

Call for Papers

‘Buddhist Philosophy between India and China: From Madhyamaka to Sanlun’ Vienna, 17–18 August 2024

As part of a Starting Grant funded by the European Research Council devoted to the study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, I am pleased to invite proposals for participation in a workshop on ‘Buddhist Philosophy between India and China: From Madhyamaka to Sanlun’. This will be held at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (IKGA), part of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW), in Vienna on 17–18 August 2024. It is timed so as to immediately precede the international conference on ‘Madhyamaka in South Asia and Beyond’ scheduled to be held also at the IKGA on 18–22 August 2024. Participants in the workshop are very welcome to also present papers at the conference.

The research project of which this workshop forms parts is titled *The Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy in the ‘Period of Disunity’* (CHINBUDDHPHIL: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101077136>). Centrally concerned with the Sanlun 三論 school most closely associated with Sengzhao 僧肇 and Jizang 吉藏, the project intends to study Sanlun’s contributions to Chinese Buddhist philosophy in historical and systematic manner, with an especial focus on the ethics of belief. In so doing, the project hopes to transform the conventional understanding of philosophically valuable traditions by demonstrating that Chinese Buddhist philosophers merit consideration not only as historical artifacts but as genuinely interesting and insightful contributors to live philosophical problems. It likewise aims to redress the preponderant exclusion of Chinese perspectives from philosophically oriented scholarship in Buddhist studies, and to do so in a manner that bridges it with philologically oriented Buddhology.

Three workshops will be held as part of the overall project. These will be devoted to Sanlun in conversation with its Indian antecedents, its later elaborations within Chinese Buddhism, and its analogues in Western philosophy respectively. In the case of this first workshop, the aim is to study the transmission of religious and/or philosophical ideas and arguments between Buddhist South Asia and the Chinese world in the early centuries of the common era, specifically in a bid to unearth and evaluate Chinese Sanlun’s distinctive contributions to and elaborations on Indian Madhyamaka. Since the project overall takes belief (howsoever understood) as its primary concern, papers that explore belief overtly, especially from an ethical perspective, are particularly welcome. Nevertheless, paper proposals are invited on relevant topics in Madhyamaka-Sanlun philosophy from diverse disciplinary approaches.

It is foreseen that confirmed speakers will be allotted 40 minutes each, with at most half of that time devoted to individual presentations and the remainder to responses and discussion. Accepted speakers will be very welcome to pre-circulate draft papers among workshop participants so as to facilitate informed discussion and debate. An edited volume comprised of chapters based on the workshop papers is planned.

Those interested in taking part are welcome to send 1) a paper abstract of circa 500 words, and 2) a CV or link to a professional profile, to rafal.stepien@oeaw.ac.at by the 1st of October 2023. Requests for further information are also welcome. In a dedicated effort to counteract long-standing discrimination, women and members of other identity-groups still under-represented in academe are especially encouraged to apply. Accommodation in Vienna for participants will be funded by the organizers, and some funds may also be available to offset travel costs for those participants with no alternative sources of funding; if a need for travel funding is foreseen, please state this when submitting your proposal.

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