

Seminar Report

Title of the seminar: **International Seminar on Philosophy**

Organized by: **Department of Philosophy, University of Malta &**

Department of Philosophy, Nepal Academy

Date: 19th December 2016/ 2073 Poush 4 B.S.,

Place: Library Hall, Nepal Academy, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal

The program was scheduled to begin at 8:00 am. However, it started few minutes later. The program's proceedings are chronologically listed below:

1. Taking Seats:

Chairperson: Prof. Dinesh Raj Pant, Chief, Department of Philosophy, Nepal Academy

Chief Guest: Mr. Ganga Prasad Uprety, Chancellor, Nepal Academy

Special Guest: Prof. Dr. Claude Mangine, Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Malta

Vice Chancellor: Dr. Bishnu Bibhu Ghimire, Nepal Academy

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Dr. Birendra Prasad Mishra, Nepal

Paper Presenters: Mr. Bishnu Prabhat, Nepal

Dr. Nirmala Mani Adhikary, Kathmandu University, Nepal

Speakers: Mr. Gregory Burgin, Arizona State University, U.S.A.

Prof. Neb Kujundzic, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada

Prof. Dalila Honorato, Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

Dr. Purnima Agrawal, University of Delhi, India

Mr. Abdul Awal, National University, Bangladesh

Prof. Miguel Angel Quintana-Paz, Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes, Spain.

Dr. Clive Zammit, University of Malta, Malta

Dr. Lestari Nurhajati, London School of Public Relations, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Dr. Chaitanya Subba, Nepal

Dr. Dinesh Bhujju, Nepal

Prof. Li Maosen, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China.

Prof. Astrid Vicas, St. Leo University, Florida, U.S.A.

Dr. O.V. Haidamachuk, National Technical University, Khakriv, Ukraine.

2. Swastivachan

Mrs. Laxmi Gautam, the deputy chief of Nepal Academy recited the Swastivachan, the Mantra that prays for peace, happiness, and prosperity in everyone's life.

3. Welcome Speech

Dr. Bishnu Bibhu Ghimire, the vice chancellor of Nepal Academy gave a speech to welcome all the national and international speakers and guests. In the speech, he mentioned that the seminar was very important as it brought both the eastern and the western philosophers on a common ground to share their ideas about philosophy.

4. Inauguration

After the welcome speech, the seminar was formally inaugurated by the Chief Guest and Chancellor of Nepal Academy, Mr. Ganga Prasad Uprety.

5. Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker for the seminar was Prof. Dr. Birendra Prasad Mishra. He showed his gratitude towards the organizers for organizing such a noble event. Prof. Mishra also shared his experience as a former philosophy teacher and the chairperson of a commission formed by the constitutional council. He quoted Shakespeare, “Life is a story told by an idiot, signifying nothing” and made a point that philosophy can add some sense to it. He said that the eastern philosophical world is proud of its two great philosophers- Buddha and Janak.

6. Special Guest Speech

Prof. Dr. Claude Mangion gave a speech as the Special guest of the seminar. In the speech, he mentioned his two main ideas that the seminar would hopefully come across. First being the dialogue between two major traditions in philosophy, eastern and western. Prof. Mangion said that through philosophy, the conflict could be solved and harmony could be attained.

Secondly, this seminar would establish a relationship among the philosophers and make it easier for future collaborations and assistances.

7. Chief Guest Speech

Mr. Ganga Prasad Uprety, Chancellor, Nepal Academy gave the chief guest speech in the seminar. He said that it was a privilege for the academy to organize such a historical program on the auspicious occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Nepal Academy. He welcomed all the guests in the program and thanked the department of Philosophy, University of Malta for co-organizing the seminar and Nepal Darshan Adhyayan Kendra for playing a vital role in making the seminar happen. Mr. Uprety mentioned the similarities between Malta and Nepal in his speech and clarified the efforts and achievements of the academy in the promotion of philosophy, social science, literature, and culture. He said that though the collaboration with the academic institutions of many Asian countries like China, Pakistan, India, etc. had happened on numerous occasions before, it was the first time with the European countries. Hence it was a historical event. He wished a pleasant stay to all the international guests and closed his speech.

8. Chair Speech

The chairperson of the program, Prof. Dinesh Raj Pant gave the chair speech in the program. He informed about the basic structure and schedule of the program in his speech. He thanked everyone for helping to make the program happen and wished good luck to all the speakers. Prof. Pant requested the speakers to finish their speech within the time limit. He thanked Nepal Darshan Adhyayan Kendra for mediating between the University of Malta and Nepal Academy for more than eleven months. At the end of his speech, he requested everybody to participate in the photo session followed by a tea break.

Tea Break.9:30 Am

Academic Session I

The first academic session chaired by Dr. Chaitanya Subba started immediately after the tea break. Seven papers were presented in this session which was followed by a floor discussion.

Paper Presenters:

1. Prof. Dr. Claude Mangion

Prof. Dr. Claude Mangion, Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Malta presented a paper entitled *On the concept of immortality and rebirth in Meillassoux's The Devine Inexistence*.

The paper tried elaborate on the concepts and logic presented in The Devine Inexistence to address the issue of evil and injustice caused by it. There are two groups of people when it comes to the concept of god- people who believe that the god exists and people who don't.

Meillassoux in his The Devine Inexistence says that we should hope for the arrival of a God that can set things right. This god, he argues cannot be the god from another world as conceptualized by the traditional theists, but from this same world in which humans exist. He says that unjust deaths, the death caused by unnatural agencies can be resolved by rebirths.

Prof. Mangion argued that the concept of immortality and rebirth in The Devine Immortality must be further clarified because his arguments are under tensions and contradictions and the paper as a whole does not make proper sense.

2. Mr. Bishnu Prabhat

Mr. Prabhat presented a paper entitled *Oriental and Occidental Philosophy* which focused on finding the common points and differences between not only eastern and western philosophies but also northern and southern philosophy. In his speech, Mr. Prabhat criticized the Eurocentric concept of considering only the south Asia as the east and mentioned that there have been equally ancient and important philosophies from other eastern countries like China, Japan, Korea, etc. as well.

Both in east and west, the primitive philosophy was realistic and naturalistic and later on, the emotional philosophy of god and rebirth developed. History says that the religious philosophy had been forced among the citizens all over the world. There have been numerous examples like Galileo in the west and Charvahka in the east who was burnt alive for being an atheist.

Mr. Prabhat argued that although Nepal is the birthplace of eastern philosophy, many foreigners and Indians consider it to be North India. One of the six branches of eastern philosophy, Sankhya Darshan was developed by a woman named Kapila in Nepali land. Her son Kapil furthered it and became one of the influential philosophers in the history. Gautam Buddha began his philosophical journey from Nepal and spread throughout India, China, Japan, etc.

Mr. Prabhat concluded his speech by arguing that today's philosophy is not bound to a single culture or a nation and has been heavily inspired by science. He said that to categorize philosophy only as eastern and western is a conceptual flaw and we have to think about the northern and southern philosophies as well.

3. Dr. Nirmala Mani Adhikary

Dr. Adhikari's paper was entitled *Towards the reconciliation of Eastern and Western philosophy: A special reference to communication theory* which focused on the expansion of communicational school of thoughts through the alternative philosophies. The discipline of communication which has been followed all over the world draws its theories and concepts from the west – Greece and America. The dominance of the western school of thoughts has had been more prevalent in the past. The scholars from America started questing and criticizing the westernization of philosophy for making it homogeneous and in the 1980s, they began exploring philosophies from all over the world. The paradigm was called "West vs Rest". It is no doubt that the discipline in communication is changing.

Dr. Adhikari presented two concepts of communication theories in his paper. First, the Sadharikaran (generalization) of communication which was earlier limited to poetics and second, Bhatta-Mimansha which has been included in the International Encyclopedia of Philosophy. He himself is an expert in Mimansha school of thought. Dr. Adhikari concluded his talk by mentioning that from Bedanta and Mimansha, new communication theories have been developed and we need to acknowledge the diversity in philosophy.

4. Mr. Gregory Burgin

Mr. Gregory Burgin presented a paper entitled *The Original Ethics of Poetic Dwelling* which explored Martin Heidegger's notion of "poetic dwelling" and its ethical implications in today's world.

Heidegger argues that the world is ordered for particular purposes. The way of being in the world is revealed by technology. Technology does have special characteristics. The concept of looking outside the west started from Plato. The reflective or meditative thinking in philosophy is not solely a western perspective. He was interested in the indigenous people and their way of life and was for the intercultural philosophy.

Mr. Burgin concluded his speech by saying that the world must be attuned against one-sided thought and the technology should be used not to limit but liberate.

5. Prof. Neb Kujundzic

Prof. Kujundzic presented his paper entitled *Performing philosophy* in which he discussed the two main types and applications of philosophy. If we think about the historical aspect of philosophy, it evolved from a practical application to the thought experiment known as armchair philosophy.

The other focus point of his speech was about the responsibility of the professors who teach philosophy. Prof. Kujundzic argued that the future of philosophy in education is enormous. Though the teachers and philosophers will have to face the educator's dilemma about what to do when teaching philosophy or performing philosophy.

In today's world, the technology has become very advanced due to which an enormous amount of data and information is available to everyone. But the question is, what to do with that information? So, instead of merely memorizing the useless data, the educators should encourage the young students for creative thinking.

Prof. Kujundzic argued that the use of technology will open doors for peoples' pursuit of wisdom and happiness and philosophy could be a major field in education tomorrow.

6. Prof. Dalila Honorato

Prof. Honorato discussed the philosophical aspect of rituals in the field of communication. Her paper was entitled *Ritual on the philosophy of communication in everyday life performance*.

Ritual has a clear connection with life as it integrates individual in the cultural context with social and spiritual values. It is a comprehensible narrative between individuals or environment. Prof. Honorato presented her thoughts from the communicational point of view. She mentioned that hands and gestures have a vital role in rituals. Gestures originate and develop according to geography.

In many cases, rituals are religious and show the relationship between man and god. Against the concept of traditional belief among the right handiest, left handiest are exceptional people. Rituals can be non-religious as well. She argued that existence is also a ritual. Yoga, dieting, exercising, learning, etc. are also rituals. Some rituals are created by individuals which may be self-inflicted or for other people. It can also be subcultural or religious. She concluded her talk by saying that rituals, be it religious or non-religious, provides comfort to the people.

7. Dr. Purnima Agrawal

Dr. Agrawal's paper was entitled *Aesthetic Object and Objectivity* in which she reviewed and analyzed Roman Ingarden's theory in phenomenological aesthetics. Roman says that the aesthetic experience is the very condition for the possibility of aesthetic experience and all aesthetic judgments must be justified objectively in terms of aesthetic experience. He further says that an aesthetic experience is perfectly possible without the existence of actual work of art.

Dr. Agrawal argued that Ingarden's theory contradicts itself and needs further development in order to make sense. She said that his theory prevents down to earth evaluation of works of art, renders aesthetic object inconceivable apart from aesthetic experience and makes the individual's solipsistic experience the final code of appeal for validity and objectivity of aesthetic judgments.

Floor Discussion:

After the speaker presented their papers, the floor was open for discussion and queries. Many participants asked questions to the specific speakers regarding the papers they presented.

Dr. Bhakta Rai suggested Mr. Bishnu Prabhat to include Kirant darshan in the realm of Nepali Philosophy and conduct studies and researches on it. Mr. Prabhat took the suggestion very positively and said that Kirant Mundhum should be presented as an eastern philosophy.

In response to Prof. Miguel's question about the philosopher, Prof Claude Mangion said that the philosopher is against both theism and atheism. He is critical about the concept of all good, perfect god and says that the god must belong to the human community. He proposes that the god or the being who can fix the evil in the world has to be from this world and anti-transcendent. The philosopher mentions that the god will resign once he becomes perfect.

Lunch Break.12:30 PM

Academic Session II

Chaired by Prof. Dr. Claude Mangion

Speakers:

1. Mr. Abdul Awal

Mr. Awal's paper was entitled *Tagore's Philosophy of Education: A new Vista of Epistemology* in which he presented the thoughts of the famous writer, critic, and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore on the education.

Seven stages in a human life. One of them is school life. Many people regard school life as the life of imprisonment. Tagore wrote numerous articles on the philosophy of education merging eastern and western beliefs. His education system was based on human state approach. Tagore advocated attachment with nature in education. He also said that education is a continuous way of learning.

A teacher cannot teach if he is not learning himself. Tagore was against the mechanical way of teaching that prevails in most of the schools today. He said such schools would produce academic slaves, not humanists. Mr. Awal concluded his talk quoting Tagore, "If you don't want something to be done to you then don't do it to others."

2. Prof. Miguel Angel Quintana-paz

Prof. Quintana-paz presented his paper entitled *Intercultural Communication Beyond Relativism and Ethnocentrism* that argued why relativism is an incomprehensible idea and communication is still possible among people from different cultures.

The popular concept says that the communication among people from different cultures is not possible. There have been many philosophical developments to cope up with this issue. Richard Rorty argues that even if one cannot understand the rest, he can partially understand the cultural and conceptual frameworks that are different from his. He further argued that we actually do not need anything in common to understand the opposite.

We should accept our ethnocentric notion and be open for other ideas. Prof. Miguel concluded his speech by saying that we don't need to go against our culture to be open to other cultures.

3. Dr. Clive Zammit

Dr. Zammit's paper was entitled *On Husserl's Introduction to Phenomenology: The quest for radical beginnings*, the promise of absolute insight and the demand for radical self-responsibility in which he discussed Husserl's concept and ideas on phenomenology.

Dr. Zammit briefly talked about his interests and his introduction to Husserl. He elaborated his ideas by giving three examples. Husserl is a philosopher of crisis. He found a fault in the foundation of knowledge and that is never getting past the "Introduction of phenomenology". There are two kinds of knowledge- active and passive. Husserl's method is to travel from passive knowledge to the initial spark. He says that if we can do it, we can see the essential truth that will be beyond doubt.

At the end of his speech, Dr. Zammit mentioned that the truth has been killed and the year 2016 is said to be the year of post-truth. He gave three examples to illustrate his ideas of the importance of cross-cultural communications as it has been essential in this era of post-truth.

4. Dr. Lestari Nurhajati

Dr. Nurhajati's paper was entitled *Ethics and Philosophy of Communication in Social Media Uses at Millennial Generation in Indonesia* in which she discussed the misuse of social media among the youths of Indonesia. In her speech, she presented the graphs of the numerous surveys and researches on the attitude of the youths regarding the use and application of social media.

Some of the topics of the surveys were opinions in the discussion via social media, the attitude of the discussion through social media, the behavior of the messages through social media, attitudes about the visualization of the victims of natural disasters in social media, and attitudes about unethical messages in social media.

The conclusion of Dr. Nurhajati's paper was that the youth must develop the ethical understanding of the consequences of the use of social media. While utilizing one's freedom of expression, he must not violate the media ethics. Hence, we must make youths ethical about the use of social media.

5. Dr. Chaitanya Subba

Dr. Subba's paper was entitled *Cho?lung: The Core of the Political Philosophy in Yakthung Mundhum* in which he discussed and analyzed the philosophical aspects of the historical and cultural Mundhum of the Kiranti community.

Yakthungmundhum provides the base for the nationality of Kiranti Community. Mundum epistemology tells about the empirical knowledge i.e. knowledge through sense organs and non-empirical knowledge i.e. knowledge through reasoning (mind consciousness). Cho?lung is the symbolic source of power as mentioned in the Mundhum. It is a key marker of Limbu community. It is said that among the eight paths, only one leads to Cho?lung.

Dr. Subba spoke about the political terminologies such as justice, law, order and their interpretations in the Cho?lung.

6. Dr. DineshBhuj

Dr. Bhuj who was supposed to present his paper entitled *Technological Romanticism and Environmental Realism Appreciating the Nature before Understanding* was absent in the seminar.

7. Prof. Li Maosen

Prof. Maosen presented his paper entitled *The Chinese Concept of Morality and its Implications for Applied Ethics* in which he discussed the ethical base and moral stand of Chinese civilization. He explained the two essential components of the Chinese concept of morality- Dao which means the orientation of human and social values and Do which means the accumulation and then the measurement of the mental growth.

In contemporary China, such moral ideology is combined with political ideology. He concluded his talk by saying that when a social project or new technology is regarded as a national policy, there will be little space for applied ethics debate.

8. Prof. Astrid Vicas

Prof. Vicas's paper was entitled *Agency in Everywhere Tech* in which she discussed the possibilities of the impact and assistance of everywhere tech in human life.

New age technology has been showing opposite effects to what was expected. Everyone in this world acts with the central question in his mind-What's in it for me? Everywhere tech will help people to be more selfless and live in harmony. The development and implementation of the everywhere tech might happen sooner in developing countries.

9. Dr. O.V. Haidamachuk

Dr. Haidamachuk who was supposed to present his paper entitled *Intonation Status in Derida's "Of Grammatology"* was absent in the seminar.

Floor Discussion II

After the presentations were over, the participants put their queries forward to the respective speakers and the speakers responded to them. Tek Narayan Acharya asked Dr. Chaitanya Subba about the grand philosophy of Mundhum. Mr. Subba accepted that the study and research in Mundhum are in its infancy. Mundhum is really broad in terms of its ontology, epistemology, political philosophy, cultural philosophy, etc. So, there is yet to be studied a lot about.

Prof. Claude Mangion asked Prof. Miguel Angel about the certain concept of relativism and Prof. Miguel said in response that we need to differentiate between living together and understanding each other. Living together does not always mean understanding each other.

The seminar ended with the speech by the chairperson of the session, Prof. Dr. Claude Mangion.

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