



WESTFÄLISCHE
WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT
MÜNSTER

Seminar für
Fundamentaltheologie und
Religionsphilosophie



Institut für Kultur- und
Geistesgeschichte Asiens

INTERNATIONAL TWIN-CONFERENCE

> God or the Divine

Religious Transcendence beyond Monism and Theism, between Personality and Impersonality

How can we conceptualize the relationship between the cosmos, the experience of transcendence, and the human individual? Do standard models like monism or theism, and standard alternatives like personalism and impersonalism provide us with an appropriate understanding of this relationship? From a Christian perspective it is already possible to understand the concepts of personality and impersonality as extreme demarcations within an analogical way of thinking. The Semitic, European and Asian traditions provide us with concepts and imaginative models for characterizing religions and their respective concepts of transcendence. Many of opposing classifications and many of these systematic concepts (e.g. all-encompassing unity, monism, pan-en-theism, theism) emerged out of a European context from the point of view of the European scientific tradition. The relations between God/divine, world and human are being more differentiated, plural and complex than the statements of the European discussion seems to suggest if they assume simple oppositions of theistic duality and monistic identification or personality and impersonality. Thus, the main question of the conference is how religious transcendence is exposed in different modes, and how these plurality of modes can be compared between different religious systems/galaxies of meaning? Is Hindu thinking about brahman expressed in monistic traditions necessarily apersonal? In which sense do nirvana or sunyata denote an ultimate reality? Which concepts of relationality of transcendence in Indian theistic are developed?

26.6.2016 - 28.6.2016

> Part I: Christian-Buddhistic Dialogue

> Sunday, 26.06.2016

I. Opening

19:30 *Bernhard Nitsche*: Anthropological approaches to transcendence: Awareness for divine transcendence and its different modes of presence

20:00 *Joseph O'Leary*: The tetralemma and the difference between impersonal or personal

> Monday, 27.06.2016

II. All-Unity

09:10 *Michael von Brück*: Oneness in Buddhist Traditions?

10:05 *Klaus-Dieter Mathes*: Pratītyasamutpāda and the problem of continuity: Does the concept lead to an idea of All-unity?

11:20 *Jörg Plassen*: »All-unity« – a possibility in Mahāyāna thought? Some musings based on early Huayan/Hwaōm literature from Tang and Silla

III. Can Mahāyāna-Tradition speak of a great, divine transcendence?

14:40 *Jowita Kramer*: The relation between the constituents of the person and true reality according to Yogācāra sources

15:30 *Florian Baab*: Transcendence in difference to creation as a Christian essential

15:50 *Perry Schmidt-Leuke*: Buddhist Concepts of Transcendence

16:15 *Hermann-Josef Röllicke*: Considerations on the inappropriateness of the »transcendence« paradigm to the hermeneutics of Buddhist scriptures

17:00 *Dennis Hirota*: Who is Amida? Where is the Pure Land? On the Locus of Transcendence in the Thought of Shinran

17:50 *Dorji Wangchuk*: The One-Truth/Reality (ekam satyam: bden pa gcig) Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

> Tuesday, 28.06.2016

IV. Personal or impersonal ultimate?

9:10 *Klaus von Stosch*: Opening question: Personhood as a Christian essential

9:30 *Robert Gimello*: Dharmakāya and Dharmatā, Deus and Deitas: Reluctant Intimations of Divine Presence in the Religion of Emptiness

10:40 *James Fredericks*: The working of grace: De Lubac and his critics in dialogue with Pure Land Buddhism

11:35 *Noel Sheth*: Effort and Grace in Relationship with the Transcendent in Buddhism

30.6.2016 - 2.7.2016

> Part II: Christian-Hinduistic Dialogue

> Thursday, 30.06.2016

I. Opening

19:20 *Bernhard Nitsche*: Types of Identity and Difference in Christian thought

20:00 *Francis Clooney*: Karma and True Religion: When Is God (Un)necessary?

16:50 *Michelle Voss Roberts*: Shades of Difference: Limitation, Individuality, and Transcendence in Abhinavagupta's Śaivism

18:00 Remarks from a Christian perspective by *Fabian Völker*

> Saturday, 02.07.2016

> Friday, 01.07.2016

II. Identity (abheda) and Difference (bheda) in so-called Indian monism

9:10 *Godabarisha Misra*: Ontological interpretation of Śaṅkara and the question of monism

10:00 *Anantanand Rambachan*: Gnoseological interpretation of Śaṅkara. The relationality of *saṅga brahman* and *nirguṇa brahman*

11:20 *Gary Tubb*: Śaṅkara and Bhāskara. Personal vs. impersonal aspects of the self against the background of Bhāskara's Doctrine of Identity and Difference

III. Theistic concepts of Kaśmīr Śaiva tradition

14:40 *John Nemeč*: Śiva's claim to identity: Can personalism in a theistic tradition of a strict identity survive? (Kaśmīr Śaivism)

16:00 *Timothy Cahill*: Aesthetic experience (*rasa, camatkāra*) as mediator between personal and impersonal transcendence

IV. Theistic concepts of Vedānta

9:10 *Marcus Schmücker*: Difference and inseparability as key-concepts for the relation of a personal God to his World (Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta)

10:05 *Steven P. Hopkins*: Theology in Poetry: Divinity, Humanity, and the Natural World in Veṅkaṇātha's Hamsasandēśa and its Śrīvaiṣṇava Commentaries

11:30 *Noel Sheth*: The Bhedaḥbheda (difference and nondifference) of Nimbārka

14:40 *Robert J. Zydenbos*: Madhvas concept of divine personality/personalism

15:50 *Gérard Colas*: God and soul as persons: similar, nevertheless different

16:40 *Christine Büchner*: How can Christian Theology be in resonance with Hinduist Theologies

18:00 *Francis Clooney*: A Review of the conference – Insights from and Perspectives for Comparative Theology



> Organisation:

- > Prof. Dr. Dr. Bernhard Nitsche, Universität Münster
- > Dr. Marcus Schmücker, IKGA, Wien
- > Dr. Ulrich Dickmann, Katholische Akademie Schwerte

> Registration:

- > Participation fee per person - including board and lodging: Single 196/Double € 172 (116 / 104) - including meals without lodging: € 114 (75)
- > Registration deadline: 16th May 2016
- > Conference secretary: Manuela Siepmann - 02304 477599 - siepmann@akademie-schwerte.de



Organised with the support of:

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