the same time sees both systems as authorized by the same scriptural authority. As I suggest, this approach, according to which the Veda instructs on the variety of human goals, also allows him to trace other philosophical schools to the Vedic source.

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Presentation Abstracts

Yuanping SHI, Leiden University

“Beyond Cosmic Dualities: A Comparative Analysis of Dynamics in Zhang Zai’s and Scheler’s Cosmologies”

This article endeavors to contrast these two divergent cosmological motion patterns. Both Zhang Zai and Max Scheler recognize the presence of a force-centered cosmology and acknowledge the inherent capacity of the cosmos for perpetual motion. Furthermore, both philosophers posit a cosmic motion formed by the reciprocal interaction of two fundamental poles, which constitute the two most basic elements of the cosmos. Therefore, their cosmologies manifest a dualistic conception of the cosmos, with each philosopher endeavoring to transcend this duality. However, they delineate two distinct cosmological motion patterns regarding how to transcend this duality. In the philosophy of Zhang Zai, cosmic motion unfolds as a cyclical process. This process is predominantly delineated into five stages, as previously mentioned, namely: the latent potential of Great Void, the initiation of the interaction between the polarities, the motion between the relative poles, the formation of tangible entities, and the dissipation of tangible entities, ultimately returning to the state of Great Void. Within this cyclical motion, the latent Taixu appears to be a state of absolute stillness; however, it is, in reality, a dynamic state characterized by formless and shapeless attributes. This inherent dynamism, or “motion,” facilitates the transformation of Taixu into the tangible essence of Qi. Regarding the primeval source of cosmic motion, Zhang Zai posits the absence of an externally inherent driving force with an active personal will residing outside of Taixu; rather, it is the formless motion intrinsic to the Taixu itself that enables the cyclical motion of the cosmos. This manifestation of motion within the Taixu is referred to as “Shen,” hence Zhang Zai regards the “Shen” as the primordial source of cosmic motion. Turning now our attention to the delineation of cosmic motion as outlined by Scheler. Within Scheler’s narrative of the world, the world possesses an inception, a process, and a culmination. The inception of the world necessitates the permission of God, yet it is not directly created by God. The world initially exists in a state of tension between spirit and drive, and its generative process involves the dialectical ascent through interactive dynamics between drive and spirit. Ultimately, drive attains spiritualization, and spirit achieves drive-actualization, thereby reaching the culmination of the world process. The activity of world genesis is continually propelled by absolute being. Absolute being embodies two attributes: drive and spirit, which exist in a state of tension. The process by which the tension between these two attributes is resolved constitutes the trajectory of the world from its inception to its ultimate culmination. In conclusion, Zhang Zai and Max Scheler articulate two distinct modes of cosmic change respectively: cosmic circulation and cosmic dialectical generation. Both models of cosmic motion transcend the duality of the cosmos, thereby forming a unique monism.

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Presentation Abstracts

James Mark Shields, Bucknell University

“Zen Power, Zen Anarchy: A Critical Reconsideration of Karma and Causality through the Lens of ‘Radical Zen’”

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Sōtō sect affiliated scholars Matsumoto Shirō 松本史朗 and Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭 instigated a movement known as Critical Buddhism (hihan bukkō 批判仏教), arguing that East Asian forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism—and Chan/Zen streams in particular—had for various reasons forfeited the critical, ethical and ‘political’ foundations of Buddhadharmā. Specifically, Matsumoto and Hakayama argued that Zen Buddhists had failed to sufficiently acknowledge the doctrine of conditional arising or pratīya-samutpāda, which, in their view, acts as a kind of ‘universal acid’ to undercut the temptations of idealism and essentialism (which they called topicalism or dhātu-vāda). While making explicit reference to the work of Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) as a primary source and inspiration, the Critical Buddhists were also recapitulating earlier forms of progressive and radical Buddhism that arose in Japan in the tumultuous decades between the 1890s and 1930s. What these forms of critical, progressive and radical Buddhism share is a commitment to a method of radical—even ironic—redescription, by which ‘orthodox’ Buddhist teachings are reinterpreted, often ‘against the grain’, in order to respond to new or emerging material conditions. Informed by the work of the critical and radical Buddhists, this paper attempts to redescribe karma and causality along ‘radical Zen’ lines. I argue that, given the ravages of contemporary global capitalism and neoliberal ideologies, standard ways of understanding karma and causality, as found, for example, in forms of Socially Engaged Buddhism, are no longer philosophically, ethically, or politically viable.

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Presentation Abstracts

Danesh Singh, Borough of Manhattan Community College--City University of New York (CUNY)

“Perspectivism and Skill Knowledge in Zhuangzi’s Philosophy”

In this study, I explore Zhuangzi’s epistemic perspectivism and its relationship to skill knowledge. I draw upon the work of Chirimuuta and Giere, who have developed versions of epistemic perspectivism within the philosophy of science that overlap with Zhuangzi’s position. Chirimuuta foregrounds the fact that scientific models are not mirror images of given objects of study. Instead of appealing to a metaphor in which human vision mirrors reality, we should instead employ a sensory touch-based metaphor that emphasizes contact and the purposeful exploration of the perceiver. Chirimuuta encourages us to think about representations in science in terms of handling some physical object or moving our way around it through sensory touch. Her conception speaks to both the interactive and interest-relative nature of perspectives and explains why her conception fits closely with Zhuangzi’s Daoist conception, specifically as it is articulated in the skill stories. Zhuangzi too sees knowledge more generally as the result of our contact with the world and our human purposes, particularly in the context of skills and skill knowledge. I propose that Zhuangzi’s epistemic perspectivism highlights three essential elements about the nature of perspective. Giere characterizes these elements as pertaining to the interactive, interested, and partial nature of all perspectives. Perspectival knowledge is interactive in that knowers do not see the world independent of their contact with it. Perspectival knowledge is interested in the sense that the knowledge in question is meant to serve certain purposes, pursuant to specific goals, constraining what is known. Perspectival knowledge is finally partial in that no one perspective can possibly capture all the knowable details about reality. I will employ Chirimuuta’s touch metaphor to emphasize how the skill stories serve as illustrations of the relationship between perspectival knowledge and skillful action in Zhuangzi’s thought.

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Presentation Abstracts

One striking feature of the Zuozhuan 左傳, a sweeping historical account of the Spring and Autumn (春秋) period, 722-453 BCE, is its frequent depictions of the common people or “multitudes” (zhong 眾) which feature prominently in a range of political and military decisions narrated throughout the text. Several early sinologists have relied on these passages to claim that a basic level of “democracy” might have existed in China before the rise of larger states in the Warring States (戰國) period, 453-221 BCE. While this paper agrees with recent commentators that these early scholars went too far in calling the people’s role “democratic” in a procedural sense — the disparate states depicted in the Zuozhuan in no way preserved a formal political position for the people akin to the Athenians in ancient Greece — it will argue that a non-proceduralist strand of democratic thinking runs throughout the text in a significant way. While political decisions are mostly left to ruling aristocrats, this paper will argue that the Zuozhuan recognises the people as a whole as the deepest source of political legitimacy. To lose the support of the people, or multitudes (wu zhong 無眾), throughout, means to have been utterly defeated. The non-ruling masses thus maintain a significant degree of informal political power, particularly expressed through their anger, by frequently placing the state on the verge of collapse. Rather than dismiss the “multitudes,” the Zuozhuan instead reveals a conscious transformation in how they are perceived within Chinese political thought, attempting both to temper the role of the people and to preserve the political insights they may hold. The Confucians of the subsequent Warring States period, by insisting on min ben si xiang 民本思想, “people-as-root thinking,” might be referring to this legacy.

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Presentation Abstracts

Martyna Świątczak-Borowy, University of Warsaw

“Rituals, psychedelics and well-being: why Confucianism is even more important than ever”

In the face of the global mental health crisis, psychedelic substances, such as psilocybin or LSD, are enjoying a rapidly growing interest. They are extensively studied as a potential cure for ailments ranging from anorexia and PTSD to depression, feelings of isolation, and existential despair.

However, apart from potentially relieving the symptoms on a physiological level, certain psychedelics also bring a deeper sense of connection—to oneself, to other people, and the surrounding world (Watts et al., 2017). These kinds of psychedelic-induced states on the individual level are linked to an adaptive function of awakening a sense of meaning and motivation. On the communal level, they are credited with increasing tendencies toward prosocial and altruistic behaviors, strengthening interpersonal bonds, and enhancing group cohesion (Lorenc, 2023, p. 57).

What is striking is that these are the very characteristics of ritual practices. The most fundamental function of ritual is to bind people together and create a sense of connection between them (Whitehouse, 2021; Xygalatas, 2023). This function has further effects: ritual participation helps cope with anxiety, promotes self-control and self-regulation, creates a sense of fulfillment, and enhances the ability to face adversities. Studies (Snodgrass et al., 2017) have shown that rituals have both subjective (reported mental and emotional condition) and objective (a decrease in cortisol levels) positive effects on their participants. Considering the monumental significance of ritual and its possible role in responding to the challenges faced by contemporary societies, the Western philosophical tradition substantially lacks focus on this universal human phenomenon. As a philosophy centered around the relational embeddedness of human beings expressed by ritual propriety, early Confucianism has an essential role in operationalising ritual. Confucian philosophy offers an approach to ritual that is neither servile to any particular organized religion and its institutional goals nor easily susceptible to appropriation by neoliberal consumerism and commodification.

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Presentation Abstracts

Yiting Tang, University of Chicago

“Two Encounters with Nothingness: Lu Xun and Heidegger, 1927”

What do we do in the face of nothingness? I mean: how does nothingness affect one? What does nothingness reveal? How to respond to nothingness? Does one stay silent in the moment? Does one write about one’s very silence afterwards? If one is to write at all, does one poeticize or philosophize? In this paper, I discuss two encounters with nothingness in Lu Xun’s *Wild Grass* and Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Both texts were published in 1927. The former, as a diverse collection of prose poems, treats nothingness as profound world-sorrow in a poetic and loose manner; the latter, as a systematic treatise on fundamental ontology, understands nothingness in terms of profound anxiety and attempts to lay out the structure of existence revealed by the experience of nothingness. I argue that Lu Xun’s poetic and loose approach to nothingness preserves his flash of insight and lets it breathe and shine, whereas Heidegger’s tight and sophisticated conceptual apparatus in *Being and Time* prevents him from getting closer to nothingness proper. Indeed, this is partly why later Heidegger breaks with systematic philosophy and experiments with various ways of writing that are looser and simpler—in search of being itself.

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Presentation Abstracts

Jacob Tease, West Chester University

“A Passion for the Possible: A Comparative Study of Abe and Kierkegaard on Faith and Hope”

Across Eastern and Western religious traditions, the manner in which humanity relates to the divine is often defined by the characteristics they attribute to it. It is these characteristics that are often the focus of comparative philosophical work, contrasting the nature of each religion's 'ultimate reality' against another. This paper concerns itself not with the characteristics of the 'ultimate realities' between religions, but rather the relationship of faith that humans develop towards them. I engage in a comparative study with the writings of Masao Abe and Søren Kierkegaard, extracting the characteristics of human faith from Abe's works on Zen Buddhism, and Kierkegaard's on Christianity. Drawing upon 'Fear and Trembling, and the sickness unto death' as well as 'Zen and Western Thought' and 'Zen and Comparative Studies', I draw a comparison between the existentialist tension of the human experience shown in both Kierkegaard and Abe's works. I find that both writers characterize their religious practice - and thus, their relationship with the 'ultimate reality' - as a direct answer to an inherent despair experienced by human beings as a result of our ontological separation from the divine. While Kierkegaard and Abe's concepts of the divine itself differ, it is the manner in which both works describe a human being's relationship towards that divine that share striking similarities. Both Kierkegaard and Abe describe an inward human capacity to achieve salvation through connection with an ultimate reality, this connection being faith. I use this similarity to synthesize a point of commonality in how faith is characterized by both writers, and illustrate human faith as a compelling vehicle for hopefulness amidst the problematic tension of human existence.

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Presentation Abstracts

Vaclav Valtr, Charles University – Faculty of Arts – Department of Sinology / Department of Philosophy and Religious studies

“Desire and ambitions of self and others: the dynamics between yu 欲 and zhi 志”

There is a clear function of desires and ambitions in the interconnected society described in Confucian or Confucian-influenced texts. In the Great Preface, the ambitions (zhi) of the individual are expressed in the form of the song which is the crystallization of the current state of the whole country. Similar conceptions, where the individual desires are part of the circular system of affairs could be found across many different texts alongside the claims that a sage-like person should regulate their desires to attain sagehood, which is impartial and unbiased. The dynamics between desires and ambitions and their different conceptions across ancient Chinese corpus leads us to the dynamics of the subject and object, as the aspirations could not be only individual, but also belonging to certain groups or even societal ones. The interplay of the personal and communal (si 私 and gong 公) is a crucial part of the Confucian society, where emotions and thoughts should be harmonised. This harmony is a result of the cybernetic paradigm of action and response (ganying 感應), which makes the desires and ambitions more than some individuals' properties, but rather as a means of communication between self and the world. This serves as a different model challenging the subject-object paradigm, which was imposed on Chinese philosophy in the first place. This article aims to elucidate the relation between yu and zhi and propose a more dynamic approach to the rationale behind the normative texts that operate with harmony, music and good governance. For this, we need to take the desires and ambitions as the key element of understanding the societal dynamics and the opportunity to rethink the role of the individual and the boundaries of the subject in ancient Chinese philosophy.

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Presentation Abstracts

Dušan Vávra, Masaryk University

“Making use of tian 天 in early Chinese thought”

The opposition of tian 天 (translatable as “heaven” or “nature” in various contexts) and ren 人 (“man”, “human”) in modern accounts of Chinese philosophy is loaded with connotations coming from Western philosophical paradigms, especially the opposition nature – culture (and some more: transcendence – immanence of tian, whether tian is deity or natural force etc.). On the other hand, in accounts bringing to the fore Chinese (Confucian) perspectives, the term is equally clouded by seemingly well-established concept of “Unity of heaven and man” (tian ren he yi 天人合一). This paper focuses on those instances in early Chinese texts, where tian clearly means something like “nature” – processes and powers beyond human control but not accessible by sacrifices or other ritual/religious practices, mostly taken from Xunzi, Zhuangzi, and a few other texts. The paper argues that in early Chinese texts, the typical purpose the dichotomy tian – ren serves is not so much an attempt to establish two clearly demarcated realms of “nature” – “culture”, or a “harmony” between them. Instead, the paper reads the analysed sections as a human search for the most effective ways to utilize “nature” (tian) in an assumed shared realm of being. The analysed sections of texts are read as various attempts to offer a solution to the riddle: How to put to human use what is essentially beyond human control (without resort to established ritual practices).

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Presentation Abstracts

Jan Vihan, Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences

“Identity or equality? Sameness in the non-dual philosophy of Vimalakīrti”

In countering Śāriputra’s attempt to define liberation as being beyond words, the goddess, a prominent protagonist of the Teaching of Vimalakīrti, counters that “liberation is the sameness of all phenomena.” The original Sanskrit term, *samatā*, allows two interpretations: identity and equality. While the first interpretation advocates a state of non-differentiation, the second interpretation, adopted by all three Chinese translators (i.e., 平等 *pingdeng*) sees the world as differentiated but the mind as capable of an attitude that treats phenomena as equal on account of their being empty of intrinsic existence. In my presentation, I analyze the Sanskrit passages in the sūtra dealing with the notion of sameness and their respective Chinese renderings showing the absence of an agreement. I argue that, same as there are multiple protagonists in the sutra, there are diverse solutions to this vexing textual as well as philosophical problem. These solutions, however, add up: in order to transcend differentiation, the practitioner must first de-activate the judgemental tendency of the mind associated with it, she must come to peace with language before abandoning it. I conclude by following through the implications of this radical non-dual liberation for Buddhist ethics showing that liberation and morality are not only compatible but in fact reinforce each other.

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Presentation Abstracts

Martina Volarevic, J. J. Strossmayer University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

“Existential Foundations of Concerned Consciousness youhuan yishi 憂患意識”

This presentation explores the intercultural possibilities for interpreting consciousness. In Western philosophy, consciousness is a fundamental aspect of the knowing subject, from Descartes' cogito to Husserl's egology. In Chinese philosophy, the concept of consciousness is articulated by contemporary philosopher Xu Fuguan (徐復觀, 1902/1903 – 1982), who discusses anxious or concerned consciousness (youhuan yishi 憂患意識). The Chinese perspective on consciousness offers a compelling contribution, moving beyond the traditional Western view that defines consciousness primarily as a cognitive function of the knowing subject. This marks a significant departure from the Western modern tradition, which emphasizes a cognitive orientation, as exemplified by Descartes' cogito. In defining the cogito as the knowing subject whose self-consciousness is the foundation of all certainty, will and emotion are also included. However, in much of modern Western philosophy, the emotional capacity of the knowing subject is often dismissed as irrelevant. It is only with contemporary existential philosophy that psychological concepts like concern, anxiety, and despair are introduced into philosophical discourse. This approach also moves away from centering the conscious subject in the discussion, as Western philosophy typically focuses on the subject's orientation towards the epistemological revelation of the world. Apart from Sartre's ontology, which emphasizes the concept of consciousness, existential philosophy often replaces the notion of the conscious subject with the self (Kierkegaard) or Dasein (Heidegger). This highlights an intriguing intertwining of Western existential philosophy with the concerned consciousness explored by Chinese philosopher Xu Fuguan.

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Presentation Abstracts

Lisa Widdison, St Mary's University, San Antonio TX

“World-Wide-Words from Bhagavatgītā 15.12-15 to Pratyabhijñā in Epistemology”

The three epistemic powers of jñāna, smṛti and apohana, rest in the universal consciousness, according to Abhinavagupta in the Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī, a commentary in support of Utpaladeva's Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā. Of note is a parallel construction of these powers in the “Puruṣottamayogaḥ” of the Bhagavadgītā, on which Abhinavagupta authored an earlier commentary, the Gītārthasaṅgraha. The root passages emphasize a unity of an agent within the powers of consciousness where the knowledge of a Self serves as a basis for meditative practice and correction of cognitive error. Buddhist logicians, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and Dharmottara alternatively centered the language-game consisting of śabdāna as abhilāpa around an error-theory of apoha. The nominalist picture delivers a theory of “semantic value” as a construct off of the dissimilarity class. Alongside his teacher Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti is an innovator, extending the idea of ‘apoha’ beyond the initial semantic application, into an explanation of non-dual perception. Affirming “vikalpa” ascertainment of anything arrived at through the exclusion of its opposite where both persist in memory, Utpaladeva leverages the conditional according to Abhinavagupta, not to show three distinct powers (which would go against the epistemological unity of the Self) but rather to show precisely how smṛti is preceded by jñāna, and that both depend upon the power of apohana. This serves to refute the Buddhist view that remembrance is possible from mere residual traces. The Pratyabhijñā reading is shown in this paper to be grounded in Gītā 15.15 where: the grammatical subject “I” (aham) supporting differentiation is not itself a limited knower, but rather the divine self in all beings, justifying an epistemological shift away from apoha as a static slice of knowing, to active discernment. The argument centered on Utpaladeva's argument in IPK 1.3.7 will be extended to a contemporary cognitive analysis.

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Presentation Abstracts

JIE WU, Huaqiao University, Xiamen, China

“The Modern Fate of “Lixue” 理學— A Case Study of Jia Fengzhen 賈豐臻, Chen Fuchen 陳黻宸 and Feng Youlan 馮友蘭”

Since the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, with the gradual introduction of Western philosophy to China, various scholars have offered different understandings and interpretations of traditional Lixue. Jia Fengzhen (1880-1945) argued that throughout Chinese history, there was only the term of “Lixue”, without the concepts of philosophy or science. Conversely, Chen Fuchen (1859-1917), a Professor at Peking University, disagreed with the Japanese translation of “philosophy” and attempted to align “Lixue” or “Neo-Confucianism” with the Western concept of “philosophy”, reflecting a conciliatory approach. Building upon the Chen Fuchen’s ideas, Feng Youlan demonstrated a more open, integrative attitude to Western philosophy, aiming to establish a new academic tradition. While his work generally continued with the tradition of Cheng and Zhu’s Lixue, it also diverged significantly from it. By reflecting on the problem awareness of various scholars, with the tensions and contradictions in their thoughts between Chinese and Western academia, we can explore the evolution of the concept of “Lixue” from the Song and Ming Dynasties to the late Qing and Republican eras. Additionally, we can observe the fluctuating fate of “Lixue” in the transformation of modern academia. At the same time, this exploration can offer new insights into methods and perspectives for the development of a more conscious, autonomous, and innovative contemporary “Neo-Confucianism”.

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Presentation Abstracts

Zhanqing Yu, Graduate School of Business Administration, Kobe University, Japan

“Subtle cultural values with profound influences ----- the literature of comparing two Doctrines of the Mean and the effect to business activities in East Asian societies”

The Chinese doctrine of the Mean (Zhong-Yong) which is a wisdom of thinking and behaving, with years of development and its profound influence, guides people with dialectical thinking and harmony-oriented value. While this way of thinking sometimes guides people with an attitude of reluctance to express their true feelings and thoughts in the organization. Particularly, among some specific domains such as accounting, it is crucial for audit practitioners to report with independence. Hence, how to make good use of the precious cultural value, and further improve the current situation under the intercultural environment when conducting business and management activities? That's a good question worth in depth thinking. This study aims at discussing the two doctrines of the Mean in between Western and Eastern regions, and try to come up with some insightful implications for business in Asian society. By screening the literature on comparing Aristotle's Mean and Confucius' Zhong-Yong, these two doctrines have different emphases and have different effects to the society. The present research thus would recapture key connotations within Zhong-Yong and discuss the connection and influence for people's decision making, and taking the specialty of business activities into consideration. Zhong-Yong after all, ultimately aims at guiding people to do right things with appropriate ways. Business practitioners as well as regulators are supposed to consider the difference, give more time and more quipped voice channels for employees.

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Presentation Abstracts

Angela Xinyi Zhao, University of British Columbia (Canada)

“The Spatiality of Loneliness”

This paper develops a phenomenological analysis of loneliness through the lens of our spatial awareness. I argue that loneliness is understood as a particular way of finding oneself in the world. More specifically, I argue that it is understood as a loss of affordance (where affordance is crudely defined as an agential possibility for actions) characterized by the feeling of an insurmountable empty space confronting or surrounding oneself. Such an experience, I contend, involves two dimensions of loss of affordance: a self-world dimension and a self-other dimension. And I argue, for the experience of loneliness, that the self-world dimension is metaphysically, though not (necessarily) phenomenologically, grounded in the self-other dimension. The self-world dimension is discovered through examining various descriptions of lived experiences of loneliness, where they often express some spatially salient feelings with the individual against the world as the backdrop. I argue that these descriptions show that loneliness is essentially a self-experience of the world at large as an empty space. Then, I turn to the self-other dimension, given that self-experiences are to be understood with intersubjectivity. I make two moves here. I first suggest, with Sartre’s understanding of self-consciousness, that the structure of loneliness involves a self-experience of absence in being-with others. It is, moreover, a spatial experience that should be understood with the concept of *aidagara* put forward by Japanese philosopher, Watsuji Tetsurō. *Aidagara* is defined crudely as the spatial in-betweenness of human beings, and it is understood as an intrinsic feature of the bodily self. I argue that the spatial self-experience of absence emerges when *aidagara* no longer feels as a part of one’s bodily self. This involves the feeling of one’s self being confronted with a concrete empty space that carves out the boundaries between one’s body and others which “prevents” one from reaching others.