

CALL FOR PAPERS

Kyoto in Davos: The Question of the Human from a Cross Cultural Vantage Point.

September 10-13, 2020

Institute of Philosophy (Domäne), Hildesheim University, Germany

The international conference, “Kyoto in Davos,” to be held in Hildesheim, Germany, returns to the well-known 1929 Davos disputation between Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) that focused on the central question of Kantian philosophy “Was ist der Mensch?” and considers what directions the debate might have taken had Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) – or any of the other members of the Kyoto School or thinker from Japan – been present.

With this question, Kant outlined the field of philosophy in its “cosmopolitan importance.” And while Kant’s cosmopolitanism was progressive and an expression of the best of the Enlightenment, such a cosmopolitanism cannot but appear to us today as Eurocentric. It has become essential to critically reflect on the cultural bias of our understanding of the human. Max Scheler, in his 1928 book, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, explicitly begins from the point of view of a “well-educated European” and thus from a clearly stated cultural bias. Returning to the Davos disputation, we ask to what degree the debate between Cassirer and Heidegger was dominated by a Eurocentric bias and how the philosophical account of the human would have unfolded had a culturally other voice been part of the debate.

Thus, the conference seeks to imagine a counter-factual confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) between Cassirer, Heidegger, Nishida, and other Japanese philosophers and to rethink, both historically and systematically, the nature of the human: What role does culture and religion play in Philosophical Anthropology? And to what extent does the plurality of cultures and religions contradict the perspective of universalism largely assumed by Philosophical Anthropology today? And how can other philosophical traditions broaden our understanding of the human and challenge the dominant models of essentialism, naturalism, culturalism, and existentialism?

Within this framing of the question, we suggest furthering the discussion at Davos within three thematic fields:

1. Historical and systematic contextualization of philosophical anthropology and the question of the human:

- What are the parallels in Japanese and German philosophical history from the 1910s to the 1930s?
- What role do neo-Kantianism and *Lebensphilosophie* play in Germany and Japan at the beginning of the 20th century?
- What can the Kyoto School and other streams contribute to philosophical anthropology?
- What are the repercussions of the multi-cultural view of the human?

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2. The repetition, appropriation, and transformation of Kant and post-Kantian philosophy:
 - What is the importance of Kant, neo-Kantianism and philosophical anthropology for the development of early Japanese philosophy?
 - What is the importance of early Japanese philosophy to our understanding of Kant and the post-Kantian philosophy?

3. The Crisis of Human Self-Understanding and the Kantian Question Across Cultural Difference:
 - Given the interconnection between language and understanding, what does it mean to translate philosophical language, specifically such terms as *Mensch*, human, 人間, from one culture to another?
 - Can we translate Kant's question of the human from Western to Eastern tradition, from the past to the present?
 - What were the conditions for translating the Western philosophical discourse into Japanese and rendering it understandable? Is it possible to translate Japanese philosophical discourse back into Western terminology?
 - Are there limits to understanding?
 - How does the limits of linguistic or cultural translation offer us new systematic insights into the question concerning the human?

We invite abstracts for proposed papers (250 word maximum) that explore some aspect of the thematic fields outlined above.

The invited speakers and guests include: Eric Nelson (Hong Kong), Steve Lofts (London, Canada), Ralf Becker (Landau, Germany), Sascha Freyberg (Venice, Italy), John Maraldo (Florida, USA), Bret Davis (Baltimore, USA), Gregory Moss (Hong Kong), Fernando Wirtz (Kyoto, Japan), and Jörn Bohr (Wuppertal).

Deadline: March 15th 2020.

All abstracts should be sent to: kyotoindavos@protonmail.ch