

Institute of philosophy (Russian Academy of Sciences) and Tibetan culture and information center in Moscow

within the framework of the joint project "Buddhist philosophy in the context of modern philosophical thought"

Welcome to the First International Conference

"Buddhism and Phenomenology"

Moscow, November 7-8, 2016

Unlike omniscient and all-embracing wisdom, philosophy is always based on doubt, questioning and raising problems. Its very nature is to detect conflicts of ideas and stimulate their rational elaboration. Philosophy takes nothing for granted. Such is philosophical work regardless its civilizational and cultural identity. Therefore contributions to philosophy can be gauged with a good degree of objectivity: Do we see a really new problem? Do we meet a fresh idea or at least a new formulation of a known idea? Are we given an interesting proof or do we have a convincing refutation of an old proof? Whatever the question, philosophical work is ineluctably directed at universally valid rationalia.

In contemporary Russia, the vision of Buddhist philosophy is basically conditioned by two main factors:

- 1) Eurocentrism that governs both educational system and philosophical discourse;
- 2) Lack of dialogue and interaction between Buddhists, Buddhist scholars, and experts in Western philosophy.

As a result of the dominance of the Hegelian philosophical model, the achievements of Eastern philosophical traditions, Indian Philosophy and Buddhism in particular, remain off agenda for philosophical education. *Not to know Plato is impossible, not to know Dharmakīrti is normal.*

This is the reason why the overwhelming majority of Russian philosophers nowadays consider Buddhism an exotic wisdom having nothing to do with philosophy in its "real" Western sense. However, today in the West, in spite of the Eurocentric mainstream, Buddhism begins to appear in the horizon of contemporary philosophical thought. A particularly promising interaction seems to be between Buddhist philosophers and phenomenologists, analytic philosophers and cognitive scientists. Articles on Buddhism are included in many Western textbooks as well as in some fundamental works on consciousness. It also concerns the organization of conferences, writing books by the authors who are not only Western philosophers but also Buddhologists.¹

His Holiness the Dalai Lama plays an important role within this process. He actively cooperates with some leading Western scientists and philosophers within the framework of the annual conferences organized by the *Mind and Life Institute* founded by Him (<https://www.mindandlife.org>). This stimulated among some Western scholars interest in Buddhism and its philosophical heritage.

In Russia, the situation with Indology and Buddhist studies is far from inspiring optimism, and the reason for such situation lies beyond the two factors mentioned above. As a philosophy Buddhism is being sometimes marginalized due to an oversized attention to the practical aspect of Buddhism with strong emphasis on meditation and yoga. Whatever their nature or level of importance, the latter cannot be considered as the only important features of

¹ For example: *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*. Edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Buddhism and its unique contribution to World thought. Regrettably, the intellectual and philosophical aspects of Buddhism are viewed among the followers of some Buddhist schools established in Russia as much less important. It leads to a wrong understanding of Buddhism as primarily a practical guide to desirable states of mind and not as a complex philosophical system that deserves to be studied in the same way we study Plato or Descartes.

This may explain the fact that in Russia, although the number of Buddhists continues to grow, the academic Buddhist studies whittle away. Needless to say, without the new generations of the serious scholars, the very existence of Indology and Buddhology for which Russia was so famous at the time of Theodor Stcherbatskoi is brought into question and in future we risk to have nothing more than a number of enthusiastic amateurs.

Meanwhile, in the modern world the global trend consists in developing a cross-cultural, cosmopolitan philosophy that will incorporate the philosophical achievements of different civilizations. Unfortunately, our philosophy is far from being ready to join this movement. In order to put an end to Russia's self-isolating tendencies and, at the same time, its exclusive orientation towards the West, it is necessary to make steps in another direction. Towards Buddhism, why not? Buddhism is a religion and a worldview historically shared by a number of Russian peoples.

Our project includes a series of conferences, publications and other joint research and training activities involving buddhologists-philosophers, philosophers specializing in different fields of Western and Russian philosophical thought as well as traditional Buddhist scholars. The goal of all these activities is to introduce Buddhist thought within the horizon of contemporary Russian philosophical discourse through mutually enriching dialogue and information exchange. This dialogue can help to show the achievements of Buddhist thinkers who face the same set of fundamental problems one meets in philosophy of mind, epistemology, anthropology, philosophy of language, and cognitive science.

Since the majority of our Russian philosophers, due to their education, is not familiar with Buddhist thought, the first conference is planned to have an educational character. We plan to invite some first-rate Western experts already involved one way or another in a Western-Buddhist dialogue along with authoritative Buddhist scholars and Buddhologists. They are welcome to make key-note presentations and further to dispute with our philosophers at the round table and during general discussion.

Since Buddhist philosophy is most often compared with phenomenology, we decided that the 2016 conference will be dedicated to "**Buddhism and phenomenology.**"

A plenary session scenario involves four key-speakers and four key-subjects:

1) "Buddhism friendly" phenomenologists, 2) "Phenomenology friendly" Buddhologists, 3) modern Buddhist philosophers, specializing in Buddhist theory of consciousness and familiar with Western philosophical tradition, as well as 4) critics of this project.

This scenario should create an atmosphere of free discussion and open exchange of opinions.

Audience:

1) Leading Russian philosophers in the field of phenomenology and philosophy of mind;
2) Researchers, especially young ones, having strong interest in the subject;
3) Buddhists who wish to plunge into the contemporary debates on the problems of consciousness and comparative philosophy;
4) Students, monks, and anyone who loves to think philosophically.

The conference will be divided into two phases:

I. Morning: plenary session before lunch (3 presentations 40 minutes each followed by questions)

II. Afternoon: round table (short papers from the other participants – 15-20 minutes) and general discussion.

Topics for discussion a:

- 1) Does the expression "Buddhist phenomenology" make sense?
- 2) Phenomenology and Buddhism: main features, identities, and differences.
- 3) Can Buddhism have any heuristic value for the development of phenomenology (Buddhist questions, problems, ideas relevant to phenomenological analysis)?
- 4) Which phenomenological ideas could be of use for Buddhist philosophy?
- 5) Could phenomenology become a soteriological project?

Estimated conference format:

10-13 h. - presentations of the 3 key speakers and questions.

13-14 h. - lunch

14-16 h. - the round table

16-16.15 - coffee break

16.15-18 h. - general discussion

Keynote presentations will be translated into Russian. The key-speakers are requested to send their power point slides by October 2016.

Russian participants should submit their abstracts in Russian and English by the end of September 2016. General discussion will be translated on request.

The list of the invited key speakers, who already gave their consent:

Venerable Thupten Jinpa Langri, a Buddhist scholar of the Tibetan Geluk school,

Venerable Dhammadjoti, a Buddhist scholar of the Abhidharma tradition.

Western philosophers: phenomenologist Dan Zahavi, phenomenologist, philosopher of science Michel Bitbol, Buddhologists Christian Coseru and Joel Kruger.

Conference organizers:

From the Institute of Philosophy – Dr. Hab. In Philosophy Victoria Lysenko -

<http://iph.ras.ru/lysenko.htm>, PhD Lubov Karelova, PhD Lev Titlin

From the Tibetan Centre of Culture and Information - Venerable Telo Tulku Rinpoche -

<http://www.kalmykia.eu/tag/telo-tulku-rinpoche> and Chief editor of the Centre of Tibetan

Culture and Information Julia Zhironkina - savetibetrussia@yahoo.com

For details on the conference key-speakers see next pages

Thupten Jinpa Langri



He is a principal English translator to His Holiness the Dalai Lama since 1985. He has translated and edited more than ten books by the Dalai Lama including *The World of Tibetan Buddhism* (Wisdom Publications, 1993), *A Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus* (Wisdom Publications, 1996), and the New York Times bestseller *Ethics for the New Millennium* (Riverhead, 1999). He received traditional Buddhist education (Geshe degree is corresponding to PhD) as well as Western education (bachelor's degree in Western philosophy and PhD in religious studies - both obtained in Cambridge, UK). He is a visiting researcher at the Stanford Institute for Neuro-Innovation and Translational Neuroscience, Stanford University, USA.

Among his publications: *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Thought: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle View*. Routledge Curzon, 2002.

His topic and abstract are expected.

K.L.Dhammajoti



Adhimukti and subjectivity in cognitive experience. The Abhidharma and Yogācāra Perspective

In my presentation, I shall discuss the gradual ascendance of the doctrinal importance of the concept of adhimukti (resolute receptivity or affirmative mentality) from Early Buddhism, through the Abhidharma doctrines, to Yogācāra, examining in particular the contribution of such a concept to the development of the vijñaptimātratā doctrine of the Yogācāra. In this way, I hope to bring out the Buddhist understanding of subjectivity in cognitive experience from the Abhidharma and the Early Yogācāra perspectives.

The Venerable K.L. Dhammajoti is a Buddhist monk originally from Malaysia, a distinguished Professor of Hong Kong University (who also taught in Sri Lanka and Thailand). The principal authority on Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma school, as well as an expert on early Yogācāra. Works with the sources in Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese, Sinhalese, and other languages of Southeast Asia, as well as with Tibetan texts. The founder of the *Journal of Buddhist Studies* at the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka. Author of such fundamental works as *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Centre of Buddhist Studies, 3rd edition 2009), *Abhidharma Doctrines and Controversies on Perception* (Centre of Buddhist Studies, 3rd edition, 2007), *Entrance into the Supreme Doctrine* (Centre of Buddhist Studies, HKU, 2nd edition 2008).

Dan Zahavi



Transcendental phenomenology, intentionality and subjectivity.

What do phenomenologists have to say about subjectivity and why are they interested in it, in the first place? What are the methodological moves, the descriptive findings and the systematic motivation? In exploring these questions, I will engage critically with certain Buddhist attempts to deny the first-personal character of consciousness, and also consider the relation between philosophical reflection and contemplation.

Dan Zahavi, Professor of Philosophy at University of Copenhagen, phenomenologist interested especially in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and philosophy of mind. In his writings, he has dealt extensively with topics such as self, self-consciousness, intersubjectivity and social cognition. He is a co-editor of the journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. Zahavi's work has been translated into 25 languages. The author and co-author of 10 books.

Among them:

Self-awareness and Alterity. Northwestern University Press 1999.

Husserl's Phenomenology. Stanford University Press 2003.

Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the first-person perspective. MIT Press 2005.

The Phenomenological Mind. 2nd Edition (with Shaun Gallagher). Routledge 2012.

Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame. Oxford University Press. 2014.

Zahavi is also the editor of more than 10 volumes, including: *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*. Oxford University Press 2012.

His papers could be found at <https://ku-dk.academia.edu/DanZahavi>

Cristian Coseru



Consciousness, Personal Identity, and the Self/No-Self Debate

Given that all Buddhists give universal scope to the no-self view, accounts of self-knowledge in Buddhism cannot rest on an egological conception of self-consciousness. Without a conception of consciousness as the property, function, or dimension of an enduring subject or self, how, then, do mental states acquire their first-personal character? How is self-knowledge possible? These questions are at the heart of a long intramural Buddhist debate about the nature and character of consciousness and self-consciousness. In pursuing these questions, I will trace the genealogy of key concepts of consciousness and personal identity in Buddhism, their role in articulating specific accounts of self-knowledge, and their relevance to contemporary debates in phenomenology and philosophy of mind about the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness.

Christian Coseru, Associate professor of philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the College of Charleston. He works in the fields of philosophy of mind, Phenomenology, and cross-cultural philosophy, especially Indian and Buddhist philosophy in dialogue with Western philosophy and cognitive science.

He is the author of *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), which offers a defense of phenomenological naturalism in comparative philosophy of mind; he is currently completing another book manuscript on phenomenological and analytic philosophical perspectives on consciousness. His papers on the subject of our conference:

"Buddhism, Comparative Neurophilosophy, and Human Flourishing," *Zygon* 49 (1): 208-219.

"Taking the Intentionality of Perception Seriously: Why Phenomenology is Inescapable," *Philosophy East and West* 65 (3).

"Mind in Indian Buddhist Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

"Naturalism and Intentionality: A Buddhist Epistemological Approach," *Asian Philosophy* 19/3 (2009).

His papers could be found at <https://cofc.academia.edu/ChristianCoseru>

Michel Bitbol



Michel Bitbol # 112 - 10/2009
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From the phenomenological epochè to meditation

Phenomenology has obvious affinities with contemplative inquiry, as it has been recognized long ago by the creators of phenomenology themselves. For instance, Husserl acknowledged in 1924 a deep connection of attitude and method between Phenomenology and Buddhism. The connection between Phenomenology and Buddhism will then be documented and developed. It will be mostly established through the basic act which allows the phenomenological inquiry, namely the epochè (i.e. the suspension of judgment about nature beyond the experience of it). Indeed, according e.g. to Sartre, the epochè occurs as a relaxation of the effort that consciousness makes in order : (i) to escape itself towards its own objects, and (ii) to project itself into an ego. But stepping back from this twofold effort, and reaching a pristine state of experience upstream this twofold tension and reification, is likely to be the main scope of Buddhist contemplative practice.

Michel Bitbol, "Directeur de recherche" at CNRS, previously in the Centre de Recherche en Epistémologie Appliquée (CREA) of École polytechnique (Paris, France), member of Archives Husserl, Ecole Normale Supérieure (Paris, France). Interested in the philosophy of mind and consciousness. Collaborated with Francisco Varela on this subject. Participated in the "Mind and Life" conferences to promote a dialogue between science and Buddhism. His publications related to the topic of our conference are: *La conscience a-t-elle une origine?*, Flammarion, 2014, "Science as if situation mattered". *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Science*.1.2002: 181–224.

"Ontology, matter and emergence". *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Science*. 6. 2007: 293–307.

"Is Consciousness primary? Moving beyond the "hard problem". *NeuroQuantology*, vol. 6, n°1, 2008: 53-72.

"A Defense of Introspection from Within" (with Claire Petitmengin) in *Neurophenomenology. Constructivist Foundations*, vol. 8, N°3. 2013: 269-279.

"Neurophenomenology, an Ongoing Practice of/in Consciousness". *Neurophenomenology Constructivist Foundations* vol. 7, N°3. 2012:165-173.

When "altered" states of consciousness become fundamental. Review of *Waking, Dreaming, Being : Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*. Evan Thompson. New York : Columbia University Press, 2014, 496 p. Published in *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 36, 101-112,2015.

His papers could be found at <http://michel.bitbol.pagesperso-orange.fr>

Joel Krueger



Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity, and the Relational Self in Buddhism and Phenomenology

Buddhism famously denies the existence of a fixed, permanent, or enduring self. What is not always appreciated, however, is that this no-self view does not entail a denial of subjectivity, or the first-person character of consciousness; nor does it entail a denial of intersubjectivity, or a relational view of the self. Drawing upon Buddhist and phenomenological resources, I consider various ways of understanding subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and the relational self that are, I suggest, consistent with a Buddhist no-self view. I focus in particular on these themes as developed in the work of Japanese Kyoto School philosophers like Kitarō Nishida, Keiji Nishitani, and Tetsurō Watsuji, whose comparative approaches draw heavily on Mahāyāna Buddhism, the pragmatist philosophy of William James, and phenomenology.

Joel Krueger is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Exeter. He works on various issues in phenomenology, philosophy of mind, and cognitive science, with a particular focus on embodied cognition, emotions, and social cognition. He also works on topics in Asian and comparative philosophy, pragmatism, and philosophy of music. Some of his papers on the subject of our conference include:

Krueger, J. (2015). The Affective “We”: Self-regulation and Shared Emotions. In T. Szanto & D. Moran (Eds.), *Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the We*. New York and London: Routledge.

Krueger, J. (2013). The Space between Us: Embodiment and Intersubjectivity in Watsuji and Levinas. In L. Kalmanson, F. Garrett, & S. Mattice (Eds.), *Levinas and Asian Thought* (pp. 53–78). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Krueger, J. (2013). Watsuji’s Phenomenology of Embodiment and Social Space. *Philosophy East and West*, 63(2), 127–152.

Krueger, J. (2011). The Who and the How of Experience. In D. Zahavi, E. Thompson, & M. Siderits (Eds.), *Self, No-self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions* (pp. 27–55). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Krueger, J. (2011). Extended cognition and the space of social interaction. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 20(3), 643–657.

Krueger, J. (2008). Nishida, Agency, and the “Self-Contradictory” Body. *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East*, 18(3), 213–229.

His papers could be found at <https://exeter.academia.edu/JoelKrueger>