SACP 2025 Annual Meeting
Presentation Abstracts

Ryan Adams, University of Memphis

Death, Deadlines, and Delays: Everydayness and the Possibility of Meaningful Time in Tosaka

In his 1930 essay "The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time" (日常性の原理と歴史的時間) Tosaka Jun puts forward an analysis of the ontological grounding of "objective time" and individual time consciousness, which he calls "phenomenological time," arguing that both are dependant upon what he calls "historical time." Throughout the essay, Tosaka takes on the understanding of time consciousness found in Bergson and Heiddeger, who he takes to be the most thorough proponents of taking phenomenological time as primary and grounding the understanding of all other sorts of time in that phenomenological time. In so doing, he provides a critique of phenomenological time in that it does not adequately account for itself, and that it is most fundamentally lacking in an understanding of the experience of "everydayness" or the repetitive "background" activities that make up so much of our lived experience. Here, he critiques Heidegger's "being-towards-death" which makes the awareness of the inevitability of death fundamental to authentic human existence. For Tosaka, it is not enough for one to know that one is going to die to elicit care, but instead the added necessity of everydayness in order to even give death itself a meaning. This paper will address the question of whether understanding life as demarcated by death is sufficient for meaningful existence and for an authentic life. To undertake this, I will evaluate what is shared and distinct in Tosaka and Heidegger's understandings of "meaning" and of "phenomenological time," including Tosaka's understanding of "necessity" in time, as well as his category of everydayness. Through this elaboration on everydayness in Tosaka, I will argue that Tosaka is correct, that it is not simply the looming immanence of death which opens the possibility of meaning, but rather the much more tangible and immediate necessities of everydayness which gives rise to "meaning."

Yoko Arisaka, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture and University of Hildesheim

Nishida's Notion of "Pure Experience" and the Existential Sensory: The Fullness of the Eternal Present

In this presentation, I illustrate how Nishida's notion of "pure experience," as our immediate participation in reality "prior to the subject and object," can be understood through the concrete examples of aesthetic experiences. Such experiences are embodied, emotive, fully sensory; they are located in a concrete place, with dynamic "movement" of the interplay of the subject and object that weave out the whole reality in the present. In this context, Nishida's notion of the "eternal present" will be re-interpreted as this robust sense of the existential sensory. In the dynamic interplay, the "self" becomes the movement itself, negating itself as the "self" that exists

independently of its world. Beyond the aesthetic, its ethical ramifications will also be discussed in terms of our existence in the social and natural world.

Yoko Arisaka, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, Nagoya, Japan, and University of Hildesheim, Germany

Beyond Equality: Places and In-Betweenness in Japanese Philosophy from a Feminist Perspective

Western liberal feminism has used the notion of "equality" to measure the development of how the society fares in terms of women's well-being. As the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (and other such lists) indicates, it has indeed become one of the most important indexes for understanding the status of women globally today. In this report, however, East Asian countries rank astonishingly low; in 2024, among the 146 countries, Japan ranked 118th, China 108th, and Korea 96th. Because of this index which utilizes the notion of equality as the measure, western feminists have often asked why East Asian nations are so "behind," or question the efficacy of feminism or women's rights movements in East Asia. However, certainly the notion of "equality" is only one of the ways in which the well-being of women can be understood. One cannot say that because equality is "still" weak in East Asia, these women suffer from oppression, unhappiness, and other issues related to the problem of "unliberated" tradition. In fact, as I have examined this issue in Japan, the important issue for women seems not to be "equality," but rather "respect." These are distinct; the former is expressed in terms of "danjo byodo" (the equal status and treatment of men and women, mostly de jure but also de facto), whereas the latter is discussed in terms of "dansonjohi" (respect for men, denigration of women). The goal of feminism should certainly address the latter, and if the women are respected, even if the status may not be equal in political terms, they would be happy. On the other hand, even if the equality is secured (as it is already often the case legally), if the latter still persists as culture, women feel denigrated and oppressed. This paper seeks other notions, such as respect, care, and fostering in-betweenness, that are based on Confucian and Japanese notions of human relations, that could address the well-being of women apart from the notion of equality. The paper thus offers another model from East Asia to link the notions of equality and respect than what is commonly assumed in liberal feminism.

Geoff Ashton, University of San Francisco

What Kind of a Phenomenology is Sāṃkhya? Some Observations on the Limits of Husserl's Subjective Idealism and the Need to Return to Life through Goethe's Organics

In his critique of research on Sāṃkhya philosophy, Mikel Burley rightly observes that scholars have faced troubling problems that are more indicative of their own realist biases than Sāṃkhya philosophy itself. He supplements this by presenting an alternative reading based in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. But while this phenomenological turn helps to disclose hidden nuances of Sāṃkhya philosophy, it encounters problems of its own. Focusing upon the doctrine of the Sāṃkhya Kārikā, this presentation examines the shortcomings of an Husserlian reading of Sāṃkhya on account of its subjective idealism—not its phenomenology. It then explores more specific incongruities between these philosophies, and finally turns to Goethe's phenomenology of organics as a more appropriate interpretive paradigm. This move enables some basic shifts in understanding: (1) Sāṃkhya is a phenomenology of biological life (vyaktaprakṛti, literally, "manifest

procreation" or "manifest procreativity"), (2) life is ontologically rooted in an extra-mental, consciousness-independent source (mūlaprakṛti or "root-procreativity"), and (3) the dualism between puruṣa (pure, nonintentional consciousness) and mūlaprakṛti (raw, non-purposive procreativity) is a tensional polarity. In short, the study of Sāṃkhya metaphysics is an investigation of the meaning of life, not the workings of transcendental consciousness. If time allows, further attention will be given to how Sāṃkhya philosophical practice leads to its unique soteric goals.

Calvin Baker, Princeton University

On the relationship between the metaphysics and ethics of Madhyamaka Buddhism

On the dominant interpretation of the Madhyamaka ('Middle Way') school of Buddhist philosophy, there are no mind-independent facts about reality. This metaphysical stance commits Madhyamaka to some form of meta-ethical anti-realism. However, Madhyamaka also espouses a universal first-order ethics of radical compassion. How do the metaphysics and the ethics of Madhyamaka fit together? Can one defend a universal—and counterintuitive—first-order ethics against the backdrop of a globally anti-realist metaphysics? And even if one can, does the metaphysics of Madhyamaka support the ethics—as prominent Buddhist philosophers and exegetes maintain? I shall argue that Madhyamaka can reconcile its metaphysical and ethical pictures by appealing to an ideal reflection account of moral truth. However, I shall also argue that the metaphysics of Madhyamaka does not support the ethics. I argue for this claim systematically by critically assessing (i) the attempt to defuse concerns about demandingness by aligning self-interest with the general good; (ii) two possible modes of experience that may be thought to feature in ideal reflection: direct acquaintance with happiness (sukha) and suffering (duḥkha), on the one hand, and with the universal absence of intrinsic nature (svabhāva) on the other; and (iii) the argument for radical altruism, by way of the metaphysics of persons, located in chapter eight of Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra. The upshot is that if we assume Madhyamaka metaphysics but fail to adopt the ethics, we make no mistake. The ethics is compatible with, but does not follow from, the metaphysics.

Nalini Bhushan, Smith College

Difficult Joy: The Paradox of Exquisite Attachment

Feelings have been at the margins of philosophy, occupying an inherently unstable position in both philosophical theory and practice. In this essay I focus on pain -- as grief, as absence, as ugliness, even – and ask whether pain is an existential condition from which we need to escape in order to be truly free. For my analysis, and inspired by some of A Chakrabarti's work on Indian rasa aesthetics, I will use materials from Samkhya, Advaita, Nietzsche, KC Bhattacharyya, E. Thompson, E Lawson and others. While I agree with and develop more fully Chakrabarti's cross-cultural strategy in philosophizing about pain, poetry, and aesthetic practice, I disagree with his suggestion that aesthetic emotions are best regarded as "ownerless" in being detached from our everyday emotions, emotions that we typically consider to be "mine, and only mine". I will argue that responses to the presence of pain across philosophical traditions provide us with a complex insight: namely, that a separation from pain is also a separation from what it means to be human. If this is so, one who aspires to a truly meaningful human life needs to find a way to accommodate

rather than escape pain. I conclude that a joyful existence, and one that is freeing– includes pain, rather than excludes, it. This in turn means that a difficult joy need not require impersonal detachment and is compatible with attachment as exquisitely felt, as "mine and oh, so much more".

Purushottama Bilimoria, University of San Francisco

Impárative saṃvāda: a new pedagogy for diversity and inclusiveness in Philosophy Curriculum

There has been a lot of talk on diversity in philosophy (e.g. the APA has a working committee dedicated to this agenda, and a number of departments of philosophy have embraced this ideal). But diversity as a trope is not understood in the same way across the board, nor are the processes of implementation uniformly followed by all concerned. There are two ways of looking at the strategy for "diversity" in philosophy in a higher educational setting. The first is confined to changing the color and gender of the faculty by appointing scholars of color and ethnically divergent background; but mandate them to continue with the status quo. Thus in robustly analytic cloisters that entails not straying far outside the Anglophone perimeters or gates, or be lured into divergencies simply for the sake of its faddishness (save for some rudimentary inclusion of "non-Western" ways of thinking, e.g. the contrasting theory of perception and idealism in Asian philosophy in a broad orientalist sweep). The Husserlian trajectory (that Heidegger warmed against) of "the complete Europeanization of the earth and man [sic]" continues unabashed.

The second approach takes as its objective the diversification of the curriculum content consistent with the recognition of the demographic shifts and diversity of the contemporary, rapidly globalizing, world that we live in. Here the philosophical academy takes cognizance of the systems of reasoning and thinking on the "Key Problems" in metaphysics, ethics and philosophical theology; in short, philosophizing that is not limited to the alleged roots in Ancient Greece and developed in Europe during the Enlightenment and more recently in the modern West.

The latter approach, however, has its pitfalls too; for over 100 years this approach was promoted under the enterprise known as "comparative philosophy (CP)", with variations to the theme in "intercultural", "cross-cultural" and "fusion" philosophy (to name just three). It also frayed into imperialist agenda as promoted by Hegel, the Mills and Macauley (in his famous 1834 Minutes to the East India administrators): "in order to govern our subjects better we need to know their literature, religion and mythic thinking". Though there were benignly sanguine hopes as well, for example in Masson-Oursel's 1926 manifesto: "Comparative philosophy can furnish to each nation or people resources that others conceived, the knowledge of which can be humanizing" – that became the motto of the newly-established East West Philosophy program in the 1950s in the University of Hawai'i, Honolulu. But the borders remained, and open-minded encounters, engagements and confluences between East and West were really not broached, or not in meaningfully deep ways. Thus arose "fusion" philosophy which went a step further and looked to synthesizing new vistas of philosophical outlook in comparativist methodology that was not hamstrung by prejudices and reticence of the erstwhile practices of CP; rather than simply explore similarities and differences, it proposed engaged cross-cultural philosophizing that would result in solutions to concrete "great" questions in philosophy, regardless of borders ( )

I wish to move beyond all of the above and propose a novel methodology that has pedagogical ramifications as well, and that I call "Impárative Saṃvāda". Here I combine the kernels of two alternative, albeit complementary, proposals that have been made of Raimon Panikkar ("impárative") and Daya Krishna (Saṃvāda) respectively ( ), but mapping it with a more postmodernist-cum-subaltern thrust. This entails engagement in intense diatopical hermeneutics while being open to mutual criticism between differing traditions and their representative classic texts, which in the next move calls upon each to re-appraise their own convictions, and thereby expand the horizons beyond the limited purview, and give oneself the permission toward conceptual re-tooling in the interest of borderless, world, philosophies.

I should like to illustrate the proposed pedagogical method with two examples drawn from an introductory or a general course in philosophy: virtues and values, and personal identity and self. Traditionally, virtue ethics with its focus on values and character is taught using Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics and more contemporary revised expositions of virtues ethics as part of normative ethics – here we have Alasdair MacIntyre (a neo-Thomist case), Rosalind Hursthouse (analytic reworking of virtues and vices), Martha Nussbaum (Sen's capabilities schema), Philippa Foot (ethics of viceless virtue), and Glen Pettigrove (virtues as sui generis values). Occasional comparative references are made to virtues in Confucian ethics. But no attempt is made to draw in the wider scope of virtue ethics in the dialogic encounter, such as from Jaina, Buddhist, Māori, Isuntu/Ubuntu, environmental and animal ethics. To his credit, Macintyre does follow part of this route, but only includes Aquinas and a bit of Confucian ethics. The larger tapestry of engaging the traditions of the East and the Indigenous, alongside postmodernist, feminist and ecological-driven critiques of classical Western virtue ethics (e.g. Aristotle left out slaves, women and animals from moral considerability). The second example draws from personal identity. Again, much of the discussion in Western philosophical curriculum remains confined to the problem as treated of by Descartes, Kant, Locke, Hume, and more famously Derek Parfit (who has some inkling of comparable Buddhist texts but does not engage with them, save for peripheral footnote references). Yet, there is such a rich tradition of discourse on self, identity and its non-conflating horizons across other global traditions referenced earlier. Students seem to appreciate being able to explore alternative resources and ways of re-examining the dualist and naturalist line of thinking on this major problem endemic in Western philosophical and psychological (even English language) literature. There are other examples I can draw from as well (time permitting). Here the inroads that is systematically possible with the helpful paradigm of impárative saṃvāda is instructive, and I wish to elaborate further on its virtues in this presentation – especially at a time when DEI is being challenged in the higher echelons of the nation rather than building on this commitment.

Brian Black, Lancaster University

Are Literary Characters Philosophers? Women and Philosophy in the Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata includes several female characters who make notable contributions to philosophical debates. Most famously, Draupadī, the major heroine of the text, makes dharmabased arguments to secure her own freedom after being staked by her husband in a dicing match. Other women who display their learning and knowledge in discussions about dharma and

other central ideas include Śakuntalā, Sāvitrī, Gāndhārī, Sulabhā, and Ulūpī. One of the challenges of assessing the philosophical views of these women is that we have no way of knowing whether their words are representative of the views of real women. To what extent can we interpret the words of female characters as expressing the philosophical views of women in a text likely composed by men? This is a question facing scholars of women philosophers in many contexts from the ancient world. In the case of the Mahābhārata, since we lack conclusive arguments for or against the historicity of its female characters, I find it more fruitful to focus on their philosophical arguments, what they contribute to our understanding of philosophy in the text, and why their views are ascribed to a woman. In this process – of treating the female characters of the Mahāhārata as philosophers – I will raise questions about whether historicity should be a criterion for philosophical merit. I will also bring attention to the double standard between how scholars are more likely to bestow the status of philosopher to male literary characters, but not to female literary characters. After all, Socrates is the quintessential philosopher of the entire Western philosophical tradition, but we only know about his arguments and views through literature. Are the arguments or views of women in the Mahābhārata any less philosophical than those of Socrates?

Emma Lavinia Bon, University of Padua

Discrete and Continuum. A Comparative Study of Consciousness

Throughout various cultures and traditions, meditative practices and magical thought seem to be rooted in a fundamental idea: that different things and beings, each situated in a unique place in space-time and embodied in a particular material form, can immediately communicate and influence one another, producing concrete effects. Under specific conditions, the spatial and temporal differences between them are overcome, and entities that appeared separate, eternally divided, and belonging to distinct spheres of existence come into contact, "touching" one another on a more subtle level. This difference or distance exists only on a surface in which each thing is perceived as external to the other. Yet, this surface conceals a deeper "ecological" connection, in which all entities and planes of manifestation of reality are, in a sense, internal to each other. In other words, the apparent discontinuity between things is grounded in a psychic continuum which is Consciousness itself: the undivided act connecting not only different beings, but also various mental objects and operations that once seemed discrete and individual. This idea will be explored across different traditions, with particular focus on Indian Kashmir Shaivism, Buddhism, and Neoplatonism. In the Shaivist speculative tradition, special emphasis is placed on the interstice between two or more states of consciousness, understood as the connector or correlative that is not itself determined as a specific discrete state. This connection is also exemplified by the ancient Greek concept of ψυχή and the "anima" of the Renaissance Neoplatonists, which, like 'the most beautiful bond' in Plato's Timaeus, unites everything in the One. Consciousness cannot be the product or the result of an operation within the discrete; rather, it is that continuous act which, discretizing itself without ontologically dividing, generates difference and complexity.

Ernest Brewster, Austrian Academy of Sciences

On Saṅghabhadra's Theory of Negation

Based upon an analysis of understudied passages within his magnum opus, the Nyāyānusāra (Treatise on the Correct Logic of Abhidharma), this paper examines the 5th-century Sarvāstivādin Buddhist philosopher Saṅghabhadra's theory of negation. Saṅghabhadra's novel theory of negation is predicated upon a realist account of absences, wherein absences, such as negata, are real – albeit negative – entities that can serve as an object of valid cognition (ālambana). In Saṅghabhadra's theory, the cognition of an absence, such as the negatum of a negating expression, can provide positive knowledge about reality. For example, when one comprehends the expression "he is a non-brahmin," one knows that the person being described necessarily belongs to one of the other three social classes (varṇāḥ). For Saṅghabhadra, negating expressions are of two types: (1) those whose designated object (abhidheya) exists, and (2) those whose designated object does not exist. According to Saṅghabhadra, positive knowledge may be gained from ascertaining the meaning of either type of negating expression, because both ascribe specific properties to what is negated, whether those are positive or negative properties. This paper demonstrates how by undergirding his theory of negation on a realist account of the ontological status of absences, Saṅghabhadra distances his Abhidharma doctrinal system from that of his rival, and intellectual sparring partner, Vasubandhu, who views absences as fictitious pseudo-entities that are merely misapprehended as real due to cognitive error. It also shows, how by affirming the reality and apprehensibility of absences, and negata as a form of absence, Saṅghabhadra doctrinally situates himself closer to the accounts of the nature and existence of absences found within the Brāhmaṇical Vaiśeṣika tradition, than has previously been recognized.

Andrew Bridges, California State University, Fullerton

Anekāntavāda and Nexus: Reflections on Jain Ontological Concepts as an Information Network of Non-violence

In this paper I attempt to conceptualize the Jain Ontological doctrine of anekānta as an information network of nonviolence for the expression of truth. This paper is partially inspired by Yuval Noah Harari's work Nexus which propounds reconceptualizing expressions and features of religion as information networks to organize large numbers of people and vast amounts of information. This paper also draws inspiration from the many practical applications and understandings of anekāntavāda found in recent Jain scholarship. Some notable practical applications of anekāntavāda include understanding the doctrine as a form of interreligious dialogue, a form of non-relativistic plurality, an expression of ideal secularism, and a method of critical thinking. In Harari's Nexus, two fascinating themes are explained, which I find profoundly salient to the Jain Ontological doctrine of anekānta. The first theme is the difference between information networks with self-correcting mechanisms built into them and those without built in self-correcting mechanism. In Harari's Nexus, scientific thinking often exemplifies the former, while religious dogma often exemplifies the latter. The second theme is the dynamic tension and compromise information networks have between fostering truth and maintaining order. This paper explores how anekāntavāda can be conceptualized as an information network with respect to these two themes. This paper examines the merit of the self-correcting mechanisms within the ontological structure of

anekāntavāda, and it explores how the epistemological implication of its ontology negotiates the tension between truth and order in its applications.

Edoardo Bronzolo, University of Turin

The Epistemic Dimensions of Samatha and Vipassana Meditation

Buddhist meditation practices, such as Samatha and Vipassanā, are traditionally associated with achieving gnosis or spiritual insight into Nirvana. However, their epistemic dimensions have received limited attention, with most studies focusing on their soteriological and neuroscientific aspects (Slagter et al. 2008; Chiesa 2010; MacKenzie 2022). This paper seeks to address this gap by examining Buddhist meditational literature through the dual lens of analytic philosophy of mind and epistemology. Building on Russell's (1912) epistemic tradition and recent contributions from Giustina's (2021, 2022), the paper offers a novel philosophical perspective on the epistemic implications of Vipassanā and Samatha, addressing the central question: what kinds of knowledge are required and acquired through meditation? The inquiry unfolds in two directions: (i) it engages with classical Buddhist meditative texts, including Anapanasati Sutta and Satipatthana Sutta; and (ii) it is anchored in two key epistemic categories—propositional knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance. The first section outlines the core features of these meditative practices, arguing that propositional knowledge, expressed as practical conditional beliefs (e.g. if...then), serves as a necessary, though insufficient, condition for guiding meditation. Simultaneously, introspective knowledge by acquaintance is identified as essential for recognizing and engaging with relevant mental and bodily phenomena during meditation. Crucially, the second section argues that meditative practices not only depend on knowledge by acquaintance but also actively cultivate it, as practitioners progressively develop awareness of mental states and, over time, become acquainted with meta-aware mental states. By examining the relationship between introspection and meditation, this paper highlights key distinctions between these mental acts, while also exploring their close interplay.

Adam Buben, Leiden University

Zen and the Art of Samurai (No)Self-Maintenance

In his 2016 article "Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts," Oleg Benesch argues that the connection between Zen Buddhism and the warrior ethic of feudal Japan is not as close as it is commonly believed to be. Although his argument is generally compelling, he seems to gloss over a few problematic specifics in his eagerness to make it as convincing as possible. Yamamoto Tsunetomo, for instance, stands out as an exceptional samurai figure who does indeed show signs of meaningful interaction with Zen. It is of course true that relatively few significant samurai authors, Yamamoto included, bought into any school of Buddhism wholesale, given the apparent conflict between a tradition that emphasizes compassion for living beings and a martial way of life that, in the more extreme cases, revels in bloodshed. Nonetheless, it was not uncommon for samurai thinkers from various regions to apply, selectively, certain elements of Buddhist teachings that seemed compatible with the demands of their way of life. In Yamamoto's Hagakure, he mentions learning from the local Zen priest Tannen while growing up in Hizen province, and his most important takeaway is the notion of Mushin ("no mind" or "empty mind"). I will argue, contra

Benesch (who pays very little attention to Yamamoto), that this concept underlies three key themes in Hagakure. First is the theme of emptying oneself of selfish interests/bias for the sake of serving the interests of one's feudal lord. Second is the clearing out of one's individual perspective and interpretation of things, which opens one up to participation in communal decision-making that is more widely rooted and less likely to err. Third is the freeing oneself from a calculating mind worried about past and future, which allows one to be in the present moment, ready for whatever comes.

Charintorn Burapa, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University (Thailand)

Revisiting Mengzi: An Ethical Examination of Voluntary Childlessness

Voluntary childlessness refers to the deliberate, permanent decision of an individual or couple to remain child-free, often driven by factors such as financial concerns, personal values, and the desire for autonomy. Some individuals prioritize personal freedom, the ability to manage their own time, or resistance to societal expectations. However, in many societies, voluntarily childless individuals are often viewed as selfish, irresponsible, or immature, and their decision is frequently regarded as deviant. In ancient Chinese philosophy, thinkers like Mengzi (Mencius) emphasized the importance of raising children as part of moral duty and societal well-being. This study explores how Mengzi might respond to the modern phenomenon of voluntary childlessness, especially given contemporary reasons for choosing not to have children. By analyzing Mengzi's ethical views, particularly his emphasis on the responsible and compassionate rearing of children, this research argues that, while Mengzi's time valued procreation as a societal obligation, he would likely prioritize the quality of parenting over reproduction as a mere moral duty. Thus, in certain contexts, voluntary childlessness could be considered morally acceptable within Mengzi's ethical framework, particularly when it aligns with responsible decision-making and personal integrity. This study demonstrates the continuing relevance of Chinese philosophical thought in engaging with modern social issues, suggesting that ancient ideas can offer valuable insights into contemporary ethical dilemmas, including the question of voluntary childlessness.

Steven Burik, Singapore Management University

From Humane to Human and Beyond? Undoing Anthropocentrism through Heidegger and Daoism.

Based upon Heidegger's Letter on Humanism this paper argues that any humanism, East or West, is an essentialist thinking. Humans have always devised narratives to make us special, and often through culture we are to become what we essentially are. It is now a commonplace that one cannot be a radical empiricist, we are always more than disinterested observers. Our ability to see this fact is what sets us apart. We just cannot imagine what it is like to be completely non-human, completely other. But we can to a large extent imagine what it would be like to be without culture (perceived as artificial social structures aimed at helping us in living). It is those structures that Heidegger and the Daoists argue against. Heidegger attacks the arbitrary subjectivity vs objectivity distinction of Western metaphysics which has elevated the human subject to the highest being, in order to bring us back to our finite existence and to the things themselves. Confucian humanism is attacked by Daoism exactly because the Daoist perceives it to be an artificial construction of what man is supposed to be. And yet, Heidegger does not think humans are not special. He just thinks they are special because they are the only ones with a possible relation (Care) to their own

existence, and not because they have culture/nurture. But how does Daoism perceive this? Is Daoism more a 'back to nature' where humans are truly not special? This paper seeks the commonalities in the approaches of both Heidegger and the Daoists, and attempts to understand the most important differences, to see how a comparative rethinking of humanism can lead to a better way of co-existing with(-in) our world.

Danica Cao, University of Chicago

The "Ethical Community" of Revolutionary Subjects: Zhang Taiyan between Kant and Mencius

In the tumultuous transition from the late Qing to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, Chinese thinkers from Liang Qichao to Zhang Taiyan debated the task of "establishing a religion" for modern China, in addition to their better remembered political theories. These understudied theories of religion, similar to their Western counterparts, played pivotal roles in the transition of Chinese and more broadly East Asian moral thought to their modern forms. The relation between Zhang Taiyan's religious-moral theory of the revolutionary subject and the Xinhai Revolution invites comparisons with the relation between Kant's religious-moral theory and the French Revolution. Especially relevant is the notion of "ethical community" Kant puts forward in his Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (1793): alternatively described as a "church," it is constituted against the background of the "political community" in the fashion of social contract theory. Despite tremendous historical and theoretical distance, Zhang's minbao-period (1906-08) writings hit on coordinates of legal coercion and publicity at the center of a fourfold modern structure of the political-religious and the private-public I identify behind Kant's "ethical community." Comparing Zhang's revolutionary subject for an "ethical community" with Kant's, this paper goes on to show the Mencian reverberations internal to the former, such as notions of the big and the small as well as the extension model of self-cultivation. It is suggested that from this contested space the beginnings of a modern Chinese moral subject could be detected.

Kavin Chada, Indiana University, Bloomington

Kantian Moral Identity as Anattā

The standard comparative reading of Kant deems his views on the self incompatible with the core Buddhist commitment to anattā (no-self). This is due to a popular reading of Kant's theoretical philosophy, specifically the Transcendental Deduction of the Critique of Pure Reason. On that reading, advanced prominently by Jay Garfeild in Engaging Buddhism, Kant argues for the existence of the self, which he calls the "transcendental unity of apperception." While this reading disregards Kant's very own criticism of a substantial understanding of the self in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, it also ignores Kant's practical philosophy. Since ignorance of anattā is a fundamentally practical problem in the Buddhist tradition, a comparative reading with Kant's ethics is more appropriate. I focus, specifically, on Kant's view of our moral identity—how we conceive of ourselves as beings bound by normative demands, i.e., in virtue of what we ought to do. A substantial conception of Kantian moral identity is advanced by Christine Korsgaard, who argues that claims to particular identities and moral judgments share the same structure; as a mother, doctor, or philosopher, I am a moral being bound by certain duties. I argue that Kant rejects this Korsgaardian substantial conception of moral identity. Kantian humanity—the only possible moral

identity—is an idea, not a substance, nor even something capable of representation as a substance. A substantial conception of our moral identity is in fact an illusory conception of the self. Our true moral identity, how we ought to conceive of ourselves, stands in radical opposition to our self-conception as substance, what Kant calls "homo phaenomenon" in the Metaphysics of Morals. Thus I argue Kant's practical philosophy is not only consistent with the Buddhist doctrine of anattā, but in fact helps defend it.

Ho Ting Chan, Chinese University of Hong Kong

A note to the Apocalypse: Studying Taohua Shan (桃花扇 The Peach Blossom Fan) (1699) though the lens of Yijing

Witnessing the fall of the Ming dynasty and the rise of the Qing dynasty, the adherents of a former dynasty would use literary work to express their anger, fear and sadness in the apocalyptical transition from Ming to Qing. Kong Shangren (孔尚任, 1648–1718) used 10 years effort, meticulously performed the textual research on all the historical events in the Ming dynasty to write the Chinese drama play script (chanqi ju傳奇劇) Taohua Shan (桃花扇 The Peach Blossom Fan) to express his complexed emtions. To avoid any misunderstanding and articulate his thought and motives clearly, Kong also wrote the introduction and commentaries to guide the readers to fully understand his work, the sentence that aroused my concern is "The drama The Peach Blossom Fan tells of events which took place in the Southern Dynasty...... one learns about events of the past three hundred years. Who were those who caused the collapse of the dynasty? To what events could be attributed her defeat? ...... the drama also serves as a lesson on how a dynasty was vanquished and thus set people's hearts aflame." Yijing, a Chinese classic that plays a dominant role in the governance and politics, and Yinyang 陰陽 has a fundamental function in Yijing and Yin symbolizes the dark and the villain while Yang symbolizes the bright and the sage. However, there are no scholar tried to use Yijing to study the political apprehension presented in Taohua Shan. I will apply the theory of religion symbolism to analysis symbols interweaving in the Yijing and Taohua Shan, so as to find the relationship with the structure of society and the culture behind the author and the psychological processes of the auther.

Yim Fong Chan, University of Basel

A Twisted Soul in Modern Confucianism: Feng Youlan in the 1960s

Based on his writings from the 1950s, Feng Youlan appeared to accept the CCP's promotion of Marxism as a "scientific authority" after the establishment of the PRC. Motivated by his concern for China's modernization in the field of Chinese philosophy, Feng pursued two major goals during this period: applying the Marxist approach to the study of ancient Chinese philosophy and ensuring the continuity and relevance of the Chinese philosophical tradition in the modern era. Following a series of self-criticisms in the late 1950s, Feng began exploring interpretative space for Confucianism in the early 1960s, when the political atmosphere was relatively relaxed. This paper adopts a sociological approach to examine how Feng responded to the prevailing negative evaluations of Confucian thought at the time. In particular, it compares different versions of A History of Chinese Philosophy published by Feng and his colleagues during this period and analyzes his debates with other philosophy scholars on Confucius' concept of ren. Through these

debates, this paper demonstrates how Feng gradually made concessions, ultimately leading him to revise A New History of Chinese Philosophy just two years after its publication. This paper argues that, in doing so, Feng underwent a process of self-negation and self-deception, leading to his transformation into what I describe as a "twisted soul." This state of twistedness arose from his struggle to reconcile the incompatibilities between Confucianism and Marxism, reflecting the tensions within modern Confucianism under political pressure.

Thaddée Chantry-Gellens, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Educating about and Coping with Climate Change: A Role for Myth in the Zhuangzi 莊子

This paper wishes to provide an in-depth analysis of the use of the mythical figure of the legendary sword Moye 鏌鋣 found in the "Dazongshi 〈大宗師〉" chapter of the Zhuangzi《莊子》. Their mention in a conversation about transformation (hua 化) between Master Lai 子來 and Master Li 子犁 helps us to understand what a Zhuangzian environmental philosophy entails. This paper proposes three main axes that require examination: (i) the Zhuangzian stance on environmental protection, (ii) the text's approach to teaching in the context of environmental education, and (iii) the Zhuangzi's ways of coping with situations we have no control over. The myth-making of the text pertains to the kind of "indirect" teaching it proposes, which is especially salient for environmental education. Indeed, myths are particularly suited to this task, since their ever-transforming shape matches the ever-transforming nature of the wanwu 萬物 ("ten-thousand things"). Additionally, the text emphasises that being fixated on a specific set of valuations (e.g., utilitarian, economic, etc) can only lead to a less adaptable and less adept behaviour. The mention of the Moye sword gives us an insight into this critique and its link to the general operation of the wanwu: constant transformation. Through the use of myth and myth-making, the text's points about fixed shifei 是非 or bici 彼此 distinctions become more poignant, but also more palatable. Through this critique, a properly Zhuangzian environmental philosophy can be articulated.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

Pluralism of Traditions: An Approach to Divergent Religious Worldviews Based on the Yogabindu

The Yogabindu, composed by Haribhadra Virahankha in the 6th century, outlines and lauds practices common to multiple religious traditions: meditation, ethics, ritual, chanting, fasting, pilgrimage, and adherence to scripture. It also suggests ways in which one must be discerning in regard to philosophical outlook. Negotiating a middle path between monist absolutism and world-denying nihilism, as well as avoiding the perceived pitfall of facile dualism, Haribhadra insists that karma and its purification lies at the core of the human dilemma. This presentation will suggest that this comprehensive approach to religious thought and practice resembles and differs from contemporary textbook approaches undertaken by Mary Pat Fisher (Living Religions) and Houston Smith (The World's Religions).

Sarnali Chatterjee, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India

Reclaiming Prakṛti: A Feminist Reinterpretation through Tantra Philosophy

Sāṅkhya, an ancient Indian philosophical tradition, offers a unique dualism between Prakṛti, the feminine material principle that creates the phenomenal world, and Puruṣa, the masculine conscious principle that witnesses it. Unlike the hierarchical malestream dichotomies predominant in Western philosophy—such as mind-body, reason-emotion, consciousness-matter, and subject-object—which often privilege the masculine pole (associating it with subjectivity, reason, and action), Sāṅkhya assigns the mind, agency, activity, and dynamicity to Prakṛti. The centrality of the feminine material principle makes Sāṅkhya compelling for feminist philosophers to explore a unique dualism, which may have been overlooked previously. However, the dearth of original Sāṅkhyan literature renders the system hard to decipher and leaves it open to diverse interpretations. Within the commentary tradition, thinkers such as Vācaspatimiśra, have reframed the Sāṅkhyan dichotomy to align with their own viewpoints, centering Puruṣa and marginalizing the significance of Prakṛti. Challenging this dominant narrative, I turn to the relatively unexplored Tantric interpretation of Prakṛti as Śakti. The Śakta sect of Tantra philosophy, which evolves from Sāṅkhyan metaphysics, elevates Śakti as the ultimate reality—active, agential, conscious, material, and subjective. Here, Prakṛti is not merely the 'seen' but also the 'seer;' her materiality is underwritten by consciousness and subjectivity, enabling her own recognition. From a feminist standpoint, exploring the Tantric interpretation of Prakṛti disrupts hegemonic ways of construing dualism and reclaims the feminine material principle. In this paper, I first explore how the Sāṅkhyan notion of Prakṛti and the Tantric notion of Śakti challenge dominant perspectives of consciousness-matter dichotomies in both Western and Indian philosophy. Consequently, I argue that interpreting Prakṛti as Śakti from the lens of Tantra philosophy could help recognize Prakṛti's role within Sāṅkhya and open avenues for future feminist philosophical reconstructions of these classical ideas.

Upasona Chatterjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University

akārā-nirākārā-sūnyā: Deconstructing the Cloud Corpus through Nagarjuna's Sunnyavada

akārā-nirākārā-sūnyā, attempts to explore cloud_studies2020, a work produced by a contemporary collective, Forensic Architecture through the lens of Śūnyavāda, offered by a 5th century Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna. In cloud_studies20202, the group engages with political ecology, sharply focusing on Palestine's resistance movement with its strong nexus with capitalism. Through digital documentation and simulacra they minutely look at different types of cloud formation that have their origin not in natural, environmental processes but in man-made warfare around territorial claims. Such experimentations bring to the discourse the contemporary debates about capitalocene and anthropocene along with its disastrous legacy of colonialism. It also addresses its corrosive perpetuation of technology resulting in ecologic wars waged at the site of commons; demanding our attention to the ways we perceive the same. To dialectically assess the site of common, the paper attempts to draw in ideas of perception from Nagaruna's Śūnyatā. In light of Sloterdijk's Terror from the Air, the paper further seeks to address the challenge of perceiving the common as a shared utopian space. While Nagarjuna's Śūnyavāda through its central ideological tenet of Pratītyasamutpāda, seeks to bind the planetary whole in a causal relationship, linking the

entire planetary whole into an interconnected, interdependent state of being; the paper endeavours to assess the oppressive agency, manifested within cloud_studies 2020 that continuously terrorizes the interconnected common. It questioning such acts of oppression, that jeopardise not only the environment of the other as propounded by Sloterdijk, but also threatens the epistemic cognition of the oppressed. It intimidates their fundamental experiences such as air, water, cloud; crafting differences in fundamental experience of the environment for third world, endangering them not only socially, historically, economically, politically, environmentally but also epistemologically; converting the common into the terrain where wars are waged, oppression is fought, ethics-of-power is questioned, again and again.

Travis Chilcott, Iowa State University

Experiencing the Divine Differently: Cognition, Learning, and the Mystical Pluralisms of Steven Katz and Bengal Vaiṣṇavism

One of the most enduring debates within the study of philosophy and religion over the last century and half has been how to make sense of the plurality of mystical experiences found in the human record (James, 1902; Zaehner, 1957; Stace, 1960; Katz, 1978; Forman, 1990; Taves, 2009). This question, however, is not new nor confined to modern academic discourse and theological speculation. There is a rich history in Indian theological and philosophical thought that has recognized and developed various theories relative to their particular worldview. Among these, Jīva Gosvāmin (ca. 16th c.)—one of the early architects of early Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology—offers an innovative model of mystical pluralism in which different scripturally-sanctioned paths of yoga lead to the ability (yogyatā) to directly perceive (sākṣātkāra) divine reality (tattva) without attributes as brahman or with attributes as a form of bhagavān. While traditional historiographical research is critical for gaining insight into the influence of the context and history of the ideas informing such models, contemporary psychological research can offer us insight into the influence of human psychological processes. To this end, I argue cognitive research on learning (Rumelhart, et al, 1976; Bechtel et al, 2002), attribution theories (Spilka et al, 1985; Malle, 2004), and conceptual processing theories (Al-Issa, 1995; Aleman and Larøi, 2008) suggests that paths of yoga can serve as learning strategies that transform how one cognitively processes information. In so doing, they create favorable cognitive conditions for the emergence of experiences reflective of what one has trained and learned to experience.

Dobin Choi, Leiden University

The Relational Self in Mengzi: A Humean Interpretation

This paper examines the concept of the relational self within Mengzi's sentiment-based moral theory, proposing that Mengzi advances an introspective version of the Confucian relational self. While Confucius emphasizes shaping self-identity through fulfilling social roles and participating in communal relationships, I argue, Mengzi prioritizes relationships as a means to activate and actualize inherent moral potentials. Relationships, in Mengzi's framework, provide the context in which moral sentiments are more properly and frequently aroused.

Drawing on Hume's theory of personal identity, I argue that Mengzi's moral self can be understood as a bundle of accumulated sentiments, rather than a product of predefined social roles. As

Mengzi's Four Sprouts as innate moral tendencies are not only expressed into sentiments of compassion, shame, respect, and approval, but also represent the four inherent virtues, we can assume that frequent and appropriate arousal of these sentiments through relational experiences facilitates their refinement. The arousals of morally approvable sentiments are accumulated to contribute to the cultivation of virtues.

This view clarifies two key aspects of Mengzi's thought. First, it connects Confucian relational ethics with Mengzi's introspective cultivation. The process of "turning inwards to examine oneself" to seek inherent virtues (M 2A7, 4A4) aligns with Confucian relational ethics because it relies on a pre-established empirical basis of sentiments developed through external relationships. Second, it supports the moral desirability of preserving self-dignity over maintaining relationships, suggesting that it is permissible to discontinue relationships or roles if they undermine one's moral integrity. This interpretation bridges Mengzi's introspective approach with the broader framework of Confucian relational ethics, emphasizing the dynamic balance between external relationships and internal moral cultivation.

Alexander Cilliers, University of Western Australia

Sāṃkhya as 'naturalistic dualism'

When Chalmers (1996) first crystallised the 'hard problem' of consciousness, he proposed a nonreductive theory of consciousness wherein some set of psychophysical properties, causally isolated from physical properties, are taken to be fundamental. Chalmers specifically remarked that there was nothing necessarily spiritual or mystical about such a theory: as such, Chalmers classified his position as a version of naturalistic dualism. Similarly, the classical Indian tradition of Sāṃkhya posits that reality consists of two ontologically isolated and fundamentally irreducible aspects. These two co-ultimates are Puruṣa: a non-physical, causally inert, witness-consciousness; and Prakṛti: a non-conscious physical substrate which comprises nature in all her variegated forms, including both mind and body. In this work, I apply an analytic lens to the metaphysics of consciousness found in Sāṃkhya, exploring the extent to which Sāṃkhya can serve as a genuine theoretical framework with which to respond to the hard problem. In the first part of the work, I – contra O'Brien Kop (2023) – argue that Sāṃkhya can be interpreted as a genuine naturalistic dualism. In the second part of the work, I explore how the Sāṃkhya metaphysical schema can be employed in response to the hard problem. I demonstrate how by integrating a computational theory of mind into the ontological structure that is the mind-body complex (Prakṛti), Sāṃkhya's dualism of pure consciousness and physical reality (i) accounts for subjective conscious experience in a way that contemporary physicalism cannot, while (ii) avoiding Cartesian-type dualism's causal exclusion problem. I consider and respond to two potential criticisms: that Sāṃkhya metaphysics (1) suffers from its own explanatory gap problem, and (2) suffers from the same individuation problem as cosmopsychism. Criticism 1, on my view, dissolves under scrutiny. In response to criticism 2, meanwhile, I utilise Shani's (2022) notion of partial grounding to account for the differentiation of Puruṣa into a plurality of conscious subjects with unique spatiotemporally bounded perspectives. I aim to demonstrate that should these objections prove to be tractable, Sāṃkhya represents a genuine theoretical framework with which to approach the hard problem.

Arianne Conty, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Comparative Philosophy and the Ontological Turn

With the publication of Philippe Descola's book Beyond Nature and Culture in 2005, anthropologist Marshall Sahlins celebrated what he called a "paradigm shift" in anthropology, "a new anthropological dawn" that has come to be called "the ontological turn." In replacing the "one-world world" (Law, 2015) of western naturalism with multiple ontological worlds, such a turn belies the universalisms so typical of Western naturalism and fosters new inter-disciplinary directions for 21st century thought. Indeed, we will show that "the ontological turn" has espoused a new philosophy of nature, or "geophilosophy" as Viveiros de Castro calls it, that may be able to respond to the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene Age in new and productive ways. Notwithstanding such important potential, this article will use both comparative philosophy and anthropology to put into question a fundamental aspect of the ontological turn: its defense of incommensurate worlds. By questioning the very existence of Being in both Amazonian and Chinese languages, this paper will accuse the ontological turn of imposing the ontological essences and inherent substances so central to Western languages on foreign cultures that privilege a processual metaphysics of flux in their place. It is thus not ontological worlds that should be defended, but rather different space/time matrices capable of linking different communities to their environments in radically different ways.

Elise Coquereau-Saouma, University of Vienna

Modern Nondualist Approach to Indian Historiography

The debate from the 1920s to the 1950s concerning the dichotomy between reason and intuition, and the association of Indian philosophy with intuition as opposed to Western rationality, has normatively shaped epistemological discussions. This discourse compelled Indian philosophers to emphasize either the spirituality or the rationality of Indian philosophy. Despite numerous philological and philosophical efforts to deconstruct the prejudices that portray Indian thought as irrational, the binary depiction of Indian spirituality versus Western rationality persists. This has resulted in the marginalization of Indian philosophy and reductive presentation constricted by the need to validate its rationality within Western frameworks. In this presentation, I argue that the failure of transcending this dichotomy between reason and intuition lies in the very way of considering knowledge exclusively as discursive thought, which is denounced by Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya. Rather than defending intuition against reason, Bhattacharyya defends a nondual mode of consciousness wherein this very opposition is gradually overcome. Indeed, the opposition exists because intuition and reason are understood by the intellect itself, through analysis. From the perspective of ecstatic intuition or samādhi, the 'consciousness of duality lapses'. Thus, Bhattacharyya unveils a gradation or sublation of levels of self-knowledge that reconciles all oppositions. Even if nondualism constitutes the very meaning of Advaita, referring to traditions with which Bhattacharyya associates, this modern commitment to epistemic nondualism to the historiographic reduction of Indian philosophy does not seem to have dismantled the very binary to which expositions of Indian philosophy have been subjected. Revisiting the controversy from a methodological nondualist point could contribute to liberate Indian philosophy from the constraints of conforming to a binary model of rationality versus spirituality.

Andrej Fech, Hong Kong Baptist University

Metaphors in the Laozi

Andrej Fech first introduces the notion of metaphor and why studying them is nowadays considered a suitable tool for elucidating the meaning of ancient texts. He then discusses the state of the field, introducing the most notable academic works on figurative speech in the Laozi. Subsequently, he shows how metaphors are instrumental in the formulation of the Laozi's distinctive worldview and its characteristic paradoxes. Fech introduces his classification of the main metaphors of the Laozi and investigates them in the context of its central philosophical notions (which themselves are metaphors). Methodologically, he notes that the Laozi can be regarded as a massive compendium of interlinked metaphors. For one, cosmological, ethical, epistemological and political ideas are all conveyed by means of metaphoric expressions. At the same time, the use of figurative speech in the Laozi does not confine itself to nouns and concrete images only. Verbs, adverbs and adjectives are also endowed with several layers of significance, sometimes meaning opposite things, and, depending on the context, interact with concrete images in a variety of ways.

Xue Feng, Department of Philosophy, Sichuan University, China

A Comparative and Integrative Study of Laozi's and Thales' Views on Nature

Laozi, the founder of Pre-Qin Taoism in China, and Thales, the founder of ancient Greek natural philosophy, were great philosophers at the same historical period. Many of their views on nature represent the difference between early Eastern and Western philosophy. Through comparative analysis, both of them have the same but different views in the following aspects: Firstly, in ontology, both of them regard "water" as the origin. Laozi said "the superior good is like water", and he discussed "Tao" with "water", endowed "water" with nature, while Thales believed that water is the basis of life and the basic element of all things. Their difference is the metaphysical moral ontology and the theory of elements. Secondly, in epistemology, both of them take natural phenomena and laws as the object of cognition. Laozi conducted "contemplation" through intuition and introspection, while Thales explored nature through sensory observation and rational thinking, which are different terms of mysterious ambiguity and scientific verification. Third, on the issue of the relationship between humans and nature, they both recognize that humans and nature have a close relationship. Laozi emphasized adapting to nature in a way of "governing by doing nothing", seeking a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, while Thales paid more attention to mastering and controlling nature with knowledge and technical means. The two had different purposes in contacting nature. Laozi and Thales respectively laid the foundation for Chinese philosophy and religion with Western science and rational thinking. Clarifying the similarities and differences between their views of nature can help us better carry out philosophical dialogues between China and the West.

Raquel Ferrández Formoso, National University of Distance Education, Madrid

Yoga and Death

The history of yoga in its plurality shows diverse ways of understanding death and immortality. Based not only on the yoga of philosophical or practical treatises, but especially on the yoga that appears in various works of Indian literature, in this presentation I will offer some reflections on the

relationship between yoga and death. What can the history of yoga teach a Western culture that has been stuck in cultural denial of death for at least two centuries?

Elisa Freschi, University of Toronto

How do we know about dharma? Talking rationally about irrational ideas

Different authors within Sanskrit philosophy accepted the idea of a direct acquaintance with reality, especially with dharma, without the mediation of the sense faculties (nor of reasoning). The epistemological means for such a direct acquaintance is called yogic perception (yogipratyakṣa). It is invoked by different schools of Sanskrit philosophy to explain different phenomena, from the perception of experts to the Buddha's direct acquaintance with the four nobles' truths. The idea that yogic perception is possible might look like a preposterous claim, typical of "irrational Eastern thought". However, the debate on yogic perception is examined through the jargon of epistemology, in particular through a careful evaluation of the inferential arguments for and against it. The debate centers in particular on how yogic perception can be reliable and at the same time ampliative and on whether it is conceptual or non-conceptual.

This presentation will untangle the history of the debate on the possibility of special perception being a valid epistemological means, starting with Dharmakīrti (6th c.), through Vācaspati (10th c.) and until Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta (Veṅkaṭanātha, 14th c. and U.T.Vīrarāghavācārya, 20th c.).

Hyojin Lee Fromell, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Confucian Virtue Meets Western Medicine: The Rediscovery of Renshu (Kr. Insul) in Modern East Asia

"Medicine is an art of benevolence" [Kr. 인술 (Insul), Ch. 仁術 (Renshu)] is a slogan widely recognized in East Asia. In South Korea, it is often regarded as an intrinsic medical ethic (Lee 2023). However, the original meaning of 'In' (Ch. Ren, 仁)—which signifies 'benevolence,' 'humanity,' or simply 'love for one another'—is rooted in Confucian virtue, particularly as emphasized by Mencius. It remains unclear when this Confucian term became associated with medical ethics in East Asia. Notably, the concept of 'medical ethics' itself was not formalized until the 19th century in the West (Baker and McCullough, 2009). Despite this, terms like Insul, affection, and the Hippocratic Oath are often used interchangeably, though they originate from distinct historical periods and carry different ideological implications (Shin, 2000). This presentation examines how translations of Western medical ethics influenced the emergence of Confucianised medical ethics in modern and contemporary East Asia, focusing on Ogata Kōan's translation and its impact on later medical ethics. He is a Japanese physician and rangaku scholar from the late Edo period. In 1857, Ogata translated Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland's Enchiridion Medicum: Or the Practice of Medicine into Japanese as Fushi Keiken Ikun (扶氏経験遺訓), a massive 30-volume text. He summarized the last volume into twelve principles on medical morality, which he titled "Fushi-ikai no Ryaku(扶氏医戒之略)," meaning "Hufeland's Twelve Advices on Medical Morality." Among these principles, the seventh advice states: "Comforting the patient, even if you cannot save them, is the art of benevolence (仁術)." This concept, rooted in Confucian virtue, gained significant traction and was frequently cited in medical journals and by both Eastern and Western physicians. In this

presentation, I will explore the historical interplay between traditional notions of Insul and Western medical ethics. Specifically, I will discuss how these ideas were transmitted and adapted in East Asia during the 18th and 19th centuries, ultimately leading to the emergence of a uniquely 'Confucianized" medical ethic.

Ana Laura Funes Maderey, Fairfield University

Luce Irigaray's Engagement with Yoga and Some Challenges/Possibilities for a New Culture of Energy

In A New Culture of Energy, Luce Irigaray discloses the extent to which the practice and philosophy of yoga have influenced her thinking. Although her approach to Eastern traditions has been strongly criticized before, some scholars have argued that Irigaray's engagement with Yoga philosophy should be read as a "narrative of transformation" and not as a theoretical analysis of India or Hindu Philosophy. I believe that a bridge can be built between this transformational narrative and the relevant yogic philosophical sources that have inspired it. This comparative exercise will reveal profound affinities in her thinking to Sāṃkhya dualist philosophy despite Irigaray´s (mis)interpretation of samādhi in the Yogasūtra of Patañjali. In this talk, I analyze her critique of non-dualist thinking and support her argument with Anand Vaidya's critical analysis of the non-dual relation between self and God in Śaṅkara´s Vedānta. This will show that Irigaray's understanding of samādhi brought her closer, inadvertently, to the qualified non-dualist Vedānta philosophy that animated Krishnamacarya´s yogic teachings — whom she met during a trip to India. Engaging with the textual sources of yoga as rigorously as Irigaray's scholars do with any other of the Western philosophical sources that have influenced her work is, I think, one way to respond to the call for building a new culture of energy that Luce Irigaray envisions as going beyond East and West.

Ana Laura Funes Maderey, Fairfield University

Embracing Anekāntavāda in Public Health Discourse: The Rationality of Vaccine Hesitancy Based on Alternative Views of Health and Medicine

Understanding the reasons that motivate people to refuse vaccines has become urgent, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In trying to make sense of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy some studies have focused on its rationality classifying vaccine refusers either as irrational, partly irrational, or rational but misguided. In this essay, I use the method of anekāntavāda to show that these accounts leave out an important group of vaccine-hesitant individuals, one which could be considered as rational and not prima facie misguided in their beliefs about the vaccine. I focus on the rationality for refusing the vaccine that has to do specifically with beliefs about health and alternative ways of coping with disease. I will argue that without taking these beliefs seriously and the embodied aspects that generate them, public health compulsory policies will continue to be experienced as "one-sided", creating further opposition and rejection. I also show how the application of a non-one-sided perspective on this issue can create the conditions for authentic dialogue and help us find better ways to address the concerns that everyone has to keep themselves and their communities safe during emergencies such as the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Julius Geissler, University of Oxford

From Cosmic Congruence to Cultivated Distance: Ritual as Moral Standpoint in the Xìcí Zhuàn 繫辭傳 and the Xúnzǐ 荀子

In both traditional and contemporary scholarship, the Xìcí Zhuàn 繫辭傳 ('Commentary on the Appended Phrases'), one of the principal commentaries to the Zhōuyì 周易 (Changes of the Zhōu), is often understood as presenting a profoundly optimistic view of human beings' ability to take up the particular role that they share with the natural forces of heaven and earth, thus participating in the generative processes of the cosmos in a way that avoids harm and misfortune. On this view, the purpose of the divinatory rituals and system of the Zhōuyì is to help us understand and involve ourselves appropriately in the continuous process of change.

In this talk, I argue that the Xìcí has a more nuanced view of the supposed congruence of the natural world and human beings than this traditional account suggests. I propose that probing the purpose that divinatory and ritual practices played in Warring States discourses directs our attention towards a strong sense of mismatch between heaven, earth, and human beings within the Xící. Indicating striking similarities with the Xúnzǐ 荀子, this perspective reveals a shared concern with urging human beings to cultivate a particular attitude that ought to be taken with regard to human beings' inability properly to 'fit in' their world. On this reading, ritual and divinatory practices emerge as crucial means of transforming human beings' perspective on their peculiar position of sharing in the generative potential of the cosmos and yet being radically distinct from its processes and aims—this insight, I propose, amounts to humans properly taking on the moral standpoint necessary for ethical practice.

Alessio Gerola, Wageningen University

Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's theory of climate (風土 fuudo) offers a phenomenological account of the experience of nature as an inextricable part of human culture, where different cultural practices both build upon and express different experiences of nature. Watsuji's reflections suggest a profound need to reconsider, in the current technological era of the Anthropocene, what ideas and values of nature are expressed in our technological responses to an increasingly unpredictable nature. The aim of this contribution, therefore, is to reflect on the conceptual and normative assumptions that bioinspired design, technology inspired by nature, expresses about the natural world. Bioinspired design attempts to achieve greater ecological sustainability through the technical imitation of natural organisms and ecosystems. There are, however, different subdisciplines, such as biomimicry and biomimetics, whose goals, methods, concepts and values in relation to nature diverge significantly. While biomimetics proposes a scientific methodology for modelling functional principles of organisms, often starting from the intention to address a particular technical problem, biomimicry stresses the importance that, beyond the mimicking of nature's strategies and principles, a biomimetic technology or practice should also embody an ethos of nature that situates it within the broader ecology as a component that supports its healthy functioning. By following Watsuji's invitation to reflect on the co-constitution of nature and culture, this contribution investigates the ways in which nature is expressed in bioinspired design to reflect on how our technological responses to the ecological crisis mediate in turn our own understanding and appreciation of nature.

Shad Gilbert, University of Helsinki

Reassessing Threat on Buddhist Terms

Threats are social products. Nursery workers, financial planners, and peacekeeping forces each recognize threats that the other parties not only fail to recognize but would also require instruction to begin recognizing. Under some circumstances, reformulating threats yields benefits. Since the Mahāyāna Buddhist construction of threat differs substantially from most others, it merits consideration whether its implementation could yield a preferable sorting of experience. This paper argues in the affirmative. To the Buddhist outsider, whether one should be "afraid of tigers, wolves, and lions" may seem like a no-brainer, yet for the Mahāyāna, a peculiar conception of threat makes this a live question. After all, enlightened ones, or "bodhisattva great beings," don't resist "sacrificing themselves for the sake of beings in the animal realm." Mahāyāna disciples commend "the limbs and appendages of these bodhisattva great beings being severed, cut, and scattered in the ten directions; and beings, including those of the animal realm, feeding upon the flesh of those bodhisattva great beings." For the enlightened, only death results, but for the tigers, wolves, and lions, "having acquired loving kindness they become elevated from the animal realm." Disassociating threat from survival and reassociating it with significance may hold value for the non-Buddhist as well. At least under some circumstances, such a realignment may more agreeably sort reality and constitute an amelioration. [Quotations from Fahuaxuanyi (法華玄義) in Swanson, p. 235, and Pañca¬viṃśati¬sāhasrikā-prajñā¬pāramitā (The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines) §62.23, by Padmakara Translation Group (https://84000.co/translation/toh9)]

Francesca Greco, University of Hildesheim

Negativity and Relationality. Some Intersections Between Plato and Nishida.

My presentation aims to discuss relational forms tied to negative phenomena, like linguistic negation and metaphysical nothingness, to explore the contradictoriness of reality at a metaphysical and existential level. I will address these forms as negativity. For this purpose, I selected two major works arising from two metaphysical traditions very distant in space and time because they search for ontological structures underlying reality and deal with the negativity of negation and nothingness. The works I will refer to are Plato's Sophistes and Nishida Kitarō's Logic of Place and Religious Worldview. By admitting non-being, falsity, and error as forms of being and even embedding them in the realm of ideas Plato not only demonstrates dialectically the ontological, linguistic, and phenomenological existence of a relative non-being but also asks the questions and opens the path for a more radical form of negativity providing valuable instruments for investigating the relationality of reality. For his part, Nishida identifies a form of intuitive knowledge and experience which, after overcoming the static oppositions of the so-called "object logic" makes it possible to recognize the contradictory intrinsic meaning of reality and thus its relational negativity. Such contradictoriness is expressed both in the metaphysical, non-substantial principle of absolute nothingness and in its absolute self-negation. Nishida uses these forms of expression to explore the relationship between individual elements of reality, which at the same time establishes a relationship of nothingness with itself. In this context, Nishida draws on various concrete examples, in particular the tradition of Japanese Buddhism and its preference for the everydayness.

Daniel Griffin, University of Warwick

'Without and within can never meet': Two recommendations on the meta-dào of wandering in the Zhuāngzǐ

In the Zhuāngzǐ two contradictory recommendations are made to the reader on the the preferable meta-dào 道 of wandering. The first recommendation is to follow the conventional-dào which happens to be followed in the society one finds oneself within, as seen in Chapter Six's political advice on how to safely and efficaciously serve political elites. The second recommendation is to live as sages or spirit-people 神人 (shénrén), following no human-made dào but instead existing in dàoshū 道樞 (axis of the dào) and constantly shifting one's dào and shì-fēi 是非 (it-not it/right-wrong) value judgments of reality as the unpredictable transformation of things 物化 (wùhuà) necessitates. These are the sages routinely encountered residing in isolation in the wild or as social outcasts. My project is to make sense of these seemingly contradictory recommendations. This requires discussing the relationship between these two approaches to wandering. Both positions make use of the same philosophical techniques, including heart-mind fasting 心齋 (xīnzhāi), to spontaneously generate new dào as each situation demands, free of interfering fixed and inaccurate dào, shì-fēi and perspectives. The difference between wandering 'within' and 'without' is the degree to which previous shì-fēi and dào have been dispensed of. The audience provided with worldly advice are those capable and willing of forgetting most shì-fēi but not all, namely, their valuing of socio-political harmony. This remaining value keeps them wandering within the human conventional world. They have sagely effectiveness but not the true spontaneity of the sage we find in the wild atop mountains or at the edge of society derided as mad and insane. These have gone further with their heart-mind fasting and dispensed with all goals and shì-fēi, enabling them to constantly exist in dàoshū.

Aditya Guntoori, McGill University

Vātsyāyana on the knowledge and meaning of absences

In this paper I will argue that there is an inconsistency in Vātsyāyana (~450 CE) between his epistemology and theory of word meaning on the topic of absences. First I will examine paradigm cases for the Nyāya school which were conceived of as instances analyzable by tadvat; a theory of word meaning that was partially developed by early Nyāya thinkers, and received a full articulation in Nyāya philosophers such as Uddyotakara (~550 CE) and Jayanta (~820 CE). The theory posits that the meaning of a general term such as 'pot' is the possessor of some property such as potness. I will then examine Dignāga's (~480 CE) critique of tadvat, and the problems of innumerability, ambiguity, and co-reference that he argues result from the view. After surveying these problems introduced by Dignāga, I will look at Uddyotakara's defence of the tadvat theory against Dignāga's arguments. Once the necessary background has been explained, I will transpose Uddyotakara's defence onto Vātsyāyana to fill in the gaps in his theory of word meaning. Once this is done however, I will show that his theory of word meaning is no longer compatible with his epistemology of absences.

Kalparnab Gupta, IIT BOMBAY

Skepticism and Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka

Nāgārjuna is often labelled as a skeptic due to his negative dialectics and refusal to admit any thesis of his own. Scholarly controversy center around this textual issue. Matilal championed a mystical-skeptic interpretation of Nāgārjuna in the closing decades of the last century. He characterized Nāgārjuna as a mystic who refuted the reality of the phenomenal world in search of some undifferentiated unity. Nāgārjuna was seen as an argumentative philosopher who sophistically defended the ineffability doctrine. Mills, similarly defends a skeptical reading, albeit differently. He distinguishes between two types, epistemological skepticism and skepticism about philosophy, and sympathizes with the latter. Mills introduces his theory of two phases. In the first phase, Nāgārjuna argues for the theory of universal emptiness while in the second phase, he even gives up this thesis and leaves us without any views. Mills contends that the second stage should be taken as the final conclusion and Nāgārjuna does not teach any positive doctrine about reality. Discussing these two positions in considerable detail, the paper seeks to answer whether the skeptical interpretation is a viable one which is in conformity with the principal texts. For this, the notion of conventional truth in MMK is reformulated by carefully analyzing its relation to the ultimate truth. Also, some issues in language needs to be clarified. Nāgārjuna, through his negative dialectics, wants to surmount the difficulty inherent in substantial semantics. The paper argues that Nāgārjuna has some claims about conventional truth and the skeptical interpretation cannot be sustained. The law of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) is the principal teaching of the Buddha and śūnyāta is only a radical way of articulating this network of dependencies.

Stephen Harris, Leiden University

Virtuous Experience or the Virtue of No Experience: Śāntideva's Two Accounts of Liberation

In recent years, there has been growing philosophical interest in the account of virtue developed by the eighth century Madhyamaka Buddhist, Śāntideva. This talk considers the relation between Śāntideva's account of virtue and his conception of liberation, especially as presented in the ninth chapter of his Guide to the Practices of Awakening (Bodhicaryāvatāra). That chapter appears to contain two incompatible accounts of liberation: a portrayal of the high-level bodhisattva as engaging with conventional reality in a purified mode of perception, and an alternate account in which bodhisattvas transcend conventional reality completely. I suggest a resolution of this apparent tension by drawing on the 12th century Indian Buddhist interpreter of Candrakīrti, Jayānanda, according to whom late-stage bodhisattvas experience the world in a purified mode of perception, while fully awakened Buddhas wholly transcend conventional experience. I suggest that Śāntideva's Guide may be read along these same lines and consider how this should alter our understanding of his virtue theory.

Markus Samuel Haselbeck, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

From Primitive to Humane: Kang Youwei's 康有為 Narration of Society's Evolution as Depicted in his Discourses on Revenge

Revenge offers a way to relief us of pent-up resentment, and thus it stands in close relation with human nature. At the same time, acts of revenge must precisely follow moralistic and ritualistic

rules or else they will only beget more violence in the form of countervengeance. This inherently places revenge at the intersection between human nature and humane behavior. In the Chinese philosophical tradition, it is especially the school of Gongyang Confucianism (Gongyangxue 公羊學), which is known for its discourses on revenge. The members of this school, however, offer vastly differing perspectives on how such acts can be made socially and morally appropriate, and thereby provide diverse notions of both human nature and the humane. While famous for his political ideas incorporating Gongyang Confucian philosophy, Kang Youwei's 康有為 (1858–1927) thought concerning revenge remains largely unknown. Zooming in on the late Qing reformer, this presentation traces his juxtaposition of revenge with his views on the evolution of humankind— from "primitive tribes" to humane societies. Not only does a look into this narrative offer a glimpse at Kang's understanding of societal evolution, but it helps to connect the act of revenge to the Theory of the Three Ages (sanshi shuo 三世說) as found in Gongyang Confucianism. This ultimately reveals in what way Kang's interpretation differs from earlier and later theories and unravels the lasting impact it had on thinkers up to the present day.

Fanrong He, Leiden University

Comparison of Proclus and Ge Hong's self-cultivation ideas based on their ontological structures

Drawing on Toshihiko Izutsu's method of comparative philosophy, I begin by exploring a fundamental ontological structure of "the 'Absolute' and its manifestation" shared across major world traditions. For Proclus, it unfolds as a hierarchy from the One, through the Intellect and World Soul, to individual souls' union with matter. For Ge Hong, it flows from the Mysterious (Xuan), through the Way (Dao) and One (Yi), to Energy (Qi)'s generation of the myriad things. Next, I want to emphasize that the presence of such ontological structure in these traditions serves a practical purpose: they provide this structure for achieving a fulfilled life by understanding it and acting accordingly. For Proclus, this entails the descended soul's journey back to divine union. For Ge Hong, this involves pursuing immortality through the practice of inner alchemy. My choice of Proclus is twofold. First, Neoplatonism, through Augustine to German Romanticism, has shaped modern Western thought, allowing its integration into Izutsu's Eastern philosophy framework and revealing a perennial philosophical structure. Second, unlike Plotinus, Proclus uniquely emphasized returning to everyday life after divine union, showing how to infuse ordinary existence with heightened spiritual awareness. I selected Ge Hong for his integration of Daoist and Confucian thought. While traditional Daoism emphasizes naturally following the Way - achievable only after "sitting in forgetfulness" (zuowang) - Ge Hong proposed a more practical approach. His philosophy of "commanding destiny rather than leaving it to heaven" suggests cultivating naturalness through deliberate worldly practice, ultimately leading to enhanced virtue. Finally, I propose that this line of inquiry points to a promising path forward: by drawing upon the shared methods of spiritual cultivation found among the greatest thinkers throught out the history, we can find ways to address the spiritual suffering that afflicts contemporary humanity.

Carl Helsing, High Point University

Great Humanity is Not Humane: Daoist Ideas of Emptiness, Non-Action, and Nature in response to the Anthropocene

"The Dao does not admit of being praised, the great argument does not require words." Chapter 2 of the Zhuangzi famously criticizes the power of language to obscure the way and fracture the natural relationships essential for sustainable existence. In contrast to anthropocentric standards and methods for managing the affairs of the world, Daoist texts celebrate emptiness (無 wu and 虛 xu) non-action (無爲 wuwei), and naturalness (自然 ziran). These ideals are far from arbitrary but are modeled on Dao: always emptying itself to further the creative processes of nature. In this manner Daoism presents a radical form of spiritual leadership in response to the Anthropocene. Instead of being merely a stoic response to adversity, Daoist principles encourage non-anthropocentric organic relationships and creative responses to the changing conditions of life. I further argue that Daoist principles may find sympathetic alliances in two unexpected but important locations. First, Daoist moral psychology shares an interest in self-control and receptive listening with diverse ascetic traditions in world religions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and other religious traditions all contain ascetic practices that reject centering human values and nurture receptivity to larger spiritual realities. Second, the Dao De Jing and the Zhuangzi both promote visions of sustainable communities in intimate harmony with natural environments. Far from being romanticism or naïve idealism, we see contemporary indigenous communities creating localized harmonies with nature through diverse ways of life or lifeways. These lifeways vary greatly in their environments, traditions, and practices, but share an important feature: intimate organic relationships with local natural processes. Like ascetic traditions, these lifeways require listening to nature itself to form the teachings that create sustainable communities. In conclusion I argue Daoism, ascetic traditions, and indigenous lifeways all recognize the problems of the Anthropocene cannot be resolved with anthropocentric values. Instead of obscuring the Way (道 dao) with human values and standards, survival and even flourishing require listening to what the world has to teach.

Ranjoo Herr, Bentley University

Can Care Ethics Save Confucianism? A Critical Assessment

Confucianism, the dominant ideology of East Asia for over 2000 years, was one of the most oppressive to women in human history leading many to the pessimistic conclusion that promoting gender equality in East Asia is not compatible with Confucianism. However, the possibility of Confucian feminism opened up when an influential Confucian theorist, Chenyang Li (1994), made an innovative case for Confucian feminism based on similarities between Confucianism and a branch of Western feminist theory, care ethics. Care ethics developed in the U.S. in the 1980s in opposition to the influential justice perspective defended by Lawrence Kohlberg and John Rawls; it criticizes the independent, autonomous, and rational self of liberalism for not only being mistaken about human nature but also neglecting the importance of human relationship. Care ethics instead conceives of the human self as intricately enmeshed in human relationships and considers caring, which sustains the best kinds of relationship, as a "premoral good" that ultimately grounds morality (Noddings 1984, 84). Li highlights Confucianism's similarities with care ethics in conceiving of the

human self as irreducibly relational and promoting ren as its primary virtue. Based on such similarities between care ethics and Confucianism, according to Li, feminism in Confucian societies might take "a new form of Confucianism" (Li 1994, 86). Li's position has been dubbed "Confucian care ethics" and since become a dominant conception of Confucian feminism among Confucian theorists. In my presentation, I shall present arguments that demonstrate that Confucian care ethics is inadequate as Confucian feminism.

Peter Hershock, East West Center

From Human Evolution to Humane Evolution: A Buddhist Improvisation on the Future of Consciousness

Theories matter, not just epistemically, but ethically. This is especially true of theories of consciousness and evolution in the context of humanity's arrival at what has been referred to as an existential precipice. Improvising in a nondualist and nonreductionist Buddhist key, this talk will counter the mythic narrative of reductive materialism and competitive fitness that undergirds much of current theorizing about evolution and consciousness, offering an account of evolution as the historical residue of consciousness mattering—an account that invites reimagining the existential risks of climate disruption and artificial general intelligence as incentives for a diversity-affirming ethical evolutionary turn comparable to that from biological to cultural evolution.

Jay Hetrick, University of Sharjah

Gilles Deleuze and the Kyoto School: Ethico-Aesthetics

The aim of this paper is to bring Gilles Deleuze and the Kyoto School into an imaginary conversation around the idea of philosophy as a way of life, or what I call ethico-aesthetics. I first show how ethico-aesthetics in the Kyoto School modernizes the traditional notion of geidō, or ways of art, through the language of continental philosophy. Even though the discourse they construct in this respect remains less rigorous than that of the other domains of philosophy with which they engage, the ethico-aesthetic concepts of Nishida Kitarō, Nishitani Keiji, and Ōhashi Ryōsuke provide a starting point from which we might begin to piece together Deleuze's seemingly random, but persistent and ultimately significant references to East Asian art and philosophy. I argue that Deleuze's references to the Zen sage and poet-painter—in addition to his uses of the Stoics, Spinoza, and Nietzsche—are necessary to fully understand the immanent goal of his ethico-aesthetics. I conclude by demonstrating that, although there is no evidence that Deleuze was familiar with the Kyoto School, he unwittingly offers more complete and contemporary solutions to the ethico-aesthetic issues presented by some of its key thinkers.

Jing Iris Hu, Concordia University, Montréal

The Moral Insights of Confucian Mothers

Confucian mothers are frequently portrayed as possessing profound moral insights, guiding their adult sons through complex moral and political dilemmas. Their moral knowledge demonstrates that moral learning is shaped by internalized familial and social roles rather than being restricted to a specific gender. Despite classical Confucian teachings, which emphasize women's obedience to

male family members, early Confucian texts also highlight the moral authority of mothers. These women not only provide essential moral and political guidance to their sons but also reference Confucian classics and historical texts, traditionally reserved for elite male education. Two notable examples from early texts illustrate this: Mencius's mother corrects his misunderstanding of ritual when he wrongly accuses his wife of improper conduct, emphasizing that he himself failed to observe the appropriate etiquette (Han Shi Wai Zhuan, 9/17). Similarly, Zifa's mother, upon hearing that he feasts while his soldiers survive on meager rations, refuses to let him into their home until he recognizes his failure in leadership (Biographies of Exemplary Women, 1/10). These accounts illustrate that Confucian mothers' moral influence extends beyond the household, challenging conventional gender roles. Their wisdom, often shaping their sons' ethical and political decisions, underscores the broader Confucian principle that moral authority is not solely the domain of men but is deeply embedded in familial relationships and social expectations.

Ruyu Hung, National Chiayi University

Eco-Bildung Through Thoreau, Daoism, Heidegger

For centuries, there has been a firm belief in the superiority of humanity over other forms of beings on Earth. This Anthropocentrism assumes that everything on Earth can be exploited by humanity and that nature is, as Heidegger says, a mere standing reservoir for the human use. From an anthropocentric viewpoint, nature is often seen as a resource or a means for fulfilling human needs and desires. In other words, nature is only considered valuable primarily in relation to its utility for human well-being. This paper aims to explore the meaning of nature, human nature, and the human-nature relationship through intercultural dialogues between Thoreau, Daoist philosophers, and Heidegger, all of who can be seen as pioneers of ecological thought. David Henry Thoreau's writings about nature have inspired people to rethink their relationship with nature, leading to the development of environmentalism, and most importantly, the adoption of ecologically ethical ways of life. Following the thread of Thoreau's view of wildness, this paper discusses Daoist 'zìrán' and Heidegger's 'Gelassenheit'. 'Zìrán' in modern times is generally translated as 'nature'. Yet in the traditional context, 'zìrán' means 'self-so', 'self-as-it-is', 'spontaneity', and 'effortlessness'. The concept of 'zìrán' enlightens an ecologically responsible and responsive way that humans treat nature.   Heidegger's 'Gelassenheit' means releasement, letting-be, or letting-go, serving as the pivotal element in examining the role of 'will' in freedom and its undoing.   With the inspiration of Thoreau's 'wildness', Heidegger's 'Gelassenheit' and the Daoist 'zìrán', an alternate way of human self can be reconceptualised: the human self as 'a part and parcel of Nature' rather than the master of Nature. On this basis, Eco-Bildung in the epoch of Anthropocene can be reconceived as the cultivation of 'non-self'.

Sookyung Hwang, Dongguk University

Practicing compassion for transforming the self and the world: Karen Armstrong and Seon Master Daehaeng's perspectives on human nature and the interconnected world

This paper examines the significance of the philosophy of compassion and interconnectedness of the world presented by Karen Armstrong and Korean Seon Master Daehaeng for overcoming the crisis of contemporary society and recovering our true human nature. Armstrong confronted human

sufferings caused by hatred, dualistic thinking, and discrimination. She has advocated for compassion and has called upon everyone to restore compassion to the center of morality, religion, and their lives. Daehaeng suggested a method of practice that can utilize the energy of a compassionate mind in daily life. She emphasized the interconnectedness of all beings, and taught about the non-duality and compassion as her core teachings. According to Armstrong and Daehaeng, the value of compassion signifies the dignity and equality of all beings, and it urges us to act socially responsible in the world. Compassion does not only imply empathy for the suffering of others, but also means to be proactive in eliminating suffering in every possible way. For them, individual change can become the driving force of social change. Armstrong asserts that we are addicted to egocentrism in ignorance, while Daehaeng expounded on the idea of self-attachment is the root of all suffering. To practice compassion, Armstrong suggested the Golden Rule, and that we should expand our capacity to understand even the position of our enemies. Daehaeng taught that, since everything is interconnected by Buddha nature, the One Mind, and the fundamental nature of everything is empty and non-dual, the suffering of others is, the same as our own suffering, and helping others is the same as helping ourselves. Daehaeng and Armstrong's thoughts on compassion were derived from their respective experiences in their lives. Although different in some ways, the compatibility with respect to compassion between the two of them helps us recognize the indispensability of compassion for humanity.

Evgenia Ilieva, Ithaca College

Between Worlds: J. L. Mehta's Hermeneutics

An important though underappreciated influence on cognate disciplines like comparative philosophy, comparative political theory, and subaltern studies is the work of Indian philosopher Jarava Lal Mehta (1912 -1988). Although Mehta devoted his entire scholarly career to a careful and sustained reflection on the philosophical and religious encounter between India and the West – indeed, he channeled much of his energies towards elucidating and developing the hermeneutic notions of understanding and interpretation – his work remains little known and therefore seldom discussed by scholars of hermeneutics, including those who today labor under the banners of comparative philosophy and comparative political theory. Though Mehta advanced a sophisticated hermeneutic theory that he developed via a critical engagement with Martin Heidegger's and Hans-Georg Gadamer's work, his writings remain little known and therefore seldom discussed by most contemporary scholars of hermeneutics. Consider, for instance, that neither of the two more recent volumes devoted to hermeneutics and its history – The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics (Malpass 2015) and The Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics (Forster and Gjesdal 2019) – offers any sustained discussion of Mehta's work. Indeed, if he receives any mention at all it is only in the footnotes. Against this background, the present paper seeks to situate Mehta's writings within the modern history of hermeneutic theory in order to highlight his distinctive contributions to this tradition. Focusing on Mehta's engagement with Heidegger's thought, I first explore why he found Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics to be particularly suitable to the task of the creative reinterpretation of the Indian philosophical tradition. In a second step, I show how Mehta both supplements and attempts to move beyond Heidegger, and how in doing so he provides the impetus for the so-called "Heideggerian turn" in postcolonial studies. Finally, in the conclusion I

consider the implications of Mehta's engagement with Heidegger for intercultural hermeneutics and comparative philosophy more broadly.

Arihant Kumar Jain, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai

Anekāntavāda, An Application of Universal Democracy

Democracy as a system of governance inherently fosters pluralism, individual rights, and social responsibility. On the other hand, Anekāntavāda is a concept based on Jainism that supports the democratic ethos through the encouragement of tolerance, acceptance, and comprehension of various perspectives. This article outlines the interrelationships between Anekāntavāda and democracy, illustrating how integrating these principles can lead to a more equitable and just society. By exploring its implementation in democratic nations, we illustrate how Anekāntavāda encourages inclusivity, open conversation, and the capacity to embrace diverse perspectives, ultimately strengthening the democratic framework of countries. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that it does not serve as a direct template for democratic governance, though it can be seen as influenced by Anekāntavāda. The study investigates the degree to which universal pluralism can affect democratic operations, enhance inclusivity, and aid in conflict resolution within democratic communities. A qualitative methodology combining a textual examination of Jain principles and democratic theories is employed to assess how pluralism underpins the safeguarding of minority rights and enhances collaborative policymaking. The results emphasize the capability of pluralism to enrich democratic dialogue through its non-authoritarian nature and inclusivity, indicating its potential to establish more just and harmonious societies. However, difficulties in incorporating pluralism into contemporary political structures are simultaneously addressed, highlighting the necessity for further interdisciplinary investigation.

Sung-Hwan Jo and **Nam-Jin Heo**, Wonkwang University

Political Ecology of Ki (氣) in Action (活動氣化)

Traditionally, in Northeast Asian civilizations, the concept of ki (氣; Ch. Qi) has been used to explain the re/circulation of energy as well as the movement and transformation of all things in nature. To this end, the theory of yin-yang, which originally described the movement of water, served as a foundational framework for understanding the circulation of ki (氣). In particular, the 19th-century Korean philosopher Choi Han-ki (崔漢綺, 1803–1877) attributed a certain agential power to the concept of ki, enabling it to account for the agency of objects and things, as well as the generative changes observed in nature. Crucially, for Choi, these objects also included tools and devices, which provided a philosophical foundation for explaining how human-made tools could alter the atmosphere and their surroundings. In this context, this paper examines Choi's Philosophy of ki (氣學) from a political-ecological perspective and reinterprets it to seek alternatives to modern anti-ecological civilization.

Wang Kai, Ocean university of China

From "The Sage Has No Mind"(聖人無心) to "The Sage Has Enlightenment Mind"(聖心本悟):On Meng an's Ontological Transformation of Sengzhao's Concept of Sage and Its Ethical Significance

A Chan monk, Meng-an He-shang, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century, composed a study of Seng Zhao's thought in the Jie-shi Zhao-lun(Excerpt Commentaries of Chao Lun-The Treatises of Seng-chao). The book was based on Zun Shi's Zhu Chaolun Shu(Commentaries on the Notes of the Chao Lun) and incorporated the views of many Chinese Buddhist schools, including Huayen, Tiantai, and Chan. In this book, Meng-an makes an ontological transformation of Seng Zhao's concepts of the sage: Seng Zhao's Prajñā is not Knowledge Theory is based on the ontological premise that the essence of everything is emptiness, and that the sages, as enlightened beings fully aware of this truth, should have reached a state of epistemological "ignorance". However, Meng-an changed the ontological focus of Seng Zhao and was more interested in how the sages reached the state of "ignorance". Thus he utilized Seng Zhao's concept of "true mind" from a Chan Buddhist standpoint. He believed that the key to the sage's transcendence of conventional truth and the attainment of the wisdom of ignorance lies in the sage's possession of the true mind, which is the original state of enlightenment. The true mind is inherent in all human beings, and by realizing it, the sage achieves the state of enlightenment. This kind of theory makes the true mind the key to bridging Buddhist theory and practice. It provides an ethical foundation for Buddhism, especially Chan practitioners, to realize the enlightenment of sages. By relying on the true mind, practitioners can exhibit all ethical conduct without becoming heavily attached to selfish desires. Specifically, full consideration will be given to the ethical potential for all beings to achieve compassion, equality, and proper management of human-environment relationships through such foundation of ethical practice. As such, the paper will analyze this transformation and its ethical implications through an examination of the definition of sage, a conceptual evaluation of mindlessness and true mind, and the correlation between ontology and ethics.

Asoss Muhammed Qader Khoshnaw, independent with the chair of Ancient Near Eastern Studies University of Wuerzburg

Truth and Justice in the Light of legal processes in the Kingdom of Arrapḫa

The Akkadian terms mīšāru ("justice") and kīttu ("truth") reflect fundamental concepts in Mesopotamian thought. Kīttu derives from the root k-w-n ("to be fixed, to be firm"). Lämmerhirt interprets its primary meaning as "being fixed" in relation to spatial and positional change, from which he derives the metaphorical sense of "reliability" or "being true." mīšāru denotes justice but does not refer to codified law or its enforcement; rather, it pertains to maintaining social order and protecting the weak from the strong. The concept of truth in this context encompasses moral, epistemological, metaphysical, and semantic dimensions. Comparing these ideals with actual legal practice may support Marc Van De Mieroop's argument that Old Babylonian society engaged in a form of philosophy centered on the pursuit of truth. Examining the relationship between idealized principles and judicial procedures offers insights into how these concepts were applied in practice. The selected corpus of applied legal documents originates from the kingdom of Arrapḫa in the eastern Tigris region, a vassal state of the Mitanni Empire in the time between approximately 1500 and 1340 BCE. The primary excavation sites—Nuzi, Arrapḫa (Kirkuk), and Tall Faḫḫar—have

yielded over 7,000 documents. However, no legal codes, such as the Laws of Lipit-Ištar, the Code of Ešnunna, the Code of Ḫammurabi, or the Middle Assyrian and Hittite laws, have been found there. Additionally, kīttu and mīšāru are absent from the known texts of Arrapḫa, despite the evident influence of Babylonian scribal traditions. This raises the question of whether Arrapḫa's legal tradition aligned with those of neighboring regions or developed distinct concepts of justice. Numerous legal documents record judicial procedures and court cases, enabling the reconstruction of legal norms and notions of truth and justice. Given the hierarchical structure of society, where access to legal representation, literacy, and documentation was unevenly distributed, to what extent could legal equality truly exist? Furthermore, how did reliance on written legal records shape the concept of justice, and can a legal system be considered fair if majority of the population did not have access to recources directly due to illiteracy? Which principle of proportionality was maintained? These questions will be addressed.

David H. Kim, University of San Francisco

Reverence and Vigilance: Conceptualizing Moral Fortitude with Toegye

Toegye (pen name for Yi Hwang) was a central figure in Korea's Joseon neo-Confucianism. One of his most sustained projects was promoting a form of moral self-cultivation that centered the development of reverence/gyeong. Influenced by Zhu Xi, he regarded moral cultivation as a resonance with and manifesting of one's true latent ethico-spiritual nature, for which reverence was central. But unlike his predecessor, Toegye prioritized in reverence an emotional structure deeply linked to vigilance and apprehension and a distinctive practice of self-examination. This is in part because he sought to explain how one should develop moral fortitude, a kind of integrity, in a world in which moral agency is consistently distracted or lulled. In this paper, I contend that the notion of vigilance and the varieties of reverence have been undertheorized in the relevant literature. I offer some elaboration on how we might develop these ideas and in what ways Toegye advances the concept of moral fortitude. In light of the foregoing, this paper considers a moderate deviation from the trajectory implied in the conference theme. For some neo-Confucians, the project of cultivating one's nature in the direction of humaneness gets incorporated into a project of reverence cultivation. And Toegye's version of this project might be understood as a shift in the more common cultivation narrative of his day and one that has some lessons for the present moment.

Hyunju Kim, Wonkwang University

Harmonizing the Moral Self: Exploring Tang Junyi's Philosophy of Heavenly Dao (天道) and Human Dao (人道)

This paper examines Tang Junyi's (唐君毅 1909-1978) concept of 'Establishing the Ultimate Human' (立人極), articulated in his influential works such as The Experience of Life, The Establishment of the Moral Self, and Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason. Tang's philosophy delves into the formation of the moral self through lived experiences, positing that moral existence requires self-governance to transcend one's empirical self. He outlines a four-stage developmental process: integration with nature, the awakening of self-consciousness, self-affirmation and transcendence, and the reconstruction of the cosmos. In the final stage, the individual's mind meets its inherent

needs by harmonizing with the universe, thereby restoring cosmic order. Tang emphasizes the significance of self-reflection and inner cultivation, advocating for individuals to enrich their inner lives and move toward universal harmony. This journey exemplifies the union of 'Heavenly Dao (天道)' and 'Human Dao (人道)', charting a pathway to realizing the moral self.

Seonjung Kim, Florida State University

Three aspects of Weifa in Zhu Xi's Philosophy of Mind

We can observe that contemporary Confucian scholars have different interpretations of one of the most important concepts in Zhu Xi's philosophy, weifa (未發), which can be translated as "the unmanifested mind." In this paper, I will articulate three distinct interpretations of weifa presented in previous studies and analyze how these differences arise from varying understandings of the concept. Zhu Xi employs a mixed approach in his interpretation of weifa, sometimes emphasizing its ideal aspects, sometimes referring to its practical aspects, and at other times describing the mental state by provisionally discussing methods for maintaining and developing the unmanifested mind. I point out that the differences in previous scholars' interpretations arise due to the lack of sufficient analysis of Zhu Xi's three perspectives used to understand the concept of weifa. I argue that an analysis of the three perspectives on the concept of weifa (未發) provides a systematic way to integrate the contradictory interpretations of contemporary scholars. Furthermore, I will assert that this integrative understanding is also consistent with Zhu Xi's various statements from his texts. Moreover, I will argue that my interpretation has the theoretical advantage of highlighting the developmental aspect of weifa.

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, VU Amsterdam

Bhimrao Ambedkar's Notion of an Interdependent Community

As is well-known, the making of a postcolonial Indian community of citizens was a philosophical endeavour. It strove to develop an ethical idiom that could be harnessed to implement an equitable access to resources, especially for those who had been systematically denied this access historically. Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956), the drafter of the Indian constitution, was a key player in this project. My paper will outline Bhimrao Ambedkar's notion of a community that is co-constituted with the making of a state that can, and does, implement structural changes to create equal citizens. Remarkably, Ambedkar does not rely on statist coercion as a quick fix to create societal equality. Instead, he aims for a long-term individual transformation of the mind, especially through the notion of a civic nation that can be understood as a meta-plan for creating a new Indian citizen, and, simultaneously, a new, inclusive Indian society.

Yuheng Ko, University of California, Riverside

Toward An Ethical Aesthetics of Wenqi (文氣): Cultivating Sagacity and Literary Expertise in Liu Xie's The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons

Literary elements are prominently noticeable in Chinese philosophical texts, as evidenced by the exemplary status of the Odes in the Analects, the famous metaphors of the Four Sprouts in the Mengzi, and the wealth of allegories in the Zhuangzi, to name but a few. The aesthetic quality of

these literary elements profoundly informs philosophical discourse, warranting a comparative approach that integrates literary and philosophical studies. By "aesthetic," I refer to "sensory perception" in its etymological sense. In his The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons (文心雕龙), regarded as the first systematic account of Chinese literary aesthetics, Liu Xie (465–522 CE) articulates a discourse of wenqi 文氣 by associating wen (visual patterns, writing, and the exemplary king) with qi—two foundational concepts in early Chinese philosophy that span semantic fields ranging from cosmological and physiological to aesthetic and ethical.   By combining these two concepts, Liu addresses the enduring philosophical debate on nature versus nurture in cultivation, relating it to literary genius or expertise. A writer's wenqi, as expressed in their wen (writing), not only reflects the work's literary value but also serves as a measure of the writer's moral attainment. The ethical dimension of wenqi reveals how aesthetic experience informs moral behavior. Sagacity is thus not merely an intellectual awakening but a deeply embodied experience; one experiences moral beauty viscerally through sensory perception and is compelled to act. The Mengzi, as I will show, demonstrates this through its evocative metaphors and stories—namely, the philosopher's wen文—enabling readers to experience moral good through literary excellence. Similarly, Zhuangzi's story of Cook Ding, for instance, illustrates sagacity as an embodied skill, where cutting an ox becomes a rhythmic, harmonious act akin to a dance. Liu's ethical aesthetics of wenqi provides literary scholars and philosophers with a perspective that unites ethics and aesthetics, suggesting that sagacity and its cultivation are deeply intertwined with the sensory experiences that deeply inspire moral acts.

Elias Koenig, Twente University

Ziran (自然) Zoetology and Environmental Justice

This paper explores an alternative conception of the natural based in classical Chinese philosophy and its implication for contemporary debates on environmental and climate justice. Its point of departure is the notion of ziran 自然, the most common translation of "Nature" in contemporary Chinese. As I show, ziran attained its modern meaning only rather recently, as a 20th century linguistic re-import from Japan. In classical texts and specifically in the Daoist canon, on the other hand, ziran is better translated as "self-so-ing", that is, as referring to the ceaseless autopoietic transformation of the cosmos on a variety of levels. It represents a holistic, dialectical view of the natural that transcends any strict human-nature binary and challenges a view of nature principally as a resource to be exploited for human benefit. The genealogical rupture between ziran and Nature, thus, marks more than a mere ontological difference. Rather, ziran calls into question the very primacy of ontology (bentilun 本体论) itself. Instead of conceptualizing nature as a thing, it foregrounds the complex and interlacing bundle of processes as which most people experience nature. As Roger Ames has suggested, the worldview that ziran encapsulates could be called a zoetology (shengshenglun 生生论), as it takes the associative and transactional nature of life itself as its starting point. In the second part of this paper, I explore the implications of this gestalt shift from ontological to zoetological thinking for the climate and environmental justice discourse. Contemporary debates in the field, I observe, still usually reproduce an essentially Cartesian approach to Nature. They tend to construe Nature as an object to be (re-)distributed, such as in the

prominent debates about carbon budgets or land rights. From a holistic, zoetological standpoint, on the other hand, justice cannot be reduced to a state or principle of perfect distribution. Instead, it should be viewed as a process of fostering and participating in moral growth and inter- and intra-species flourishing. To understand environmental and climate justice from a zoetological perspective would therefore imply a fundamental shift in our thinking about justice – away from a view of justice as an ideal state of just distribution, towards one of justice as a collaborative and open-ended process of relating to the world.

Emma Kopeinigg, Utrecht University

Transhumanist aspirations to overcome ageing challenge traditional conceptions of life's natural cycles. From a Daoist perspective, particularly that of Zhuangzi, such efforts reflect a deep-seated resistance to the spontaneous flow of the Dao (道). Unlike Confucian moral cultivation, which emphasizes continuous self-improvement, Zhuangzi's philosophy embraces effortless wandering (you 游) and an acceptance of transformation, including ageing and death, as intrinsic to cosmic harmony. This article explores how Zhuangzi's thought critiques the transhumanist desire to control and transcend biological limits. Does extending life disrupt the Daoist ideal of non-attachment and harmony with nature? Or could radical longevity be reframed as a new mode of wandering within the ever-changing Dao? Through an analysis of key Zhuangzi passages and contemporary bioethical debates, this paper argues that embracing impermanence, rather than resisting it, may offer a more profound response to the challenges of ageing in the transhumanist era.

Gus Kraus, St. John's College - Santa Fe

Narrative as the 'Honeycomb' of Philosophy: (Self-)Reflections on Poetic Interpretation in Saundaryalaharī and Proclus' "Hymn to the Muses"

How can one say what is beyond words? How can one describe experiencing the divine, that which is the precondition for any description? This basic problem challenged both late Platonic and medieval Tantric philosophers. They searched for a discourse which was not limited to denotation, an aesthetics which was not simply mimetic. Both therefore turned to reading (and writing) poetry as a solution. In studying this philosophical problem, we can look to similarities in the poetry and interpretations thereof between Greek Late Antiquity and Medieval India to outline possible solutions. This paper consists of a comparative study of selections of Saundaryalaharī and Proclus' "Hymn to the Muses", focusing on themes of poetic inspiration, suggestion, and religious analogy. This inquiry will be aided both by the philosophical prose of Platonic and Tantric philosophers and commenters, as well as contemporary scholarship. While noting the surprising similarities in content (addressed to poetic Goddesses; vāgdevī, SL 17, Proclus v.2; shared symbolism, e.g. beehives/honey in Proclus v.16, SL 15) between the Śākta scripture and Proclus' hymn, studying formal homologies provides a fruitful way to explore the opening question. These homologies will be explored as follows. Both texts enmesh themselves in an intertextual network through allusion to their respective epic traditions (Garuḍa, Sl 20, cf. Mahābhārata I.28); for Homeric allusions and Hesiodic quotation, cf. Van den Berg 2001, 210-211). Further, both texts speak both self-referentially (tantraṃ ... idam, SL 31; cf. Proclus v.4 in Van den Berg 211-214) in an esoteric mode and with the technical terminology of exegetical methods developed by philosophers (rasikāḥ, SL

33; νοεροῖς, Proclus v.11). Crucially, both texts analogize hermeneutic processes to processes of religious initiation in their respective cultural frameworks (cf. Chlup 2012, 195; Van den Berg 219-220; Timalsina 2015, 27, 29).

Lanlan Kuang, University of Central Florida

Sounds and Colors of the Mountain: Embodied Experience and Self-Transcendence in Chinese Poetic Narratives

This presentation investigates the fluid nature of selfhood and identity in selected Tang and Song poetic narratives through the lens of sensory experience, particularly how poets render aesthetically the sounds and colors of mountains and natural landscapes. By examining the shifting usage of "I" and evolving notions of "self" through both phenomenological and literary lenses, this study explores how sensory engagement with the natural world leads to self-transcendence. In Chinese classics, the sentiment attitudes and thoughts of the ancients regarding specific environments, people, and events were predominantly expressed through poetry, where physical sensations often serve as gateways to deeper spiritual and philosophical insights. Drawing on phenomenological approaches to embodied experience, the author explores how some of the Tang and Song poets articulate the complex interplay between bodies, senses, and meaning-making processes that define human consciousness and its relationship with the natural world. The analysis examines how these poetic narratives serve as vital repositories of human experience within the context of Chinese aesthetics, under the influence of Buddhism and Daoism in particular, where the narrative "I" becomes a dynamic site of interaction between sensory perception and spiritual transformation, between individual consciousness and shared cultural understanding. Through close readings of selected poems, this study demonstrates how the poetic articulation of embodied experience reveals deeper insights into what makes us not just human, but humane - particularly in how these works capture the delicate relationship between individual sensory experience and transcendent awareness. By examining how poets navigate the boundaries between personal sensory experience and universal human conditions through their encounters with mountains and landscapes, this presentation contributes to our understanding of how literary narratives facilitate the journey from human to humane through the transcendence from individual experience to collective spiritual awareness.

Zhao Kuang, Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Metaphor: Philosophical Rhetoric and Chinese Thinking

In the research scope of modern discipline of history of Chinese philosophy, the mainstream of classical Chinese philosophy is generally believed lacking interest or ability in theoretical argumentation, and this is in sharp contrast with Western philosophy. In the world, the way of rational thinking of human beings is not limited to the scope that the classical model of Western philosophy can provide. In the past, efforts to establish theoretical relationships between concepts, topics, or ideas were attributed to the search for narrow logical relations and the way of reasoning displayed in philosophical discussions was always considered analytical, but now we know that the process of thinking does not rely solely on logical analysis in the narrow sense, and that the way of analogy and storytelling also has the power to construct ideas and deduce topics in

a deep sense, that is, the activities of reasoning and argumentation can also be carried out with the help of "philosophical rhetoric" way to expand. The focus on philosophical rhetoric is complementary to that of deductive analysis in the narrow sense, especially when dealing with Chinese philosophical material, which may allow us to incorporate more of what has been previously overlooked into our thinking. In all means of philosophical rhetorics, the metaphor may be the first research approach to be considered. It may help us to understand more comprehensively what rational thinking in classical Chinese philosophy means, and more effectively break through the limitations of traditional Western logic in the modern study of Chinese philosophy.

Nadine Künne, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Early Buddhist Understanding(s) of the Cause of Human Suffering Exploring Gāndhārī Sources on the Early Development of the Concept of Pratītya-samutpāda

One of the most fundamental questions Buddhism deals with is the origin of human suffering. The canonical answer to this question is often presented in the form of the twelve-limbed chain of dependent-arising (pratītya-samutpāda). Yet, from the early sūtra literature onward there has been much debate about a more detailed interpretation of the concept of dependent arising: What are the causal relations between its limbs? How does it narrate the causality of ignorance, human consciousness, rebirth and suffering, as well as their resolution? Scholars such as Bernhard and Schmithausen put forward the hypothesis that the twelve-limbed chain is not the original form of the pratītya-samutpāda formula. Instead, it was combined from shorter sub-chains, which explain its different aspects but lead to incoherences in its overall interpretation. Using the now available Gāndhārī manuscripts, which offer a new, unique insight into early Buddhist doctrinal developments in Gandhāra, we can reconsider the question of the original development of the concept of dependent arising. I will present what the Gāndhārī texts tell us about early notions of dependent arising and the development of the 12-limbed-chain. I want to show that the Gāndhārī commentarial literature from ca. 1st cent. CE evidences the existence of several of the sub-chains identified by Schmithausen. Further, these commentaries provide conceptual mappings between the pratītya-samutpāda and the concept of the three courses (vartmans) and the four nutriments (āhāras). Most importantly, they present a contrasting model of causality, the bundles of reeds (naḍakalāpin), which explains an interdependent causal relationship between certain limbs of the chain. Hence, I will trace these two models of causality – unidirectional and interdependent – regarding their understanding of the arising of human consciousness in other Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist sources. This will help us understand the contested development of the notion of causality in early Buddhism.

Fang-Ru Kuo and **Duen-Min Deng**, National Taiwan Normal University

Conceptual Engineering for Chinese Philosophy

One of the major objectives in comparative philosophy is to find a method of understanding philosophical views in one culture without implicit bias from another culture. One way of doing this is to follow Chad Hansen's (1992) proposal to construct a suitable 'interpretive theory' that reflects the true underlying theories of language and of mind of the target culture, so as to avoid imposing

presuppositions of our own culture into our interpretations. This means that if we are to understand classical Chinese philosophy, we should first construct a suitable interpretive theory, such that we can avoid imposing our own views about language and mind into our interpretations.   In this paper, we argue that this approach is basically correct if our goal is to have a 'conceptual analysis' project. To appeal to Hansen's 'principle of humanity' is indeed the best we can do for analyzing the concepts in the target culture without bias. However, we also argue that things would be quite different if our goal is to have a 'conceptual engineering' project. While conceptual analysis aims to understand the target concepts as faithfully as one can, conceptual engineering aims to improve them: either by replacing them with intellectually better concepts (such as Carnap's method of 'explication'), or by ameliorating them for some practical or political purposes (such as Haslanger's ameliorative project). In light of this, if our goal is to have conceptual engineering for Chinese philosophy, we are allowed to improve the target concepts by deviating slightly from how the ancient Chinese people think about language and mind. In this paper, we propose a way of doing this without too much bias from another culture.

Wing Keung Lam, Dokkyo University

Rationality and morality: On Nishida Kitarō's "concrete" logic

This paper examines the relationship between rationality and morality in Nishida Kitarō's moral philosophy. Its aim is threefold. Firstly, having hardly criticized formal logic as an abstract theory, which is unable to explicate morality in Zen no kenkyū (善の研究, An inquiry into the good, 1911), Nishida does not completely deny the role of rationality. In the article, "Ronri to seimei" (論理と生命, logic and life), I would like to suggest that Nishida advocates a "concrete" (in contrast to formal logic), of which can help uncover the role of rationality for morality. Secondly, in respect of the actualization of personality (人格の実現, jinkaku no jitsugen), which is the stance of Nishida's moral philosophy, I would like to explore how this "concrete" logic is related to feeling and volition. As is well known, the very content of personality (人格, jinkaku), is the union for knowledge, feeling and volition (知情意合一, chijōigōitsu). Last but not least, unlike the discourse of knowing-how and knowing-to given by Gilbert Ryle and Huang Yong respectively, which in one way or the other highlights the indispensable role of knowledge, I would like to propose a feeling-to approach in line with Nishida's "concrete" logic for morality. Nishida is in fact very sympathetic to the British Moral Sense School, especially Shaftesbury's idea of harmony for moral senses. While feelings, to be more precise, moral feelings, uphold a primacy for knowledge and volition, the feeling-to approach does not undermine rationality or "concrete" logic for Nishida, which plays a significant role in judging right and wrong for moral senses.

L. K. Gustin Law, University of Chicago

Is it natural to become good? A dialogue between Mengzi and Aristotle

Aristotle says that virtues arise in us not by nature (Nicomachean Ethics 2.1). On the other hand, Mengzi appeals frequently to a plant's growth to represent a human's becoming virtuous, and endorses that the "nature" of human "is good", in the sense that "if one goes by one's inherent conditions, one can do/be/become good by them" (Mengzi 6A6). It is true that the "nature" of x in Aristotle means x's internal source of its own change, whereas the "nature" of x in Mengzi means,

roughly, how x is and changes uninhibited. But it seems that a feature that arises in a living thing by the latter's internal source of change is a feature that arises in its course of change if inhibited, and so tension remains between Aristotle and Mengzi. A possible explanation lies in a difference that scholars have suggested: on Aristotle's picture there is an absence of native dispositions in us that are directed toward virtue, whereas on Mengzi's picture there are some – namely, the "sprout" of each of the four Mengzian "canonical" virtues. The part about Aristotle is not obviously true, however: he thinks e.g. that a non-rational part of our soul, called "spirited desires", is natural, common, and like a help to reason. Perhaps he would deny that this is proto-moral because it is an unreliable disposition that can cause harm. But Meng Ke, too, is aware of the fallibility of the agent acting on certain dispositions, and yet this does not stop him from calling them the "sprouts" of virtues. This makes sense for Meng Ke because – I argue as an alternative interpretation of some key passages from the Mengzi – if someone responds to their situation as they should out of their juvenile "sprout", this less-than-virtuous person is already being good in that situation.

Li-fan Lee, Institute for Philosophy, Leiden University, Netherlands

The Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on Interpretation

The Zhuangzi and Nietzsche are often considered as postmodern champions for intercultural philosophy for their philosophical perspectivism and pluralism. A closer and wider reading of their ideas problematizes both this impression and the normal model of cross-cultural interpretation that aims at faithful representation. Regarding the drive of interpretation, the Zhuangzi thinks that living creatures naturally perceive others from the position or perspective they intrinsically hold whereas a "sage" assumes a perspective close to that of Dao, while Nietzsche suggests that "will to power" animates all interpretations as means of overcoming and mastery. The authenticity of interpretation in the Zhuangzi lies in explaining the necessary relation between a party's intrinsic perspective and their perceptions, while for Nietzsche no interpretation can be authentic but necessarily involves falsification and an interpretation succeeds when the target becomes "manageable". Although both the Zhuangzi and Nietzsche would generally agree that interpretation aims at a healthy life, they nevertheless disagree on what that means and what life's transformation entails for the purpose of interpretation. For the Zhuangzi, ideal interpretation should expand one's understanding and bring one closer to Dao by breaking one from any dogmatic position. In contrast, Nietzsche would prefer interpretation that operates according to his "war-praxis" which presents the target as the best opponent they can possibly be to give us the best challenge that enhances us without destroying either them or us. Nietzsche views the Zhuangzi's creativity is restricted to relativism by its ideal of Dao, while for the Zhuangzi Nietzsche keeps the door open for an understandable game of creation that ultimately matters little. Such contrasts present us with options regarding intercultural philosophers' critical self-understanding: What criteria of interpretive authenticity are employed in our work, and why do we think they are important and justified for human beings?

Lilith Lee, VU Amsterdam

Heaven, Humanity, and History: Immortality and the Project of Reconciliation in the Daoist-Idealism of the Straits Chinese Philosopher TAN Teck Soon in fin-de-siècle British Colonial Singapore

In The Shadow of God (2022), Michael Rosen argues that "the spiritual situation of the West" today, after the events of World War II, is a result of the frustration of the German Idealist project to reconcile us with suffering and death in the world through the doxa of historical immortality. But Rosen also invites us to also consider 'non-Western' ways of "coming to terms with the world" in the project of reconciliation, albeit with the suspicion that these are just as susceptible to the "corrosive force of the drive for explanation and justification" that underlies the aforementioned situation. In this paper, I present two exploratory notes for any such 'non-Western' consideration. The first note draws out Rosen's brief point that "'non-Western' cultures have been heavily influenced by Western ones, even in their opposition to the West," by attending to Straits Chinese philosopher Tan Teck Soon's project of reconciliation in the context of fin-de-siècle British colonial Singapore (before, to paraphrase Césaire, 'colonialism turns inwards'). The second note turns to the doxa of anthropocentrism implicit in such considerations and how it might condition our search for 'non-Western' ways out of the 'spiritual situation of the West,' even if we are to find 'non-Western' cultures uninfluenced by 'the West'—such the Zhuangzi, to which Tan attributed his version of historical immortality and attempt at the project of reconciliation.

Wonjean Lee, Yonsei University

Death and Disposal of the Care Robots from Confucian Perspective of Ren and Filial Piety

In the film After Yang (2021), the character "Yang," an emotional robot designed for childcare, raises questions about whether a robot's breakdown can be considered a form of death. Similar themes are explored in science fiction works such as Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, The Windup Girl, and The Ready-Made Bodhisattva, which investigate the ethical and existential dilemmas surrounding the repair, disposal, or replacement of robots. As emotional and counseling bots, particularly those influenced by Confucian AI, become increasingly prevalent, it is imperative to reconsider their humaneness and the meaning of their "death." This paper argues that Confucian concepts, such as ren (仁)—the interconnected compassion for all living beings—and the understanding of death as the dispersion of qi (氣) and the separation of hun (魂) and po (魄), offer a novel framework for addressing these issues. Reflecting on the "death" of mass-produced care robots, as depicted in After Yang, prompts us to consider what should be preserved, commemorated, and honored. This perspective advances a discourse on robotic dignity within the ethical framework of Confucianism.

Michiel Leezenberg, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam

Masters of Truth in Greece and Babylon: Revisiting the Idea of 'Mythical Thought'

Recently, the hypothesis that there may have been philosophical traditions in Late Bronze Age Mesopotamia and Egypt (cf. Van de Mieroop 2016, Manley 2023) has been gaining traction. If correct, it forces us to rethink the long-held belief that the history of philosophy is marked by an evolution, or revolutionary change, from mythical to rational ways of thinking around 500BCE. The –

ultimately neokantian – ideas of 'mythical thinking' and 'prelogical mentalities' have been severely criticized, but can still be found in later authors, like the anthropologically informed classical scholars Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne. Here, I will present an 'archaeological' discussion of ancient Mesopotamian concepts of knowledge, wisdom and truth, informed in part by Foucault's radical historicization of knowledge and its conditions. Specifically, I will critically confront Mesopotamian concepts of truth with Detienne's classic, The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece. This will expose the radically concepts and norms of knowledge and truth, forcing us to develop more geographically and historically nuanced epistemological concepts. The archaic Greek concept or truth (alètheia), Detienne argues, is essentially linked to orality and memory; the Akkadian concept of truth (kitti), it will appear, crucially depends on writing and graphically ordered knowledge. Such a comparative archaeology of conceptions of knowledge, wisdom and truth, I will conclude, may also help us to develop more nuanced and theoretically informed accounts of other early traditions of knowledge and wisdom, like those of ancient India and China.

Jingjing Li, Leiden University

Towards new family ideals: Rebuilding community as renewing norms in Longlian's non-teleological feminism

In this talk, I examine how Ven. Longlian 隆蓮 (1909-2006) repurposes Indo-Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist resources to carve out a path for Buddhist women who aspire to be ordained. Drawing upon and developing previous research in cultural anthropology and social history of this eminent Bhikṣuṇī and her monastic community, I zoom in on her reimagination of family ideals, which has been epitomized by her effort to redefine a monastic community as a family of dharmic ties, not blood ties. Since the family of dharmic ties values virtue more than social roles, Buddhist women are furnished with a model of practice other than that in the project of Buddhicizing family. As such, instead of always resisting existing norms inside the monastic order, Longlian epitomizes generations of Buddhist nuns who actively inhabit the norms for its renewing, refashioning, and remaking. Skillfully, they lay down the conditions for the possibility of pursing spiritual freedom in a community of ordained nuns, subsequently problematizing the public-private distinction that has been deeply institutionalized in secular modernity.

Chunhong Liu, Sichuan University of China

An exploration into the intrapersonal cultivation of existence as delineated within the Doctrine of the Mean—— with a focus on the concepts of "Caution in Solitude"(慎獨)and "sincerity and enlightenment." (誠明）

In the treatise "The Doctrine of the Mean," the term "moral subject" alludes to the gentleman of profound ethical introspection. He appreciates the primacy of self-cultivation and endeavors to embody and advocate the celestial virtues by assimilating the wisdom of the sages. Through such scholarly pursuit, he ascends to a higher plane of existential being. The introspective aspect of self-cultivation as delineated in "The Doctrine of the Mean" encompasses two dimensions: "exercise vigilance in the detection of nuances and concealed aspects" and "authenticity coupled with enlightenment."Should a gentleman maintain a state of watchfulness and authenticity in his solitude, he is able to dismantle the impediments posed by external entities and adhere to the

correct path, ultimately attaining the state of "harmony." The sage's "sincerity and enlightenment" is an intrinsic attribute, whereas for the gentleman, it represents a plane accessible through diligent study and application.Upon attaining the state of "ultimate sincerity," one is capable of fully realizing both human nature and the essence of all things, thus contributing to and facilitating the transformation and cultivation of the cosmos. The principles of "caution in solitude" (慎獨) and "sincerity and enlightenment" （誠明）serve essential roles in fostering the holistic development of individuals and in maintaining the long-term equilibrium of society.

Zhaoxia Liu, Department of Philosophy, Sichuan University, China
Why Buddhist Ethics is Not Utilitarianism?

The debate regarding whether Buddhist ethics can be considered as a form of utilitarianism emerges from modern scholars' endeavors to understand Buddhism through the lens of Western moral philosophy. To address this intricate issue, which encompasses aspects such as the nature of actions, standards for what is good or evil, and the significance of consequences, requires an all-encompassing examination of Buddhist behavior theory. This involves viewing Buddhist thought as a multi-layered structure that developed in history, alongside revealing ontological issues underlying ethical questions, such as the relationship between mind and body, in order to fully grasp the nature of actions and their impacts. This paper discusses two representative scholars' main perspectives— Damien Keown and Charles Goodman —to analyze some key concepts in Buddhism, including actions and their consequences, the concept of compassion, and ultimate values. The aim is to clarify the fundamental differences between Buddhism and utilitarianism, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of Buddhist ethics while also fostering dialogue across different cultures. The significance of the teaching of karma in Buddhist scriptures primarily lies in its ability to indirectly reflect psychological qualities and establish moral responsibility. It contrasts with utilitarianism by emphasizing the nature of "otherness" of karma and consequences characterized by sensitivity to pleasure and pain. Yogācāra's interpretation stands out for highlighting that the overall manifested world is an externalization of internal consciousness, thus completely nullifying consequences' significance—a radical shift from both utilitarianism and consequentialist views. In conclusion, Buddhist ethical theory requires ontological analysis beyond mere social ethics. This approach distinguishes Buddhist ethics fundamentally from utilitarianism, which primarily focuses on the outcomes of actions. Emphasizing internal consciousness over external consequences aligns Buddhist principles more closely with enlightenment than maximizing welfare.

Arlene Lo, London School of Economics and Political Science
Is Fengshui scientific? The Problem with the Demarcation Problem

The problem of demarcation, distinguishing science from pseudoscience, was a central problem in philosophy of science. Although philosophers of science now declared the demise of the demarcation problem, the question remains on how to understand the epistemic standing of non-western knowledge traditions concerning the natural world. Some philosophers of science appealed to resources from demarcation in arguing that Fengshui is epistemically corrupt pseudoscience: Fengshui fails many demarcation criteria or marks of scientificity, thus Fengshui is

pseudoscientific. This presentation argues that this approach fails to ascertain the epistemic status of non-western knowledge traditions. The failure of Fengshui to meet demarcation criteria cannot be determinately attributed to its epistemic character but rather due to the socially contingent nature in which different epistemic communities have organised their inquiries. Fengshui, I argue, is transdisciplinary in character: it encompasses domains of studies that are scientific (e.g. environmental science, psychology, economics) and non-scientific (e.g. urban planning, architecture). Evaluation of the epistemic standing of Fengshui from the perspective of scientificity creates two central issues. Firstly, having a domain of inquiry extending scientific and non-scientific disciplines is not inherently epistemically corrupt. It only reflects different historically contingent socio-political aims and interests that drive epistemic practices. Secondly, the demarcation approach distorts the epistemic value different knowledge systems bring. The value of transdisciplinary inquiries is to draw linkages between phenomena across disciplines, which cannot be fully captured in a disciplinary perspective. In excluding parts of Fengshui that fall beyond the disciplinary boundaries of science, the demarcation approach distorts the epistemic structures and products of Fengshui and reduces the apparent epistemic value (e.g. fruitfulness) in evaluation. Therefore, the demarcation approach makes faulty inferences from the lack of scientificity to poor epistemic standing. To appreciate the epistemic value of Fengshui, we must treat it as a discipline in its own right.

James Madaio, Czech Academy of Sciences

Inverting the cosmos: yoga as de-narrativization in medieval Advaita Vedānta

In this paper I examine a model of selfhood articulated in a meditational yogic context featured in the Jīvanmuktiviveka, a fourteenth century work by the Advaita Vedāntin Vidyāraṇya, a renowned mahant of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha in southern Karnataka. In the third chapter of the Jīvanmuktiviveka, which expounds on the disappearance of the mind (manonāśa), Vidyāraṇya interprets key verses from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad that distinguish three different senses of self (ātman), which are mentioned in relation to a technique of yogic restraint (√yam), which entails a reversal or involution of the sequential proliferation of the life-world. On Vidyāraṇya's reading, the three 'selves' adumbrated by the Kaṭha indicate pure consciousness, 'individual' egoity, and 'general' egoity. I argue that implicit in Vidyāraṇya's account of the individualized egoity is an understanding of personal identity as a narrative construct and that his elaboration of the generalized or universal egoity converges with accounts of 'mineness' in the Husserlian phenomenological tradition. My analysis pays close attention to the process of meditational yoga within which these distinctions on self are made. In particular, I explore a number of rich analogies Vidyāraṇya puts forth to explicate the porous borders of personal identity at different liminal stages of yogic withdrawal. In doing so, I argue that this yogic method, which culminates in nirvikalpa-samādhi, can be profitably re-framed as a process of de-narrativizing the storied persona-world.

Elodie Martin, University College of Cork, Ireland

Fukuzawa Yukichi and gender equality in Japanese society

In this paper, I explore the philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi highlighting the unique way in which he brought ideas of gender equality into Japanese society. Fukuzawa Yukichi was a reformer of

Japanese society, active during the second half of the 19th century. Deeply inspired by philosophical Western concepts of freedom and liberalism he gained popularity as a fervent defender of freedom, accessibility to education, and gender equality. He wanted Japanese society to adopt a particular theory of civilization inspired, for instance, by Henry Thomas Buckle or François Guizot. He is the founder of Keio University, a well renowned university in Japan that promotes social and gender equality in education. It is important to analyze ideas circulating in Japan during this new era of engagement with the world, after the isolationist Edo period. It is obvious that the social, philosophical and political changes that occurred in Japan during the 19th century are fundamental for the aim of this paper, which is: to comprehend gender within contemporary Japanese society. More specifically, I discuss how Fukuzawa was a central figure for bringing Western ideas on gender equality into Japanese society, through his book Gakumon No Susume (Encouragement of Learning), where he defended women's autonomy. Scholars in Feminist Studies and Japanese Philosophy and Politics (Mara Patessio, Kei Hiruta or Carmen Blacker) have gradually come to question the true intentions of this book. As such, I critique their theories through novel analysis of two major questions: Firstly, to what extent can we argue that Fukuzawa advocated for women's rights in Japan? Is there a limitation in his theory of gender equality ? Secondly, I ask how we can properly debate this within the historical and social context of the time (accounting for the Western influence on Japanese society). This paper is articulated around central themes such as the contextualization of Fukuzawa's theories on gender equality, on freedom and on autonomy, and aims to understand the impact he has had still to this day. I use feminist theories and Postmodern methodologies to point out weaknesses that appeared in Fukuzawa's works.

Tiantong Meng, The University of Hong Kong, Department of Philosophy

A Confucian Conception of Loyalty

This essay delves into the Confucian concept of loyalty and its intricate relationship with political authority. Although Confucian loyalty is commonly misunderstood as mere obedience, this essay demonstrates that it does not equate to unconditional obedience. Instead, it requires a nuanced discernment in deciding when to uphold or challenge authority to maintain one's moral standards. One aspect of Confucian loyalty is that ministers are obligated to critique their rulers when necessary, as loyalty involves guiding the ruler toward righteousness, even at personal risk. The Confucian teaching also warns against the dangers of absolute obedience, as unchallenged authority can harm both the state and the ruler. In comparison, Han Feizi also recognises that disobedience can be justified to some extent, but such dissent must align with the established rituals and hierarchical roles. Hence, Confucian loyalty embodies a moral duty to correct and guide superiors while maintaining respect for established social structures. This understanding of loyalty is crucial for ensuring virtuous governance and preventing the abuse of power, reflecting the broader Confucian commitment to morality within political institutions. However, a significant challenge arises: Confucian ministers are obligated to critique their superiors when necessary, yet the lack of institutional protection often compels them to remain silent. To address this, it is essential to justify and propose institutional reforms and protections that safeguard the rights and obligations of ministers to dissent without fear of retribution. Such reforms would strengthen virtuous governance and uphold the true essence of Confucian ideals.

Thomas Michael, Beijing Normal University

Great Authority' in the Daodejing as Framed by Hannah Arendt

Thomas Michael develops a comparative approach to conceptions of authority in the Daodejing by asking questions of the text that modern Western political philosophers more frequently pose within their own, non-Daoist cultural contexts. Relying on Hannah Arendt's (1906–1975) philosophical framework, Michael frames his own approach to authority in the Daodejing according to four primary fields of inquiry: (1) the distinction between authority and tyranny; (2) the relationship between natural authority and political authority; (3) the augmentation of authority; and (4) the particular contours of a specifically Daoist conception of legitimate authority. Arendt's characterization of legitimate authority as the voluntary acceptance on the part of the governed, devoid of violent coercion, of the guidance, laws, and commands that direct their actions and behaviors, and that emanate from a sovereign source, is comparable to the discussion of authority in the Daodejing. The Daodejing offers a powerful vision of supreme authority grounded in the cosmic Dao's 道 natural authority. The voluntary obedience on the part of the ruled to the ruler's authority to direct their activities is based on the values of non-violence, non-aggression, and non-injury.

Federico Minzoni, University of Groningen (Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Religion, Culture and Society)

Towards a Care of the Nonself. Socializing Freedom at the Encounter of Foucauldian and Early Buddhist Ethics

This paper aims at putting Foucauldian ethics in conversation with early Buddhist self-cultivation (bhāvanā), to rephrase in interpersonal terms the individualistic model of freedom implied by the former. Foucault's ethical individualism, which defines freedom as solipsistic self-mastery, is problematic not only because it incurs in the same difficulties raised by liberal ethics, but also because it ultimately contradicts the political inspiration of Foucauldian genealogy, driving it towards a deeply anti-social, and hence apolitical, resolution. This undesirable model of freedom originates from the encounter between the ultimately Nietzschean inspiration of Foucault's ontology of power and the Graeco-Roman notion of care of the self (epimeleia heautou), which sparked the French philosopher's ethical turn in the eighties. The interplay between these two influences appears at its clearest in Foucault's idealization of the Graeco-Roman practice of parrhēsia (or frank speech), which merges Socratic, Stoic and Cynic themes to trace a model of free selfhood that finds in antagonistic, solitary self-determination its defining feature. On the look for a way out of this solipsistic paradigm, I propose in this paper to implement Foucauldian ethics with the theoretical toolkit of early Buddhist bhāvanā as put forth in the Pāli canon, which – differently from Foucault's Graeco-Roman sources – decidedly counters individualism at both the theoretical and the orthopractical level, resolving it in an ontology of conditionality. More in particular, I oppose to the Foucauldian valorization of parrhēsia the self-cultivation technique of the satipatthānas as described in the Mahāsatipatthānasutta of the Dīgha-nikāya, to show how we can re-articulate the Foucauldian model of free selfhood in interpersonal terms while still saving Foucault's political concern for autonomy. Rethinking Foucauldian ethics through early Buddhist lenses allows us not

only to rephrase it in a more culturally inclusive perspective, but also to successfully address the theoretical problems posed by its individualism.

Minjung Noh, Lehigh University

Toward Radical Capaciousness: A Critical Assessment of Clayton Crockett's Engagement with Vodou Spirit and Qi (氣) Philosophy

The Comparative Religion and World Religions paradigms have faced criticism in late-twentieth-century religious studies for their Protestant Christian biases and colonial legacies. An energy philosopher Clayton Crockett, who explores concepts of spirit in Amerindian traditions, Haitian Vodou, and East Asian qi (氣) philosophy, is aware of these critiques. In his work, Energy and Change (2022), Crockett clarifies that he does not intend to unify the diverse traditions he examines. While his innovative philosophical comparisons are meaningful, this paper critiques the imbalance in his treatment of Haitian Vodou compared to Zhang Zai's qi philosophy. Although Crockett acknowledges the historical significance of the Haitian Revolution and its ties to slavery and European Enlightenment, his engagement with Vodou requires further depth. In contrast, his discussion of Zhang Zai's qi philosophy reflects a nuanced understanding, enriched by interactions with Korean philosophers like Jung-yeup Kim and Hyo-Dong Lee. This paper assesses the structural reasons behind the imbalance and seeks to fill the gaps in Crockett's approach to Vodou by incorporating comprehensive Haitianist scholarship. Ultimately, it argues that new comparative works can foster a radical political philosophy that expands agential possibilities.

Monika Nowakowska, University of Warsaw

Natural, or received and nurtured? – on moral law in some South Asian context

When one thinks of ancient South Asian moral assumptions, the earlier notion of ṛta or the later one of dharma immediately come to one's mind. In particular, the former one falls into the category of natural moral law. The latter, because of its varied interpretations in various ethical systems, seems to be more problematic, although some of its understanding again situate it within the domain of natural, universal law (but see Davis,Jr.; Olivelle). Ṛta goes out of use in the post-Vedic time, while dharma gains more cross-religious popularity. It would seem than that one of the two early law- and morality-centered sister traditions, i.e. dharmaśāstra and Mīmāṃsā, would also conceive of moral law as a universal natural set of rules. Yet, it was not the case, and both the traditions offered some kind of positive law. Both dealt with the idea of dharma, and both tried to ground the sources of human understanding of dharma, but cleverly and idiosyncratically interpreted the idea of dharma itself. Particularly interesting is the approach of Mīmāṃsā, most importantly in the works of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (ca. 600 CE), who devoted much of his efforts to categorize and explain the sources of law and morality. From his perspective, there is a set of criteria to be fulfilled to count someone's conduct as moral and lawful. Apart from religious and ritualistic elements of that set, there is also the idea that the idea of morality is received, practiced, and nurtured, it is by no means natural. In the paper I summarize and analyse Kumārila's arguments and point out some of his hidden assumptions and overlooked counterarguments.

Pawel Odyniec, Karlstad University

Transformative Philosophy in Colonial India: The Interplay Between Philosophical Theory and Yogic Practice in the Life and Work of Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950)

The aim of this presentation is to look at the life and work of the modern Indian political activist, philosopher, and yogi Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) through a new hermeneutical prism, the emerging field of intercultural philosophy as a way of life (PWL), in order to showcase what I take to be a prominent example of PWL developed in colonial India. In particular, I aim to show that PWL's pivotal claim to the effect that philosophy is a self-transformative exercise which entails discursive and non-discursive practices is a useful theoretical framework for interpreting the life and work of one of the most important figures of modern Indian philosophy. By examining ways in which Aurobindo's philosophical discourse on yoga and Vedānta were intimately related to, and informed by, his own practice of yoga, I will argue that, for Aurobindo, philosophical reflection is a function of a philosophical life seeking self-transformation.

Jea Sophia Oh, West Chester University of Pennsylvania

Humans as Heaven: Innaecheon 人乃天, and the Resilient Spirit of Korean Democracy and the Korean Wave

(Sponsored by the Leiden University Centre for Intercultural Philosophy)

This study asserts that democracy is not solely a Western construct rooted in Greek philosophy but also encompasses democratic elements in Korean Donghak Philosophy and its movements. Central to this exploration is the Donghak Movement, which embodies the philosophy of Innaecheon 人乃天—'human beings are heaven'. This philosophy highlights resilience and collective resistance against oppression, evident in significant historical movements like the March 1st Movement, the Gwangju Uprising, and the Candlelight Movement, which challenge anti-democratic structures. Korean philosophy and democracy are pivotal to the Korean Wave (hallyu 韓流), influencing its future and manifesting in K-pop and K-food, such as BTS' music and bibimbap, which contribute to a global cultural phenomenon. This transcends hypernationalism, promoting a philosophy of healing and love that connects humanity with hope. By examining Innaecheon dynamics and its implications for ecocracy—a system that advocates for all living beings—this paper illustrates how Korean philosophy fosters empathy and interconnectedness in contemporary cultural expressions and social movements.

Yeong Guk Oh, Department of Indian Philosophy, Graduate school, Dongguk University

Liberation from the Illusion of Knowledge: Addressed Through Dzogchen and Daehaeng Seon

Daniel J. Boorstin wrote, in his book The Discovers (1983), that the illusion of knowledge is the greater obstacle than ignorance. However, in terms of the Buddhist concept of ignorance (avidyā), ignorance and the illusion of knowledge share the same root. For ignorance springs from the "delusion of thought". This paper explores and compares the methods of approach toward the illusion of knowledge in the perspectives of two Buddhist thoughts: Dzogchen, a tradition within Tibetan Buddhism, and Daehaeng Seon (대행선), a modern branch of Korean Seon Buddhism. The "delusion of thought", which is the essence of ignorance (avidyā) and is the most "primordial

illusion of knowledge", contaminates "the pure storehouse (ālaya)". One of the main teachings of Dzogchen includes "cutting through" (khregs chod) the "arising thoughts" (rnam rtog) and thereby transforming the "contaminated store consciousness" (ālāyavijñāna). Dzogchen's aim is to reveal the "pristine awareness" (rig pa), and from it, the "natural wisdom". This wisdom is liberation from knowledge, cleared of the veils of ignorance and delusion. Daehaeng Seon, which stresses the "exercise of wisdom", refers to this "thought" as "a single thought", and states that changes are made to both the material and the spiritual realm through manifesting the wisdom by "letting go" of and "melting" the "single thought". The correct "turning" of this single thought functions as the driving force of the manifestation. In Daehaeng Seon, the changes in both realms of the material and the spiritual through the manifestation is the "true liberation from knowledge", free from the distorted delusions, and the "exercise of liberation". Both Dzogchen and Daehaeng Seon assert that becoming free from the primordial illusion of knowledge, which is also delusion and ignorance, is the path to attain true wisdom, and thus that enacting the wisdom is essential for bringing a transformative change.

Margus Ott, Estonian University of Life Sciences / Tallinn University

Complex Adaptive Systems and Neo-Confucianism

Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) are systems with a large number of interacting elements that modify each other's behavior but also exhibit some autonomy and modularity. Their behavior adapts to that of other elements, and to the environment, giving rise to non-linear and emergent effects: the behavior of the whole (e.g. ant colony) cannot be predicted from that of the sum of its elements. It also makes the behavior of its members highly contextual: the next steps of a member depend on the situation of other members and on its own past history.

Neo-Confucian philosophy offers a good conceptual framework for CAS-s: on the background of each actual thing and situation (xing 形, the realm of the "below the forms", xing'erxia 形而下) is a virtual articulation (li 理, the realm of "above the forms", xing'ershang 形而上). The actual state of affairs is produced by a differentiation process, carried by the "energy" or "life-breath" (qi 氣) and in mutual interaction of dynamic strains (yinyang 陰陽, wuxing 五行), giving rise to emergent patterns in the actualized world. These notions help to conceptualize what happens in the emergent behavior of CAS-s and how the actual state relates to the system as a whole as its virtual background.

Iljoon Park, Wonkwang University

Political Ecology of in-between Beings from Korean idea of Hong-ik-in-gan (弘益人間)

This study explores the significance and value of in-between beings through the lens of the Korean political concept of hong-ik-in-gan (弘益人間), which translates to 'benefiting the world widely'. Here, 'human being', interpreted as 'human-between', suggests that the world exists within the interstices of human connections. In our increasingly competition-driven society, the meaning of betweenness has largely been forgotten; however, it serves as a vital mediator, akin to the role of fungi in fostering the coalescence of diverse life forms. This presentation will argue that the essence of being lies in its capacity to extend, as exemplified by fungal networks that interlink

countless organisms in sympoiesis. Even beings traditionally seen as lower on the life hierarchy—such as fungi, bacteria, and viruses—play critical roles in the intricate web of existence. Ultimately, this entanglement and the intra-action among 'between-beings' underscore the necessity of pursuing ecological politics that recognize our interconnectedness and shared existence.

Sool Park, University of Hildesheim

Kant, a Taoist Saint? The Inclusivist Construction of 'Western Philosophy' in Richard Wilhelm's Kant Translation (1914) and Jeon Byeong-hun's "Complete Philosophy of Spirit 精神哲學通編" (1920)

In this talk, I would like to demonstrate an alternative construction model of global philosophy in East Asia in the early twentieth century. At this point, a form of philosophical syncretism was motivated by a specific translation tendency using Classical Chinese, often culminating in philosophical inclusivism. Was this, perhaps, a decolonial view on global philosophy avant la lettre? In contrast to spoken languages, Classical Chinese as the East Asian scriptura franca was highly saturated with traditional conceptual vocabulary of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, as it was used as language of philosophy for some two millennia. Used subsequently for the translation of Western philosophy, Classical Chinese functioned as a strongly biased conceptual filter for Western thoughts, pairing foreign concepts to key concepts of classical East Asian philosophy. Richard Wilhelm's translation of Kant's text "Von der Macht des Gemüts, durch den bloßen Vorsatz seiner krankhaften Gefühle Meister zu sein", published in 1914, is the first translation proper of Kant's work in an East Asian language. Wilhelm chose this text because he saw a close relationship between Taoist (and Buddhist) practice of spiritual-medical self-cultivation and Kant's view on philosophical dietetics (Diätetik), as he was hoping to discover a shared spiritual root for Western and Eastern traditions. In the foreword of Zhang Shiheng, Kant is celebrated as the "world's most venerable philosopher", who promoted the "art of extending the human life by controlling the body through will". This quasi-Taoist reading of Kant's philosophy had further effects on the Korean philosopher Jeon Byeong-hun (1857-1927) who read Kant in Richard's translation and wrote his major work "Unification of Mind and Philosophy" in Classical Chinese. In his work, he draws concepts and theories from East Asian and Western texts alike and constructs an inclusivist Taoism. In this text, Kant is listed as a "saint of the humanity" next to Confucius, Laozi, Plato, and Jesus.

Patrycja Pendrakowska, Humboldt University in Berlin

Nothing More Than Marxism-Leninism? An alternative approach to reading and evaluating philosophy in the PRC between 1949 and 1978.

Scholars often argue that between 1949 and the opening up reforms of 1978, philosophical inquiry in the People's Republic of China (PRC) was strictly confined to Marxist-Leninist ideology, leaving little or no space for engagement with other philosophical traditions. This perspective has contributed to a reductive view of the period, discouraging closer examination of intellectual developments of philosophy in the PRC. However, He Lin's works, particularly his introductions to the first Chinese translations of Lesser Logic (1950, 1954) and Phenomenology of Spirit (1962, 1979) reveal a more complex reception of Western philosophy. His writings, together with the translations undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s at the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese

Academy of Sciences (CAS), illustrate that the study of Hegel in China was more heterogeneous than previously assumed. This essay challenges the prevailing narrative particularly in non-Chinese scholarship that Hegelian studies in this period were entirely subordinated to Marxist-Leninist ideology. It demonstrates that He Lin drew on a wide range of philosophical influences, including German idealism, American neo-Hegelianism, French existentialism, and Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. By applying hermeneutic methods, the essay uncovers hidden meanings in He Lin's introductions, illustrating how he navigated ideological constraints while advancing Hegelian thought. Concepts such as 'latent objective research' and 'apparent objective research' are employed to reveal how He Lin strategically framed his interpretations. Through an analysis of key passages, including He Lin's discussion on the translation of the term 'Understanding' (in German: Verstand) as 知性 (zhixing), this study highlights He Lin's engagement with both Western and Chinese intellectual traditions. The essay concludes by encouraging further translations and argument-focused research on Chinese philosophy from the examined period, as it was not entirely subsumed under Marxism-Leninism doctrine.

Tomaso Pignocchi, Catholic University of Paris and University of Rome-Lumsa

Rethinking Dualism: A Comparative Exploration of Madhyamaka and Wittgenstein on the Problem of the 'Two Truths'

This paper examines Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka interpretation of the doctrine of the two truths through a critical engagement with the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. It argues that both frameworks challenge the dualism that emerges from foundationalist approaches to reality, and particularly those that posit a sharp division between conventional reality and ultimate reality. Rather than affirming this dichotomy, Candrakīrti and Wittgenstein expose the conceptual difficulties generated by the pursuit of an underlying foundation beyond the domain of ordinary experience. In both cases, philosophical problems are understood as arising when language is abstracted from its everyday context and reified through metaphysical constructions that obscure the structure of lived experience.

In Madhyamaka philosophy, the concepts of emptiness (śūnyatā) and dependent origination (pratītya-samutpāda) function to undermine the notion of intrinsic existence, emphasizing that phenomena arise only in dependence on other conditions and lack any self-subsistent essence. Wittgenstein's emphasis on the notion of "bedrock" similarly does not indicate a metaphysical ground, but rather delineates a self-imposed limit to the regress of justification—a point at which explanation comes to an end without appeal to further foundations.

The two perspectives taken into account jointly contest both ontological and epistemological dualisms. Just as Wittgenstein moves away from the essentialist foundationalism of the Tractatus toward an immanent conception of meaning rooted in practice, Madhyamaka rejects the opposition between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, presenting them as two perspectives on a single reality. Despite their cultural distance, both thinkers articulate a therapeutic orientation: liberation is not achieved through access to a higher ontological domain, but through the suspension of metaphysical fixations. This, in turn, involves a kind of transformation that requires a form of realization not reducible to rational assent to a propositional content, but arising from direct experience and entailing a shift that is both cognitive and affective in nature.

Marco Pouget, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, LMU Munich

On the Subtleties of Human Nature, Fate, and the Way Zheng Xuan's Reading of the Zhongyong

The Zhongyong 中庸 is one of the most highly acclaimed sources of thought on human nature in early China, though the elusiveness of its message and the multitude of its potential meanings required explanation early on, often through commentary. Yet, such explanation necessarily also entailed a determination, a fixation of the fluid range of meanings provided by the text. What the Zhongyong says about human nature thus strongly depended on the human exploring it, retelling the narratives of the text through an individual, even idiosyncratic lens. Throughout tradition, it has become obfuscated how radical the changes introduced through this act of appropriation and mediation often were. The zhu 注 commentary by the early imperial scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) is one of the earliest layers of scholarship on the text, on which much of later scholarship built. Zheng Xuan's commentarial remarks often seem unassuming and minor but subtly changed the reading of the Zhongyong even in major points. Still, his influence has often gone unnoticed in Western philosophy. My presentation traces how Zheng's interpolations gradually changed the Zhongyong's idea of human nature. Of particular interest are the narrative devices Zheng Xuan used to carve out the meaning he recognised in the text: How did he extrapolate wisdom in the text? How did he seek to convince his readers? I highlight the incremental changes to the image of human nature in the Zhongyong introduced by Zheng Xuan, asking what the implications thereof are if we wish to do commentators more justice as exegetes and thinkers in their own right. By comparing it to other commentarial voices, my presentation also contributes to situating Zheng Xuan's thought, now often regarded as quintessential for his era, within the scholarship of his time.

Leela Prasad, Brown University

Sanmati: A Special Transcendence in the Praxis of the Humane

My talk will explore the notion of sanmati translated from the Sanskrit through a semantic range that includes "goodwill," "wisdom," "good sense," and "reality-mindedness." The concept was deeply important to Mahatma Gandhi, in whose moral ecology the ethic of pluralism depended on sanmati, which is imagined both as something one might acquire through divine grace, but perhaps more essentially, as a subjective potential that could be awakened. Quite consistent with his famous conviction that "There can be no politics without religion," Gandhi brought the concept of sanmati to the secular domain where he believed it would yield a politics of collective-mindedness—one that appreciates and accepts differences. Sanmati thus promotes human flourishing. Taking contemporary examples from the Indian context, I will discuss how sanmati entails a particular disposition and an embodied orientation that makes humane praxis possible in everyday life especially amidst conflict and diversity.

Leo Purnomo, Independent Scholar

ADRIAN PIPER & THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS: Unveiling Mystic Practices in the Visual Arts

This chapter examines the integration of mystic beliefs and practices in the visual arts, focusing on the work of artist, philosopher, and yogi Adrian Piper. Drawing on Theravāda Buddhism's Four Noble Truths – tenets revealed to the Buddha in a mystical experience while meditating under a bodhi tree

millennia ago – the chapter connects Piper's work with Buddhist insights on suffering, attachment, and liberation within the context of racial discourse. By situating race and ethnicity within this ancient belief system, the chapter introduces the Buddhist concept of anattā (non-self) as a means to confront and transcend the limiting boundaries of identity. In engaging with anattā, Piper's work invites viewers to explore identity beyond rigid racial categorisations, suggesting a more fluid understanding of self.   The paper is divided into four sections, one for each Noble Truth. (1) Dukkha, or suffering, addresses the confines of racial identity, a condition Franz Fanon described as being "overdetermined from without." (2) Samudaya suggests we are overdetermined not only externally but also internally, due to attachments to a stable sense of self. (3) Nirodha, or cessation of suffering through detachment, highlights Piper's 56th Venice Biennale installation, where she inscribed "everything will be taken away" on vintage blackboards, paired with photographs of faces erased and overprinted with the same phrase. (4) Lastly, The Eightfold Path—a pluralistic framework guiding ethical living—promotes Buddhist virtues often overlooked in Western views. This presentation aims to demonstrate how the visual arts can mediate between the nuances and complexities of Buddhist philosophy, racial discourse, and Western conceptions of personal identity.

Xiao Qi, University of St. Andrews

Xunzi and Hume on Nature and Artifice in Morality

The relationship between human nature and artifice (like custom, convention, and education) is a central topic for both Xunzi's and Hume's moral theories. Xunzi argues against Mencius's view concerning human beings' natural capacity for leading a virtuous life and claims that "people's nature is bad; their goodness comes from artifice" (Xunzi 23.1, translation of Tang 2016, 172). Kupperman suggests that on this topic, it is tempting "to assimilate Xunzi to Hobbes and Mencius to Hume" (2000, 92), and these two pairs of similarities are also respectively endorsed by CHEN Lai (2016) and Dobin Choi (2023). In his Treatise, nevertheless, Hume argues against Hutcheson's view that people have a natural motive for justice, and claims that "the sense of justice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially" (Treatise 3.2.1.17; 483). Moreover, both Xunzi and Hume develop theories of 'artificial virtues' with premises concerning the insufficiency of human nature for sociability, human beings' capacity to reflect, learn, and establish social practices by using reason, and the malleability of human desires and sentiments under the influence of custom and education. I suggest that in this respect, Hume's view assimilates to that of Xunzi more than Mencius, and arguably, Xunzi's view assimilates to that of Hume more than Hobbes. Consequently, reading Xunzi's and Hume's accounts of nature and artifice in morality together can be a productive interpretative approach. Especially, regarding how people's natural inclinations can be redirected and modified to become morally good, Xunzi's theory of rituals, on the one hand, and Hume's theories of convention and moral sentiments, on the other hand, shed light on each other despite their apparent dissimilarities. Identifying these similarities also helps us to highlight these philosophers' different concerns underlying their emphases on the nature/artifice distinction, which is noteworthy for scholars working on each of these philosophers.

Jiyan Qiao, Leiden University

Aligning Individual Right and the Common Good -- The Political Philosophy of Su Shi

How can what an individual thinks is right also contributes to the common good? This paper presents Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037-11010) solution to this longstanding issue political philosophers around the world have been grappling with. I first reconstruct the eleventh century context Su was responding to – the unprecedented monarchical absolutist reform designed by Wang Anshi, implemented by three successive monarchs to counteract the growth in literati moral autonomy under developments of the Ancient Prose 古文 movement. Then I spell out the content of Su Shi's political philosophy as formulated in his commentaries on the Analects, Change, and Documents, a project he undertook when exiled for criticizing the reform. In contrast to Wang Anshi's statecraft designed to transform self-centered individuals into subjects thinking unreflexively in line with state interest, Su proposed an approach to governance that guides individuals to cultivate their ability to do what they think is right while according with the way things work. This way, one's own moral judgment follows the inherent pattern of things in the world, thereby bringing about greater common good. That is, a state can increase its power by letting citizens be who they are. And, because it follows the natural way, it can last. This "cultivated" spontaneity has, I argue, deep shared grounds with Kant's idea of categorical imperative.

Chris Rahlwes, Smith College

Zhuangzi's Account of Drawing Distinctions

In the Qiwulun (2/4/16–2/4/20), Zhuangzi (or the authors of the chapter) propound(s) a philosophy of language centered on drawing distinctions (shi是/bi彼, shi是/fei非, ci此/bi彼). In so doing, he criticizes previous indexical accounts of language, which focus on setting a standard, as well as expounds a differential account of language, which provides a means for language to refer without such a standard. His critique focuses on the Later Mohists' and Gongsun Long's characterization of names as designated by the indexical pair ci/bi ('this'/'that'), and his differential account establishes that for either side of the shi/fei ('this'/'non-this') or shi/bi ('this'/'that') dyad to be meaningful, both sides must successfully denote. In so doing, his critique also targets Mengzi's use of shi/fei. Ultimately, Zhuangzi's critique against the indexical account and his propounding of a differential account come together in his argument that the ci/bi dyad depends on a vicious circularity of shi/fei. This argument simultaneously shows that the indexical and differential accounts of language are ungrounded and, as such, are threatened to be rendered meaningless, but through an appeal to yiming 以明 and dao 道Zhuangzi attempts to ground the differential account of language.

Daniel Raveh, Tel Aviv University

What is it like to be a Human Being? A Dialogue with Ramchandra Gandhi

Ramchandra Gandhi (RCG, 1937-2007), is one of the most original voices of Indian philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. He has one foot in Western philosophy (he engages with A.N. Whitehead, Wittgenstein, J.L. Austin, and Tomas Nagel), and another foot in classical Indian sources. He is a commentator of his grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, of his massive corpus of

writings and his life as a commentary on his writings (or vice versa, his writings as commentary on his life and action). In correspondence with Nagel's seminal essay "What is it like to be a Bat?" (1974), RCG wrote three "What is it like to be" papers of his own, aiming to take Nagel's move forward. He titled them "What is it like to be a human being?" (1976), "What is it like to be Dead?" (1981), and "What is it like to be God?" (1984). All three title-questions, each impossible in its own way (as I will explain), are in fact – RCG suggests – one and the same question. It all comes down to the question what is it like to be a being human (with a divine spark, and with the inevitable horizon of death)? In the course of the discussion, I will touch on RCG's interpretation of the concept and ideal of Ahiṃsā, nonviolence, deeply identified with the Mahatma, and on RCG's insistence on two notions which at first sight look contradicting, dialogue (which emphasis on the ethical significance of addressing words, vocatives) and Advaita (not-two-ness, nonduality) together. I will explain why and how. One of the purposes of the proposed presentation is to call attention to contemporary Indian philosophy, a unique genre of philosophy with an inbuilt dialogic strand. It is a dialogue between cultures, languages, eras, thinking traditions, thinkers, texts and even disciplines. Hence, the challenge (and the beauty) is that every paragraph of contemporary Indian philosophy, RCG included, has multiple layers of reference and intertextuality.

Chiara Robbiano, University College Utrecht, Utrecht University

"Seeing peach blossoms— eyes utterly overwhelmed": Dōgen's and Autistic Sensory Stories

My thesis is that sensory stories —which display characters receiving sensory inputs, such as sounds, colours, lights etc.— can, by activating our bodies, bridge the gap between self and others and open a shared space between different people. Firstly, I show that by listening to sensory stories we can imagine the sensory state of someone who might seem different. Literary scholars have studied the effect of scenes where characters touch, see, hear something: they provide entry points into the storyworld at the sensory level (Ready 2023). Dōgen's concept of expression (dōtoku) encourages appreciating communications styles that, by differing from ours, complete us and allow us to deepen our understanding of reality and the quality of our actions. By listening to sensory stories we can step in the shoes of an autistic child or a Zen master. We will look at Naoki Higashida's illustration of a method for preventing light from 'needling' its way into his eyeballs, and Dōgen's reference to a master, whose eyes got completely overwhelmed at the sights of peach blossoms. Secondly, I argue that autistic and Dōgen's sensory stories teach us the benefits of an open bottom-up style of information processing, which can take one out of the subject stance, prevent the readiness to objectify or categorize the other, and enable one to resonate with the received sensory input. Thirdly, building on Dōgen and Yergeau, I argue that episodes of hyperstimulation —and stories about them, told for instance, by autistic authors and by Dōgen— can help us decenter and enter the in-between space, which some neurotypicals might feel unequipped to enter, but which is a place of growth through openness to different expressions.

Dawid Rogacz, Adam Mickiewicz University

Nurturing the Nurture: Confucian Perspectives on Assisted Reproduction

Both in vitro fertilization (IVF) with cryopreservation and artificial insemination by a donor (AID) are usually viewed as admissible by the contemporary Confucian thinkers. Conservative Confucian

arguments against AID seem to neglect the fact that Confucianism focuses on the affectionate rather than the genetic tie between parents and child. The issue of the commodification of gametes, zygotes, and embryos is, in turn, hardly reconcilable with Confucius' moral principle of not subjugating life to profit (cf. Lunyu 4.12) and must always be justified on additional, higher grounds. However, given famous statement of Mencius that "bearing no heirs is the most impious thing," Confucian philosophy has always strongly encouraged to tackle the problem of infertility by all morally acceptable ways. However, some Confucians argue that surrogacy disrupts the mother–child relationship developed during gestation and, due to these ties as well as the lack of confidentiality, may eventually harm the adoptive family, even though adopting a nephew from, say, one's cousin's family was common among infertile couples in the past. Those issues are also indirectly connected with the Confucian attitude toward same-sex adoption and reproduction. Historically, homosexuality was socially acceptable only outside of marriage between married people who already had children; it was not accepted as an alternative to heterosexual relations. And while Confucian conservatives such as Zhang Xianglong argue against the AID by same-sex couples, Bai Tongdong and Sin-Yee Chan point out that Confucian care is never reduced to care from biological parents, and that its unreasonable restriction meaningly impedes the moral development of those who would have otherwise found home. Tan Sor-hoon emphasizes that biological reproduction is neither necessary nor sufficient to meet filial obligation, and that family ties in Confucianism are formed ritually. The debate is, therefore, still open and requires closer investigation.

Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu

Feminist Friendship as Spousal Relationship

The problem of gender-based oppression in the institution of marriage is one of the most contested issues within the feminist community. In order to deal with its many problematics, some feminists advocate for a complete withdrawal from the institution of marriage that historically has been built based on patriarchy and some insist on an absolute 50/50 split in all aspects of spousal duties to preempt insatiable demands for female servitude. However the first proposal evades rather than addressing the issue of marriage and the second proposal is nearly impossible to implement for us mortals. The radicality and impracticality of both proposals hence make it necessary for feminists to reimagine an alternative theoretical paradigm for spousal relationship. In this presentation, I intend to propose a hybrid concept of feminist friendship framed in Confucian you 友 (friendship) with a blend of Greek philia to reconceptualize modern marital relationship. By replacing spousal relationship with moral friendship, we would be able to rehabilitate the institution of marriage and to enable all to live a fully flourishing and ethically satisfying life so that in a marital union both spouses can become greater than they once were and are worthy friends for life.

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.

Rituparna Roy, University of Porto and Ruhr University

Buddhist Reflexive Awareness in The Lenses of Brentano's Inner Perception

This paper focuses on the most discussed issues of consciousness; does consciousness intrinsically and necessarily involve self-awareness? In Section 1, I will talk about "svasaṃvedana" citing Dharmakīrti (Dreyfus 1997, Garfield 2006) works. It refers to a cognitive process in which the consciousness of an object and consciousness itself occur concurrently, and this type of self-awareness or reflexive awareness is nondual, implying without a subject/object dichotomy. There is only one mental state and thus, certain cognitive states can reveal themselves while disclosing their intentional objects. In essence, his self-consciousness was a kind of representationalism. In light of this, I shall address Brentano's concept of "inner perception" in Section 2 and argue that Dharmakīrti also provided a version of immanent intentionality in which awareness of awareness is relational which is more Brentanian than Husserlian. Whether awareness of awareness should be interpreted relationally is arguably the main point of contention between the Brentanian and Husserlian approaches. The object of the inner perception and the perception itself have a unique relationship, and they are both parts of the same mental act. Both Dharmakīrti and Brentano, in my opinion, defended their similar opinions with compelling arguments for why there is only one mental act. In Section 3. I will shed light on Dharmakīrti's notion of "ākāra" in the light of Kriegel's illustration of "for-me"- ness. The object of experience imprints its "mark" on awareness, which in turn captures the object's form. A causal connection between an object and the senses enables awareness to acquire a specific pattern or ākāra. Kriegel made a distinction between the "qualitative character" or consciousness "it is" and the 'subjective character' or "for-me" -ness that makes consciousness "at all" of a conscious experience, where the latter is part of the consciousness itself and because of it the same object felt differently by different individual. Both

have endorsed the idea that "for-me" -ness and experienced givenness are compatible to a certain extent.

Anthony James Ruda, Oxford University

Another Look at Alokākāśa: Anekānta in a Mathematical Universe

This presentation examines the non-world space (alokākāśa) of Jaina ontology in the context of gaṇitānuyoga, the mathematical discipline cultivated within the Jaina tradition as a means toward liberation. More than an infinite void of nothingness as such, alokākāśa is recontextualized as a mathematical structure underpinning the Jaina system of reality, lending gaṇitānuyoga special resonance. Through the adoption of this mathematical framework, a concordance is demonstrated between the Jaina alokākāśa, the Pythagorean void, the Platonic World of Forms, and the Advaitic Brahman. Attention is also given to speculative physics and the mathematically-informed theology of Spinoza. Indeed, in the spirit of anekāntavāda (the doctrine of many-sidedness), this presentation aims to show how various conceptions of reality may mutually illuminate each other, contributing thus to a pluralistic and collegial pursuit in the human search for truth across traditions. In this way, the Jaina, Pythagorean, Platonic and Brahmanic worldviews are likened to different 'models' of reality, with each lens combining to bring 'ultimate reality' (or the Absolute) into clearer focus.

Raman Sachdev, Minot State University

A Tale of Two Sages: Comparative Paths to Tranquility in Stoicism and Buddhism

This paper explores the comparative philosophies of Stoicism and Buddhism through the lens of their paradigmatic figures: the Stoic sage and the Awakened One (the Buddha). Despite their divergent cultural and historical contexts, both traditions present the sage as an exemplar of emotional mastery and tranquility, achieved through disciplined engagement with the mind and emotions. This essay argues that the Stoic and Buddhist sages, while differing in their metaphysical underpinnings, share a common practical goal: inner freedom from suffering through the cultivation of wisdom, mindfulness, and ethical integrity. The paper begins by drawing on Diogenes Laertius's Lives of the Eminent Philosophers to outline the Stoic sage as an ideal, supplementing this with reflections from Seneca (On the Happy Life, On the Tranquility of the Mind, On Anger), Epictetus (Discourses, Enchiridion), and Marcus Aurelius (Meditations). These works illuminate the sage's ability to live in harmony with nature, transcend emotional disturbances, and maintain rational self-governance. In parallel, the essay examines the Awakened One as depicted in Buddhist texts such as the Dhammapada and analyzed in Walpola Rahula's What the Buddha Taught, focusing on the Buddha's teachings on taming the mind, overcoming craving, and achieving enlightenment. Central to the paper's thesis is the claim that the sage and the Awakened One, though grounded in different metaphysical frameworks, embody the transformative power of philosophy as a way of life. This shared vision—philosophy not as abstract theory but as a practical discipline—offers complementary paths to tranquility through self-mastery and ethical living. By integrating Pierre Hadot's insights from What Is Ancient Philosophy? on spiritual exercises, the essay emphasizes the lived practices that define the sage and the Awakened One as models for resilience and well-being.

Neela Bhattacharya Saxena, Nassau Community College

Bernardo's Daemon, Schopenhauer's Will and 'Iccha' of the Tantric goddess

Humans are earthlings made of humus/dirt, with a cosmic dimension in their expansive consciousness, but most religions and philosophies take us farther away from that root. Forgetting that reality has brought us to the Anthropocene. Under the spell of reductive materialism, more than ever, we are now Tantalus of Greek myth, and Hungry Ghosts of Buddhism, tantalized and never satisfied by stuff and losing our humane qualities. We need a new narrative that could take us away from a misconstrued "materialism". A fascinating contemporary thinker, Bernardo Kastrup, does just that in his book Materialism is Baloney. He seems to effortlessly swim across science, technology, ontology, and the philosophy of mind claiming that he rides the dictates of his daemon. He engages with many scientists, philosophers, and spiritual teachers like Swamy Sarvapriyananda, an Advaita/Nondualist master. In Decoding Schopenhauer's Metaphysics, Kastrup digs deep into The World as Will and Representation and presents Schopenhauer as an important figure in understanding the nature of mind and reality in the light of modern psychology and current interest in the "hard problem of consciousness." Kastrup posits that Nature has an inner longing for self-recognition and the blind Will has a telos towards meta-cognition. This sounds remarkably like Samkhya metaphysics. Indic traditions speak of bondage and liberation from that bondage as the way out of personal and collective suffering. While most non-dual traditions focus on jnana or knowledge as the liberating tool to transcend human suffering, Tantric traditions that make the Great Goddess the central figure in this transformation speak of her Will/Iccha as the supreme reality beyond all knowledge. This presentation intends to examine the notion of Will in Tantric texts and the understanding of Schopenhauer's Will with the help of Kastrup's work that focuses on a new understanding of reality and its radical non-dual edge.

Dimitry Shevchenko, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Beyond Concepts, Beyond Possibilities: The Necessary Primacy of the Indefinite in the Thought of K.C. Bhattacharya

Krishnachandra Bhattacharya (1875–1949), a pioneering Indian philosopher, engaged deeply with diverse traditions like Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Jainism, crafting original interpretations of their core ideas. Despite this broad engagement, he is often presumed to be fundamentally committed to Advaita Vedānta, a view bolstered by his numerous essays and allusions to Advaita thought. However, this presentation challenges that assumption, arguing that Bhattacharya's non-dualism is distinct from classical Advaita. While Śaṃkara and Maṇḍana Miśra affirm the metaphysical primacy of the existent (sat) as the irreducible basis of reality, Bhattacharya consistently foregrounds the indefinite—a category preceding definite existence and affirmation. This notion aligns with apophatic characterization of brahman as neti neti (not this, not that), but departs sharply from Advaita's foundational premises. In his essay "Some Aspects of Negation," Bhattacharya argues that philosophical systems negate one another's logic yet fail to establish a universal standard of truth. This insight compels him to explore how to engage with the plurality of metaphysical views, navigating between approaches such as skepticism and pluralism. Bhattacharya proposes that incompatible possibilities must relate through mutual negation and alternation, where they are equally valid yet mutually exclusive. While each possibility offers a definite conceptualization of

reality, alternation points to something beyond conceptual thought—an unthinkable reality that defies affirmation or negation. For Bhattacharya, conceptualization reaches its limits not in the immediate experience of pure existence, as classical Advaita suggests, but in the indefiniteness of the thing-in-itself. This indefiniteness resists definitive classification as existent or non-existent, as such judgments are contingent on specific metaphysical stances. Thus, the progression unfolds as follows: plurality of views logically precedes any particular view, alternation precedes specific approaches, and the indefinite underlies alternation itself.

Ricardo Silvestre, Federal University of Campina Grande and University of Brasilia, Brazil

Contradiction in Bhedābheda Vedānta: A Paraconsistent and Dialetheic Account of Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda Theology

Several Indian religious traditions associated with Vedānta offer conflicting descriptions of the ultimate reality, Brahman. A prominent example is found in the Bhedābheda Vedānta tradition, which posits that Brahman is both different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from the world and individual selves. At first glance, this seems like a contradictory statement. However, most Bhedābheda Vedānta thinkers, such as Bhaskara (8th-9th Century), Nimbārka (13th Century?) and Vijñānabhikṣu (16th Century), attempt to reconcile the contradiction, asserting, for example, that Brahman is different from the world and individual selves in one sense, yet non-different in another, distinct sense of "difference." A notable exception is Jīva Gosvāmī, a leading theologian of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava school (15th century). According to a widely accepted interpretation, Jīva accepts the contradiction directly, adding that it is inconceivable (acintya). He termed his school Acintya Bhedābheda. Despite textual evidence supporting this view, other evidence from Jīva's writings and subsequent commentaries suggests his theology might be reconstructed using the more traditional contradiction-avoiding approach. This raises fascinating theological issues. The purpose of this paper is to offer an integrated interpretation of Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta, one that synthesizes both interpretations while staying true to the key elements of his ontology. This will be based on a version of Graham Priest's Logic of Paradox (LP), which I refer to as (a) Logic of Partial Truth (LPT). The result is a paraconsistent and (weakly) dialetheic account of Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta theology.

Giorgio Sinedino, University of Macau

The culturalization of Time/Number under a Pre-Newtonian framework: a comparative study of Ancient Western and Chinese approaches

The culturalization of Time is another feature that distinguishes Humankind within the natural realm. This presentation will compare how two ancient philosophical traditions, Western and Chinese, explicated the relation between Number and Time. I will argue that, although both represent Time through Number, they adopt distinct approaches to the problem, with repercussions for each one's way of philosophizing. The introduction will argue how a Pre-Newtonian framework provides objective standards of comparison, not only allowing for different social practices of setting "relative time", but also for philosophical/theological attempts to construe "absolute time" culturally. The first part will focus on how Aristotle used Number as an abstraction in Physics Book V to explain physical time and how the consequent aporiai led him to

cosmological and theological speculations about the topic in de Caelo I and Metaphysics XII. Despite Aristotle's breakthroughs, it was the Platonic doctrine of Time/Number that remained more influential in Late Antiquity, as it was better suited to respond to the needs of that age. The second part will focus on the account of Time/Number provided by Han dynasty Daoism, studying the common thread that unites 易傳, 淮南子 and 說文解字. While Time was also represented by Number, it was understood concretely, in two ways. First, the change (of Place) of celestial bodies. Second, the seasonal change (of states of affairs). Unlike Aristotle (and Plato), Chinese philosophy was not concerned with Time qua Time, and did not attempt to abstract it from Place and the observable states of affairs. The conclusion will distinguish Western and Chinese doctrines of Number/Time philosophically, postulating that, in the former, Time/Number is investigated as a matter of definition and quantification, while in the latter, it is a matter of correlation and qualification.

Jessica Soester, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Reconstructive Democracy: creative tension and the restoration of (dynamic) equilibrium

Deweyan creative tension and the related conception of Deweyan creative intelligence exist as forces necessary for the reconstruction of democracy. The Deweyan conception of democracy at work here is almost best understood as a verb or at least a gerund, one requiring constant maintenance and recreation. These concepts connect to and are expanded upon in the work of Indian philosopher B.R. Ambedkar, who studied at Columbia under American Pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. Ambedkar develops and employs what Stroud calls a "reconstructive rhetoric" (Stroud, 17). Here, rhetoric means, "ways or styles of argument or persuasion" rather than pejorative notions of "rhetoric as simplistic manipulation" (Stroud, 14). Ambedkar thus extends and moves beyond Dewey's pragmatism in his use of rhetoric and persuasion as an additional dimension of Deweyan tension. An Ambedkar and Deweyan pragmatism has potential for a thicker understanding and conception of democratic dialogue and its role in ethics and democratic communities. This Ambedkar-Deweyan synthesis is in need of and strengthened by the philosophy and demonstrations Martin Luther King, Jr.'s —specifically, the conception of "creative tension" in both his arguments and aesthetic demonstrative actions. King's conception and use of "creative tension" serves as a method to shine light on a crisis such that its injustice can no longer be ignored—especially racial and economic injustices. Ambedkar and King both engage democratically with their respective tensions. King's economic philosophy, ethical theory, aesthetic demonstration, nonviolent civil rights demonstrations and oratory, and Ambedkar's "reconstructive rhetoric" are both manifestations of pragmatism engaged in certain ideals of democracy with particular methods of communicating and cultivating these conditions. Through their specific and unique manifestations of tensions arising from the call for more democratic inclusion and dignity, the philosophies of Ambedkar, King and Dewey thus inform, and are productively informed by one another.

Joseph Sta. Maria, Delft University of Technology

A Confucian Approach to the Issue of AI Friendship

Recent innovations in AI have brought about the question as to whether AI can be friends with human beings or not. This has disrupted the concept "friend" in that the concept is no longer able to adequately fulfil its function of indicating and defining the entities that it should properly refer to. One way of addressing this disruption is by establishing a clear definition of "friend." This is what several philosophers have attempted, with a significant number of them drawing on the Aristotelian understanding of friendship. However, this Aristotelian understanding often leads to either rejection or skepticism with regard to the possibility of AI being friends with humans. This is because the Aristotelian understanding implies that friends should have some kind of interior faculty, such as a will, by which these friends could wish each other well, which, in turn, is a requirement of friendship. It is doubtful, however, as to whether AI has such a faculty. Some scholars have pushed back against this by either applying a more loose or limited Aristotelian understanding of friend or abandoning an Aristotelian approach altogether. One common and praiseworthy reason they have for doing this is that friendship with AI could be beneficial for people who find themselves in circumstances that prevent them from befriending other humans.

This paper approaches the issue above by suggesting a way of using concepts inspired by Confucius' usage of concepts in the Analects. In the Analects, Confucius does not provide universal and exhaustive definitions of ethical concepts. Instead, he describes these concepts in a way that can help his interlocutors become more ethical in the specific circumstance in which they find themselves. Generalizing this, it can be said that, for Confucius, the function of a concept is not to adequately define or describe "reality" but rather to guide people toward (ethical) flourishing. Applying this to the issue of AI friends means avoiding the possibly intractable debates about what the definition of a friend is. Instead, one's understanding of the concept of friend can be considered legitimate insofar as it helps one achieve flourishing in one's specific context. This way of handling the concept of "friend" can thus cater to the diverse stakeholders involved in the issue, particularly those for whom friendship with AI might be beneficial because of their unique circumstances of being unable to befriend humans.

Rafal Stepien, Austrian Academy of Sciences

The Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy in the 'Period of Disunity'

Is it ethical to believe? Does believing necessarily entail ethically suspect metaphysical commitments? And if so, can one suspend all one's beliefs? This paper explores these and related questions by reconstructing what is a hitherto largely unstudied yet highly original philosophical conception of how belief relates to ethical action. Substantively, it focuses on the foundationally important Sanlun 三論 or Three Treatise school of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Sanlun is the Chinese development of Indian Madhyamaka—the hugely influential school of Buddhist philosophy founded around the turn of the third century by Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250)—and is most closely associated with two figures, Sengzhao 僧肇 (374-414) and Jizang 吉藏 (549-623). On the basis that Sanlun thinkers take belief formation, maintenance, and relinquishment as ethically consequential actions, I argue that the ethics of belief provides a generative means of perceiving—and untangling—the various interwoven strands of their thought. Specifically, this applies to what I see

to be the school's fascinating combination of metaphysically nominalist anti-foundationalism, epistemic relativism, meta-ethical conventionalism, and non-theistic deontological normative ethics.   More broadly, this paper introduces ongoing research into Sanlun Buddhist philosophy. While research on Madhyamaka philosophy has recently been intense, work in this field has largely sought to elucidate the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical positions of Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika heirs in India and Tibet, leaving the philosophical study of related Chinese Buddhist texts and ideas still relatively untouched. This paper outlines the 'ChinBuddhPhil' project, designed as this is to contribute to the historical and systematic study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy through specialist research on the Sanlun school in conversation with its Indian antecedents, later elaborations in Chinese Buddhism, and analogues in contemporary Western philosophy.

Karsten Struhl, The New School for Public Engagement

The Mindfulness Revolution and Zizek's Critique

As Buddhism spread to the West and developed as a global phenomenon in the 20th and 21st century, it has taken several forms. One form has seeded what has been called the "mindfulness revolution," in which Buddhist mindfulness meditation has been extracted from its soteriological and ethical path and taken on a life of its own. The result of this modern transformation makes Buddhism an easy target for philosophers like Slavoj Zizek, who has argued that Western Buddhism not only withdraws from social and political concerns but, in fact, serves as a hegemonic ideological support for an oppressive and exploitative status quo. Specifically, Zizek argues that Western Buddhism has become a most efficient way to participate in capitalist dynamics while appearing not to do so, that it "enables you to fully participate in the frantic pace of the capitalist game while sustaining the perception that you are not really in it...and that what really matters to you is the peace of the inner Self to which you know you can always with-draw." While Zizek's criticisms come from outside Buddhism, it has been echoed by a number of Buddhist thinkers who offer ethical and political criticisms of the mindfulness revolution, e.g. David Loy and Ronald E. Pursur. In this talk, I will identify certain aspects of mindfulness meditation, as it is generally practiced in Western Buddhism, that support these criticisms, but I will also consider the potential of mindfulness to become counter-hegemonic when reformulated as an ethical and socially and even radically engaged project.

Martyna Świątczak-Borowy, University of Warsaw

Ritual, Narrative, and the Shaping of Public Space: A Critical Examination of Confucian 禮 (li)

Narratives and rituals are interconnected practices that shape human experience through shared structures, performative power, and transformative potential. Rituals frequently incorporate narratives instrumental in ritual transmission (Nünning and Nünning, 2013). While both can serve as a source of existential meaning and a powerful tool for shaping communal life, they equally share the potential to distort and deteriorate. (Farneth, 2023; Meretoja and Freeman, 2023).

This bivalent character of rituals must be accounted for when building upon rituals to create and shape the public space. Sungmoon Kim (2023) proposes the Confucian understanding of ritual (li 禮) as the foundation for Confucian civil society, a "subjunctive space" enabling transformative

public discourse. Kim suggests that shared ritual practices cultivate a "civil tongue," fostering deliberation and decision-making.   Kim's account, however, must address the inherent potential for ritual to ossify, shifting from multivocal flexibility to reductive rigidity. As Michael Nylan points out in her analysis of the Liji (2001), ritual practice requires flexibility and adaptation, avoiding mere perfunctory adherence to fixed rules (170). Nylan emphasizes that for rituals to remain efficacious, they must be "harmonious variations on a theme," reflecting the specific social context (173). Therefore, while Kim's proposal of ritual as a response to societal polarization holds promise, mitigating ritual's potential dangers through adaptable and contextually relevant practices is crucial for realizing its potential within the public sphere.

Yiting Tang, University of Chicago

By Way of Attunement: The Musicology of Situatedness in Zhuangzi, Book 2

It is well-known that, in classical Chinese philosophy, qing 情 does not always and primarily mean emotions. At the same time, many studies of the Zhuangzi still approach the discourse on qing 情 under the rubric of something like the philosophy of emotion. The aim of this paper is not so much to criticize that approach to the Zhuangzi but to explore the aspects of qing 情 in the Zhuangzi that don't neatly fit into the categories of passions, moods, and emotions. My attempt will be to illustrate the discourse on qing 情 in the Zhuangzi through the concepts of being and attunement. My main questions are: What if to be is to be attuned? What's the relationship between attunement and rhythm, frequency, and intensity? And what kind of philosophy might result if the opening of Book 2 of the Zhuangzi is read as a phenomenological account of being as various (and varying) modes of attunement?

Kevin Taylor, University of Memphis

Hakuin Zen as a Way of Life: Nature, Nurture, Narrative in Revitalizing Rinzai Spiritual Exercise

This paper aims to take up Pierre Hadot's call for more comparative philosophy in what he termed Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL). Whereas Steven Collins took up this call to use Theravada Buddhism and the Jataka Tales as his case study, this paper has elected to focus on an individual Zen master, Hakuin Ekaku (白隠 慧鶴, 1686–1769) for his importance in modern Rinzai Zen and his approaches to what Hadot termed "spiritual exercises." Hakuin's kōan curriculum aims at seeing into one's true nature (kenshō) through his implementation of the the three jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, the sangha) which becomes the Zen Master, the kōanand the Rinzai monastic community. Hakuin's teachings are meant to nurture the student as the progress through his kōan curriculum (later set down by two of Hakuin's disciples) as they seek to confront "the great matter of life and death." Hakuin himself was however an unreliable narrator perhaps employing skillful means to reach a wider audience or simply misremembering the finer details of his spiritual practices such as his overcoming of Zen sickness through the aide of a Daoist mystic or his account of the eruption of Mount Fuji as a catalyst to push through the Zen barrier. Hakuin's narrative is often unreliable and may be understood as skillful means or simply an expression of his humane fallibilism. This paper therefore explores the pedagogy and Zen philosophy of Hakuin Ekaku, the concept of kenshō, the practice of meditation in-the-midst-of-activity (dōchū-no-kufū 動中の工夫) and his narrative

approach which occasionally stretches the credulity of skillful means in light of his goal, following Dahui, to attract as many students as possible.

Friso Timmenga, University of Groningen

A Dirty Word? Universality in Japanese and Latin-American Philosophy

In recent years, the concept of 'universality' has come under scrutiny. Terms traditionally considered universal – such as 'human', 'being', time', and culture' – are increasingly viewed as tools of a dominant Western paradigm that marginalizes difference rather than embracing it. Nonetheless, comparative, intercultural, and world philosophical traditions broadly recognize that an outright rejection of universality, without offering an alternative, risks lapsing into relativism. This talk therefore proposes a reimagined approach to universality by engaging with the relational thought of Nishitani Keiji, whose philosophy provides a compelling foundation for rethinking universality beyond domination. I advocate for a transformative model of universality, one that harnesses rather than suppresses difference. To demonstrate how this model can enrich cross-cultural philosophical dialogue, I explore Rodolfo Kusch's notion of estár and consider its potential for universal philosophical relevance. I conclude that the universality of philosophical concepts should be assessed aesthetically, namely by their capacity to evoke transformative experiences. Such an aesthetic evaluation invites an ongoing, reflective negotiation of what constitutes the truly universal.

Sebastian Moro Tornese, Hellenistic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London

Music, Attunement, and the Ground of Being: A Neoplatonic-Kyoto School Dialogue

This paper explores how music, poetry, and art provide an alternative to representational language, offering a direct experience of reality beyond the subject-object divide. Through a comparative study of Neoplatonism (Plotinus, Proclus) and Kyoto School philosophy (Nishida Kitarō), I argue that aesthetic experience enables a lived attunement (Stimmung, or a mood or mode of existence that shapes our understanding of the world) to a deeper unity underlying all existence. For the Neoplatonists, music and harmony express the hidden order (logos) and living vibrational essence of reality. Music awakens an inner receptivity or intuition—what could be called the spiritual ear—allowing the soul to resonate with the cosmic harmony as an expression of nous and a sonic ground of being. Nishida's concept of the 'place of absolute nothingness' serves as the grounding reality that enables the dynamic interplay between being and non-being, self and world, subject and object. This suggests an inner natura naturans, a creative, self-expressing ground of being that mirrors and expresses itself in the monadic harmony of the whole world, mirroring the dialectical interplay between self and the environment. This dynamic interplay involves an underlying dynamic that can be expressed with the Dionysian aspects of music which allows for both the universal and the many individual selves to interplay dialectically, reminiscent of the Platonic chora and the Neoplatonic ideas of dynamis and life as a space of both potentiality and emergence. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony exemplifies this, uniting rational structure and ecstatic transformation in a way that mirrors both Neoplatonic triadic structures (being, life, intellect) and Nishida's idea of dialectical universal and absolute present. In this light, music is not merely an aesthetic form but a mode of knowing—a sonic participation in the life of natura naturans, revealing an underlying

harmony that attunes the individual to the unfolding unity of reality, fostering a deeper self-awareness through embodied experience and intuitive engagement with the world.

Melissa Townsend, Independent Scholar

Painting Liberation: A Visual Ontology of the Interplay of Mind and Consciousness in Book Four of the Yoga Sūtras

This presentation explores how artistic practice can facilitate a philosophical inquiry into the nature of mind, consciousness, and liberation as articulated in Book Four of the Yoga Sūtras. Through a series of paintings that visually translate these sūtras, I propose that art offers a unique, experiential means of engaging with the complex relationship between citta (mind-stuff) and puruṣa (consciousness). The paintings function as a form of "visual ontology," inviting viewers to engage philosophical concepts in a tangible, sensory way. This approach seeks to render the metaphysical inquiry of the Yoga Sūtras available to us through the aesthetic experience of visual art, not just through discursive reason

Paul Van Els, Leiden University

The Origins of the Legend of Master Wen: The Relation Between the Laozi and the Wenzi

Paul van Els focuses on the legend of Wenzi's 文子 pupillage under Laozi and examines how this legend came about. Section 1 scours early Chinese texts for passages that mention Laozi's disciple Wenzi. Section 2 explores the Wenzi for textual links to the Laozi. Section 3 focuses on how these two main protagonists are portrayed in the Wenzi, to see what this reveal about Wenzi's discipleship. Van Els shows that the creation of this legend is related to the early beginnings of the Wenzi as a text, which in turn is linked to the Laozi and its philosophy.

Dušan Vávra, Masaryk University

Modern, or monstrous? Contemporary critical and fictional approaches to Chinese modernity

There is a long strain of thought in Chinese modern history that contrasts becoming modern or civilized with the abyss of uncivilized monstrosity of failed modernity (from Lu Xun to the TV documentary River Elegy in the late 80s, and beyond). On the other hand, there has always been a counter-current framing modernity as opposed to Chinese traditions, depicting the West-modelled modernity as monstrous from the point of view of Chinese indigenous values. Chinese modernity itself has been pictured as monstrous, especially with reference to failed utopian projects, like Cultural Revolution. In this paper, I analyse the problem of modernity vis-à-vis monstrosity as it appears in contemporary (21st c.) Chinese texts. First, I present a set of examples from contemporary Chinese fiction (mostly science fiction) where the omen of monstrosity lurking behind successful modernity often takes literal shape, pointing to both supra-human and infra-human futures. Second, I read selected works by contemporary Chinese thinkers, who present doubts and dreams concerning modernity in less spectacular way but, as I argue, basically evoking the fictional visions. I argue there is a century-old concept that still haunts contemporary Chinese imagination, underlying both philosophical and fictional representations of Chinese modernity: (social) Darwinism. The paper argues that it is exactly Darwinist worldview (obviously widely shared by Chinese intelligentsia as well as public sentiment) that renders the problem of modernity-as-monstrosity as a specifically Chinese problem (and not universal one) in many works by various Chinese authors.

Yves Vendé, Université Catholique de Lille

Reading Chinese Classics as a transformative exercise for individuals and communities

Jesuit interpretations of Confucianism are often presented as a static narrative: Matteo Ricci is said to have provided the first engagement with Confucianism through dialogue with Chinese scholars, while subsequent generations of Jesuits would have followed the interpretive "folds" he established without significant change. This account, however, overlooks the internal dynamism of reading and transmitting communities.

Ricci's approach evolved from engaging with Chinese culture through Buddhism to privileging Confucianism, which he regarded as more compatible with his tradition. In this process, he rejected Neo-Confucianism as irreconcilable with Scholastic principles. By doing so, Ricci positioned himself as "a true interpreter" of early Confucianism, which he deemed commensurable with scholasticism. This view of compatibility between scholasticism and early Confucianism—but

not Neo-Confucianism—is particularly evident in his interpretation of Qi, which he conceptualized through an Aristotelian lens as a material element, excluding its metaphysical dimensions.

Ricci's successor, Niccolò Longobardo (1565–1654), developed a different interpretation of Confucian texts. Engaging with a broader range of sources, commentaries, and interlocutors, Longobardo took Neo-Confucian commentaries seriously and ultimately concluded that a profound incommensurability existed between the Confucian and Scholastic traditions.

A century later, François Noël (1651–1729), while initially building on the accounts of Ricci and Longobardo, incorporated Neo-Confucian commentaries and the cosmology of the Yijing (易經) into his understanding of Confucianism. Noël reinterpreted Qi as a "vital principle" rather than mere material air, blending it with biblical notions of creation and Aristotelian vocabulary.

Through the examples of Ricci, Longobardo, and Noël, this presentation explores how engagement with foreign Classics and their commentaries fosters openness to change in individuals and challenges collective prejudices. In this light, univocal narratives about the mutual engagement between Confucian and Scholastic traditions fail to account for the transformative potential inherent to Classics.

Rico Vitz, Azusa Pacific University, USA

Skepticism, Insight, and Ineffability: Reflections on Daoist Apophaticism and Humean Philosophy of Religion

Zhuangzi and Hume have similar views about skepticism and the limits of language. In particular, Zhuangzi is skeptical about what can be known and, consequently, what can be said about Heaven and the Way. In a similar vein, Hume is skeptical about what can be known about "the Deity." But each offers a radically different practical response to these epistemic and linguistic limits. On the one hand, Zhuangzi views Heaven and the Way as having an important practical role in human life. On the other hand, Hume views the Deity as having no significant practical role in human life. And these views—i.e., Zhuangzi's "mysticism" and Hume's "atheism"—are typically recognized as distinguishing characteristics of each philosopher's thought. This combination of intriguing similarities and stark differences provides a rich basis for philosophical investigations. And yet (from what I can tell) there is not one published piece offering a comparative analysis of the works of these two philosophers. In this paper, I will examine the reasons for their differences and explain how such an examination can create new opportunities for Hume scholars not only in comparative philosophy but also in philosophy of religion.

Ellie Hua Wang, National Chengchi University

Xunzi and Hume on Moral Motivation

Xunzi (312–210 BCE) and Hume (1711–1776 CE), separated by nearly 2,000 years, share intriguing similarities and notable differences in their views on moral judgment. Both thinkers engage with opponents from comparable perspectives, exhibit a strong commitment to naturalism, and demonstrate a keen interest in moral psychology. Their ethical frameworks do not rely on ontological entities, metaphysical structures, or theological conceptions of heaven. Moreover, both recognize the centrality of affect—such as feelings and desires—and the role of artifice in moral

judgment. This paper initiates a dialogue and complementary study of Xunzi's and Hume's perspectives on moral motivation. It examines two interpretations of Hume's motivational theory, as outlined in Cohon (2008): the background impulse model and the spontaneous creation model. The paper argues that both models share a potential limitation: reductionist and static motivational monism. By contrast, Xunzi's emphasis on the transformative role of the heart-mind (心, xin) offers a dynamic framework for understanding how "radically new motivations" can arise. This comparative study explores their views on the nature and foundation of moral distinctions and moral agency. By examining their similarities and differences, the study aims to provide fresh insights into both theories and highlight ways in which Xunzi's approach to moral psychology may surpass Hume's in addressing certain philosophical challenges.

Lewis Wang, Boston University

Xuanzang's Master Argument Against Mind-Independent Existence in Cheng Weishi Lun

While the prospect for ontological idealism in Western philosophy seems bleak today, interest in the Buddhist Yogacara idealism remains alive and thriving. This makes one wonder whether the unique foundational assumptions and principles of Buddhist philosophy may be more conducive for building a plausible case for ontological idealism. This essay is an attempt to start building a clear and strong Buddhist case for ontological idealism that can engage in dialogue with other traditions. I locate this case in Xuanzang's Cheng Weishi Lun, a Yogacara masterpiece that is highly influential in East Asia but understudied in the West. In particular, in this paper I focus on what I call Xuanzang's Master Argument against mind-independent existence, which summarizes the general strategy Xuanzang uses against the Abhidharma accounts of mind-independent dharmas. This argument establishes the conclusion that there is no mind-independent existence by ruling out the mind-independent reality of physical objects (rupa), neither-physical-nor-mental beings (citta-viprayukta-samskara), and causally inefficacious permanent beings (asamskrta). Furthermore, I explore how Buddhists defend the premises of this argument, and identify and discuss the Buddhist metaphysical principles that ultimately underlie these premises. As I will show, Xuanzang's Master Argument depends on four key premises: 1. If something is causally efficacious, it is impermanent. 2. If something is not causally efficacious, it must be unreal. 3. If something is physical, then it must consist of parts and is thus unreal. 4. If something is not physical, it must be mental. Premise 1, I argue, ultimately rests on the principle known as the Indiscernibility of Identicals in Western metaphysics. I further show that premises 2 and 4 both depend on Ockham's Razor (or the Principle of Lightness in Mark Siderits' term). Finally, I argue that premise 3 depends on both the Buddhist mereological nihilism and the assumption that space is infinitely divisible.

Sonia Weiner, Tel Aviv University

Calibrating the Colonial Archive

Indian philosopher A. Raghuramaraju has challenged the effectiveness of importing Western philosophical concepts directly into Indian philosophy (2019). Alternately, he suggests "calibrating," "bending," or reinterpreting central ideas through dialogical engagement between Western and Indian thought. RRR challenges the accuracy of Jacques Derrida's critique of the bias of logocentrism for Indian philosophical thought, unsettling his privileging of the written over the

spoken word in the Indian context. In the same vein, the archive, a Greek concept, also famously theorized by Derrida, might be "bent" towards an Indian sensibility, especially when considering the types of materials that have traditionally been archived, official written documents, additionally consecrated through the power bestowed by the confluence of commencement (origin) and command (authority). Santanu Das (2018) has argued for expanding the category of the colonial archive (WWI) to include oral, material, and visual artifacts created by non-literate (pre-modern) persons who operated within the parameters of a literate (modern) system. The inclusion of unconventional materials allows other ways of thinking to emerge, uncovering previously concealed registers of affect and reflection of Indian subjects serving the Raj. Das's work corresponds with that of Homi Bhabha (1990, 1998), who perceives racial stereotypes as the product of enduring colonial fantasies, offering new ways to undo race by turning the gaze towards the historical construct of whiteness as a normalized deracialized category. Turning the gaze from a pathologized or Orientalized other toward the anxiety underlying the colonial archive has the power to deconstruct its Eurocentric vision, discerning the distortions and erasures at its core. Drawing on RRR, Bhabha, and Das, this presentation will unfold tensions between the oral and written within Amitava Kumar's novel, Immigrant, Montana (2018), by examining its multiple engagements with archival materials, from NASA's Indian monkeys to WWI Sepoys, and stories of the Partition.

Kuan-Wei Wu, Ruhr-Univ. Bochum

Different Treads of the Confucian Liberalism through An Intellectual Historian Approach (1945-1960)

This conference paper employs an intellectual historian approach to examine whether and how liberal democracy can emerge from Confucian virtue. While past debates have primarily centered on normative and philosophical dimensions, this study prioritizes intellectual history and scholarly development. It posits that through progressive reforms in citizenship enfranchisement, the bottom-up consolidation of civil society, and the benign governance of sovereign statehood, liberal democracy can flourish when rooted in Confucian virtues despite its elite-led orientation. It, therefore, explores three intellectual trajectories: (1) native Taiwanese intellectuals who had been educated and cultivated in the times of Taishō Democracy at that time, such as Lin Mosei (1887-1947) and Joshua Wen-Kwei Liao (1905-1952), who advocated citizenship and autonomy during the early postwar period; (2) New Confucian emigres scholars advocating an alternative version of Chinese liberalism aside from the Chinese nationalist central discourse, including Tang Jun-Yi (1909-1978), Mou Zong-San (1909-1995), Xu Fu-Guan (1902-1982), and Carsun Chang (1886-1969), who reinterpreted Confucian values in democratic contexts; and (3) Chinese liberalists who hold Confucian traditional virtues in a more critical, scientific positivist stance, like Hu Shih (1891-1962), Lei Chen (1897-1979), and Yin Hai-Guang (1919-1969), who balanced allegiance and opposition to Chinese nationalism. This study navigates the interplay of political thought and historical context and aspires to contribute to comparative and intercultural philosophy. It seeks to shed light on the intersections of Confucian thought, liberalism, and democracy in East Asian past and future.

Shizhen Xie, University of New South Wales

Filial Children, Resentment, and Responsibility: Cases from the Mengzi

Shun, one of the revered Confucian sage-kings, is an exemplary filial son in the Confucian classic Mengzi. As Confucians generally believe, filial children are appropriately affectionate and dutiful toward their parents. Therefore, it seems not appropriate for them to feel negative emotions toward their parents, such as resentment. Yet, in Mengzi 5A1, Shun appears to resent his parents, which would seem inconsistent with the Confucian image of filial piety. In this paper, I consider two possible interpretations of Shun's resentment. In the first interpretation, Shun's resentment is directed at himself and not at his parents. This view assumes that filial children should not resent their parents as that can damage relational affection (qinqin 親親) in the parent-child relationship. By comparison, the second interpretation claims that Shun resents his parents on the basis that his parents intended to murder him. To support the latter interpretation, especially defending its ethical idea, I interpret the notion of "resentment-yearning" as a form of resentment that does not entail blame. My paper proposes that it is appropriate for filial children to feel resentment-yearning toward their parents when parents perpetrate serious crimes. However, resentment-yearning alone is insufficient to preserve a filial child's relational affection for their parents in some ethical dilemmas. Therefore, I believe filial children need to seek reconciliation with their parents.

Huayanni Yang, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

How Not to Be a Daoist Dogmatist: Reflections on Language in the Guan Yin Zi

The Guan Yin Zi (關尹子) is a Tang dynasty apocryphal text found in the Daoist Canon Daozang. It fuses Daoist thought with Buddhist philosophy, resulting in nine chapters of aphorisms, whose terse insights and unusual charm have provoked multiple commentaries spanning Song and Ming dynasties. No English translation of the text is available at the moment, and very little attention has been given to it. This paper is an effort to bring the Guan Yin Zi into the horizon of a wider scholarly community. In 9.20, it warns all students of the Dao: "When encountering subtle and exquisite sayings, or mysterious and wonderful deeds, be careful not to seize them with eagerness or adhere to them as truths. Once you do, it becomes the direst disease possible, with no medicine to cure." Contrary to the majority of Daoist texts that espouse the Dao, habitually quoting from the Daodejing as uncontestable wisdom, the Guan Yin Zi maintains a rare sobriety with all verbal formulations and ancient teachings. I shall trace out the text's attitude toward language with a close analysis of chapter nine, observing the Daoist absorption of Buddhist imageries and its critique of attachment. Yet the Buddhist approach is also transformed when expressed in the Chinese language. This paper offers new points of reference on the early interaction between Daoism and Buddhism.

Wenbo Yu, Beijing University of Chemical Technology

Exploration of the Structure of Mind-Nature and Establishment of the Moral Subject: A Comparative Study of Zhu Xi's "Virtue of Nature (性之德)" and Ma Yifu's "Nature-Virtue (性德)"

At the level of the theory of mind-nature, Zhu Xi proposed the concept of "virtue of nature (性之德)" through his interpretation of "The Doctrine of the Mean," which represents the inherent state of nature within the heart. Ma Yifu, a representative figure of modern Neo-Confucianism, building on

the foundation of the Song-Ming Neo-Confucian theory of mind-nature, introduced the concept of "nature-virtue (性德)," emphasizing that it is something inherent in all people from birth, universally shared by all, regardless of time or place, Eastern or Western.Both Zhu Xi and Ma Yifu expressed their understanding of human moral nature through the analysis of the structure of human mind-nature. In contrast, Ma Yifu's emphasis on the concept of "nature-virtue" (性德) aims to draw more attention to moral nature and moral cultivation, advocating the restoration of the original bright state of moral nature through the study of the Six Arts of Confucian classics.In the context of cultural exchanges between China and the West, Ma Yifu's reflections embody the conscious efforts of modern Neo-Confucianism in establishing moral subjectivity. His viewpoints provide important insights for humanity to construct a moral world and solve human dilemmas.

Ai Yuan, Tsinghua University

Silence and Rhetorical Questions in the Daodejing

Ai Yuan examines the idea of silent teaching in the Daodejing from the perspective of "rhetorical questions" (RQs). This chapter discusses the practice of making silent arguments in the Daodejing through RQs: a form of questioning that expects silent answers from the addressee. Yuan disagrees with reading silence in opposition to language and debate. The Daodejing shows that the importance of silence in RQs does not lie in telling people what ought to be done. Instead, (1) RQs repeat the literary expressions already present in propositions that we put forward within the same context, calling for a recognition of the proposition's universal validity without directly uttering it. Thus, silence invoked by RQs reveals the authority of knowledge. (2) Arguments elicited through RQs confront audiences with problematic actions and choices that violate accepted principles. Thus, they demonstrate the emotive power of the arguments. (3) RQs invoke new conceptual images. Their use anticipates an awareness of a more prevalent use of a shared image while inviting readers to entertain the new construction of that conceptual image. (4) The Daodejing criticizes language oppositions and conceptual contrasts. Within this context, RQs invite a reflective attitude, leaving questions and answers open. (5) RQs evoke a conversational feeling and facilitate a sense of self-discovery.

Haishan Zhang, Sichuan University

From Illusory Discrimination to Ethical Inquiry: A Yogācāra Analysis of Human-AI Romance

This paper examines the phenomenon of human-AI romance through the lens of Yogācāra Buddhism, focusing on the notion of "illusory discrimination" (abhūta-parikalpa) within the Three Natures framework. In parikalpita-svabhāva (imagined nature), both human-AI and human-human relationships arise from projections lacking independently existing referents, thus illustrating how emotional attachments can be fueled by consciousness-based constructs. However, at the level of paratantra-svabhāva (dependent nature), a more complicated picture emerges for human-human intimacy. Each person's behavior toward the other is ultimately a manifestation of their own vijñāna (consciousness), yet it genuinely affects the other's consciousness, creating a dynamic interplay. While individuals sow karmic seeds in their own ālaya-vijñāna, these seeds remain interconnected through their relationship. Causing another person to suffer does not merely harm that individual— it also plants negative seeds in one's own consciousness, thereby influencing both parties' future

experiences and shaping their shared world. By contrast, human-AI relationships typically lack such vijñāna-to-vijñāna reciprocity, as rūpa (matter) in AI does not possess sentience in the conventional Buddhist sense. Consequently, it does not experience suffering or volitional impulses, which substantially reduces the ethical dimension related to mutual harm and lacks shared karmic implications. Moving on to pariniṣpanna-svabhāva (perfected nature), Yogācāra underscores the emptiness of the subject-object duality. Neither the human nor the AI has an inherently existing self—realizing this calls for cultivating compassion free from self-clinging and developing non-discriminating wisdom (nirvikalpa-jñāna). By applying these Yogācāra insights to human-AI romance, this paper highlights both the risks of clinging to illusory constructs and the importance of recognizing our own role in shaping such attachments. It ultimately argues that a Yogācāra-informed perspective can guide us in addressing the ethical implications of emerging forms of intimacy with greater clarity and compassion.

Paweł Zygadło, Department of China Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

Humanising the human – mind (xin) and ritual (li) in Xunzi's thought

The stereotyped version of Chinese philosophy portrays Xunzi as the opposite of Mengzi. Whilst Mengzi is prized for advocating the goodness of human nature (ren xing), Xunzi is perceived as the one condemning it as evil (Kupperman, 2000). Consequently, for centuries, the psycho-moral complexity of Xunzi's project has been overshadowed by the supposedly more 'humane' Mengzi's approach and largely neglected. However, from the argumentation regarding human nature presented in the 23 Chapter, it is apparent that condemning human moral qualities was not Xunzi's primary objective. With additional analysis of two other crucial for Xunzi concepts, mind (xin) and ritual (li), another, much more complex and much less 'inhumane' (as Xunzi's critics like to see his project) picture emerges. It becomes evident that, despite 'canonised' prejudice, Xunzi offers a complex, programme of 'humanising the human' based on recognising human natural constraints and appreciating human agency (Zygadło, 2024). The current study is designed as an in-depth analysis of notions of mind (xin) and ritual (li), which aims to contextualise the abovementioned conclusion in the entirety of Xunzi's programme. Mind, as another, after desires (yu), inborn quality, and ritual, as a field of human activity meant to curb desires, the actual source of possible evil, are indispensable tools for attaining actual humanhood in the Confucian sense. Squared with Xunzi's vivisection of human nature, they become a complex programme for becoming a human within moral pragmatism's boundaries.