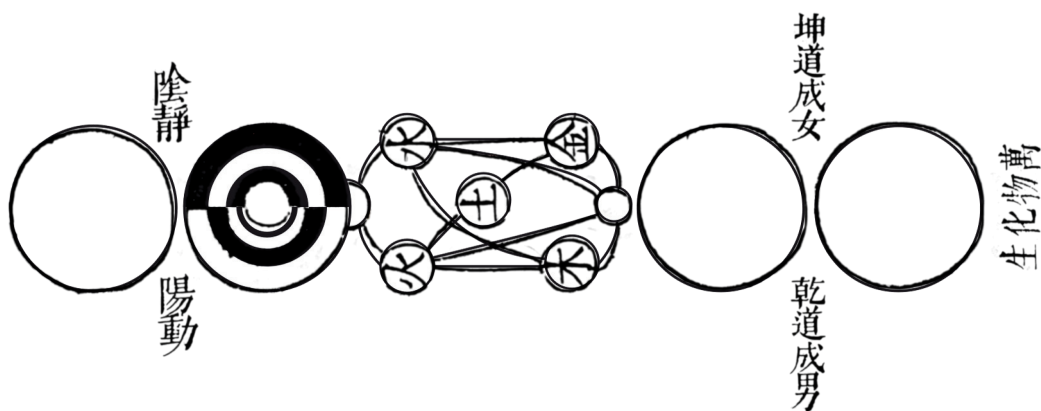


Programme and Book of Abstracts for the
Summer School

MODELS OF DIALECTICAL THOUGHT IN CHINESE AND ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

International Summer School Hosted by the
Department of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts,
University of Ljubljana

Ljubljana, September 4-7, 2026



Programme and Book of Abstracts for the Summer School *Models of Dialectical Thought in Chinese and Asian Philosophy* Ljubljana, 2026

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Department of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts,
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Ljubljana, September 4–7, 2026

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12, 1000 Ljubljana

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INTRODUCTION

乾道成男

坤道成女

萬物化生

The present booklet of abstracts accompanies the summer school *Models of Dialectical Thought in Chinese and Asian Philosophy*, dedicated to the exploration of dialectical thinking as a way of understanding dynamic processes in both conceptual and social domains. Dialectics is approached here as a mode of grasping reality as relational and processual, while shaping how tensions, contradictions, and transformations are interpreted within human societies. The programme adopts a transcultural and contrastive approach, engaging with European and Asian traditions, with an emphasis on East Asian philosophical contexts. This framework reflects the expertise of the lecturers and enables sustained engagement between distinct traditions that have developed different models of change, opposition, and continuity.

At the methodological level, the summer school proceeds with caution toward cultural generalizations. References to “European” and “Asian” dialectics are treated as designations of theoretical paradigms rooted in specific historical and conceptual frameworks. Within these paradigms, differences emerge in approaches to movement and stillness, oppositions and contradictions, as well as identity, difference, continuity, and change. Such distinctions are examined without reducing traditions to fixed or homogeneous entities.

The programme is further shaped by an awareness of the asymmetries that have marked transcultural philosophical exchange. The global influence of European models of modernization, historically linked to colonial expansion, continues to inform evaluative frameworks and interpretive standards. These influences often remain implicit, affecting how philosophical traditions are understood and assessed.

In response, the summer school engages a range of critical perspectives from both Western and Asian traditions. Post-structuralist and critical theory approaches question key assumptions of classical dialectics, while Chan Buddhist, Modern Confucian, and Kyoto School discourses offer alternative ways of conceptualizing relationality and contradiction. Indian Buddhist thought, also forms part of this broader field of reflection.

The contributions collected in this booklet reflect ongoing efforts to rethink dialectics in a transcultural context. The summer school provides a space for sustained engagement across philosophical traditions, with the expectation that such encounters will generate rigorous and productive intellectual exchange.

Tara Peternell

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SUMMER SCHOOL
PROGRAMME

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坤道成女

萬物化生

Time/Day	Friday, September 4
08:00–09:00	Registration
09:00–09:30	Welcome remarks and cultural performance
09:30–10:00	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
10:00–12:00	Jana S. Rošker: Sublating Dialectics: A Transcultural Theory of Mediation
12:00–14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00–16:00	Raquel Bouso: The Contradictory Self-Identity of the Self and the World: Dialectical Thinking in the Philosophies of Nishida, Nishitani, and Ueda
16:00–16:30	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
16:30–18:30	Tzuchien Tho: Dynamics and Dialectics in the <i>Zhou Yi</i> Commentary Tradition and Contemporary French Philosophy
19:00	<i>Welcome reception</i>

Time/Day	Saturday, September 5
08:00–10:00	Yves Vend�: An Alternative to Cartesian Dualism: Fran�ois No�l's interpretation of <i>Li</i> and <i>Qi</i>
10:00–10:30	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
10:30–12:30	Robin R. Wang: Beyond Contradiction and Complementarity: <i>Yinyang</i> as a Dynamic Logic of Subtle Proximity
12:30–14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00–16:00	Graham Parkes: Dialogical Thinking Through Anecdote: Contradiction in Classical Chinese Philosophy (Video) <i>Basho's Thinking Places</i>
16:00–16:30	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
16:30–18:30	Fabian Heubel: Upgoing and Downgoing: Heraclitus, Laozi, and the Possibility of an Aesthetic Philosophy of the Way
19:00	<i>Dinner for lecturers</i>

Time/Day	Sunday, September 6
08:30–09:30	Graham Parkes (Video): <i>The Role of Rock in the Chinese Landscape Garden</i>
09:30–10:00	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
10:00–12:00	Tamara Ditrich: Development of Multivalent Logic in Ancient India, with a Specific Focus on Early Buddhism
12:00–14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00–16:00	David Bartosch: Beyond Mere Comparison: Transversal Analysis, Sublation, and Polycontextuality in Transcultural Philosophy
16:00–16:30	<i>Coffee and tea break</i>
16:30–18:30	Closing discussion
18:30–19:30	<i>Dinner for lecturers</i>
20:00	Cultural programme (concert)

Time/Day	Monday, September 7
Excursion to Koper (visit to the Scientific Research Centre of the University of Primorska, and the Daoist temple of Supreme Harmony)	



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ABSTRACTS

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坤道成女



萬物化生

Beyond Mere Comparison: Transversal Analysis, Sublation, and Polycontextuality in Transcultural Philosophy

David Bartosch
Beijing Normal University, China

In this presentation, I will discuss three approaches to transcultural philosophizing. While each is suited for distinct theoretical perspectives, they can also be applied synergistically and in an integrative manner. I refer to the first method, a framework I have developed, as *transversal analysis*. The second is best described as *sublation* (Jana Rošker). Both methods are intrinsically related and potentially complementary: the moment of sublation is methodologically implied in the second-order analytical concepts of transversal analysis. Conversely, if sublation is chosen as the primary analytical objective, a preceding basic transversal analysis serves as an essential preparatory step.

The primary difference between the first two methods lies in their respective methodological emphases, and the choice between them depends largely on the specific goals of the respective philosophical analysis. Transversal analysis strives to reconstruct historical philosophies within their original contexts while mapping their contents – in correlation with their respective conceptual-historical and contemporaneous discursive backgrounds – onto one another in a quasi-holistic manner. It does so without resolving the tension of their substantive contradictions into a synthesis that forms a new standpoint. Sublation, on the other hand, aims precisely at a substantive dialectical synthesis of both sides (Rošker prefers “sublation” over the term “synthesis” to avoid associations with earlier misconceptions of its

dialectical depths). While transversal analysis tends to focus on differences and refrains from dialectically resolving doctrinal and conceptual tensions towards a contentual sublation – including those intertwined with the structures of the different languages involved, their historical forms of life, or historical structures of consciousness (such as Jean Gebser’s mythic and mental-rational structures) – sublation is specifically geared towards a conscious *contemporary actualization* (Kurt Flasch) of historical materials from diverse contexts.

Regarding transversal analysis, I will also discuss a further distinction from a logical perspective concerning the source material: Are the respective philosophies based on a bivalent, “Aristotelian” either/or logic, or are they based on what I call *basic logic* (*Grundlogik*)? The latter remains bivalent but incorporates the “and” – functioning either historically as a widespread traditional precursor to dialectical thinking, or systematically as the logical foundation of modern dialectics. Transversally analysing forms of thought based on this basic logic enables a higher-order qualitative level of comparison, one that extends beyond the mere association of simple categories found within the context of strictly bivalent, non-basic-logical thinking. In this context, it becomes possible to let the basic-logical foundation of thought – which I term the *metalogikon*, the fundamental, universally enfolded basis of thought as the unity of unity and difference – serve itself as the *tertium comparationis* for the selected topics or problematics under (transversal) investigation.

A third method, which I have similarly conceptualized, is best described as *trans-classical integrative polycontextuality*. It builds upon the concept of vague categories of comparison (Charles Sanders Peirce) and an expanded concept of polycontextuality (Gotthard Günther), which implies the aforementioned basic logic as the condition of the

possibility to “quantum leap” between the various culturally embedded contextures of individual historical philosophies of particular thinkers or thought collectives (distinct heterarchical holons functioning as rhizomatic nodes through their difference). This method is particularly suited for contemporary, global topics that are to be examined through the lens of their diverse and pluralistically conceived transcultural rootedness in world philosophy.

All three complementary methods will be illustrated using examples from my own philosophical work. For transversal analysis, I will draw on my comprehensive German monograph on Cusanus and Wang Yangming. To exemplify the third method – while also showing elements of sublation – I will draw on a recent, extensive book chapter of mine on the novel topic of the cosmological integration of biological life. Four additional open-access texts, provided as working materials, will complement this selection of examples.

David Bartosch currently serves as a professorial Distinguished Research Fellow at the Zhuhai campus of Beijing Normal University in the Greater Bay Area. As a dedicated scholar of East–West transcultural comparative philosophy, his core expertise spans Chinese philosophy – with a particular emphasis on Wang Yangming and Confucianism – ancient Hellenic thought, Western Eurasian Neoplatonism from Plotinus to Cusanus, and classical German philosophy. Drawing upon this historical backdrop, Bartosch expands his academic focus into a dynamic array of interdisciplinary and emerging research fields. His recent work delves into Transformative Philosophy in Neoplatonic Traditions, the Philosophy of Humour in Chinese Philosophy, the Philosophy of Technology and Artificial Intelligence from the perspective of Classical German Thought, the early history of Transcendental Philosophy, Intellect Mysticism from a

Transcultural Perspective, Transcultural Philosophical Cosmology (“Cosmic Life”), and early encounters between European (Cartesian) thought, Neo-Confucian philosophy, and Manchu Shamanism in the late stages of the Jesuit Mission. Furthermore, his transcultural research engages with transdisciplinary peace studies, comprehensive longtermism, and global ethics. At the heart of his intercultural approach is the methodologically rigorous parallel analysis and synthesis of Chinese, Hellenistic, and classical German intellectual traditions, driven by innovative, transdisciplinary methodologies. By investigating the vital intersections between philosophy and the sciences, and extending these insights into applied fields, Bartosch aims to highlight philosophy’s enduring capacity to inspire necessary cognitive and cross-cultural shifts. Bartosch has recently secured three book contracts with Springer on topics exploring the holistic foundations of longtermism as well as new perspectives in Confucian and transcultural philosophy. (<https://philpeople.org/profiles/david-bartosch>)

The Contradictory Self-Identity of the Self and the World: Dialectical Thinking in the Philosophies of Nishida, Nishitani, and Ueda

Raquel Bouso

University Pompeu Fabra, Spain

From the beginning of his philosophical career, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) sought to understand how dichotomies, such as subject and object or matter and spirit, emerge from a single, unified reality. In his later years, he developed a “logic of place” (場所的の論理) by applying a kind of negative dialectic, thereby deconstructing both representational and naturalistic accounts. This talk will explore Nishida’s notion of “contradictory self-identity” (矛盾的自己同一), as articulated in his text “Logic and Life” (論理と生命, 1936). In this work, Nishida employs this concept to describe the relationship between the self and the world, proposing the notion of the “expressive world” (表現的世界) and the human being as the focal point of world’s self-awareness. We will subsequently examine how other philosophers associated with the Kyoto School, such as Hisamatsu Shin’ichi (1889–1980), Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990) and Ueda Shizuteru (1926–2019), draw on the legacy of Buddhist dialectics and Nishidian logic in original ways.

Raquel Bouso is an Associate Professor at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, where she received her PhD with a thesis on the notion of Emptiness in the thought of Nishitani Keiji (1900–90). At the same institution, she also serves in the capacity of Vice-Rector of Culture and Communication, a role she has held since 2023, and as director of the

Antoni Tàpies Chair of Contemporary Art and Thought. In addition to her various articles, she has published *El zen* (Catalan, 2008; Spanish, 2012), coedited FJP vol. 6, *Cross-Currents and Confluences*, with J.W. Heisig (2009), *La filosofía japonesa en sus textos*, with J.W. Heisig, T.P. Kasulis, and J.C. Maraldo (2016), and *Tetsugaku Companion to Ueda Shizuteru: Language, Experience, and Zen*, with A. Loughnane and R. Müller (2022). Her research interests include intercultural philosophy, aesthetics and religion, East Asian religions and thought, particularly Japanese Zen Buddhism, and the Kyoto School. She is a cofounding member and president (2019–2024) of the European Network of Japanese Philosophy (ENOJP). She is currently affiliated with the Research Project *Countermovement. Mysticism Against the Grain* (UPF-PRISM 2025).

Development of Multivalent Logic in Ancient India, with a Specific Focus on Early Buddhism

Tamara Ditrich

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

The lecture will begin by tracing the roots of multivalent logical thinking in ancient India, as already attested in the earliest religio-philosophical texts of the Vedic corpus. It will then examine its subsequent expansion and refinement within Buddhism and other contemporary schools of thought. In this context, the lecture will provide an overview of the role and positioning of multivalent logic across several ancient Indian traditions – especially Jainism and Buddhism – which enabled them to approach realities through the incorporation of multifaceted contexts and inherent ambiguities. By way of example, particular attention will be given to the foundations of fourfold logic, evident already in early Vedic thought and further elaborated in Buddhism (e.g. *catuṣkoṭī*) and other traditions of the time, particularly within Jain philosophy (e.g. *anekāntavāda*, *syādvāda*).

The central focus will be on the role of polyvalent logic in the early Buddhist models of cognition, likely informed by contemplative practices. These models seek to integrate and analyse the dynamic, multifaceted, interdependent, and ever-changing phenomena and processes that constitute lived experience, understood as arising from multiple causes, conditions, and contexts, and as grounded in the absence of any permanent or essential identity. It will be demonstrated how Buddhist ethical thought is both embedded in and articulated within the framework of multivalent logical thinking, operating across several levels. The lecture will conclude with an overview of how polyvalent logical thinking – often implicit rather than explicitly

articulated – functioned as a foundation in other domains of ancient Indian culture, including traditional linguistics, medical discourse, literary traditions, and mythologies, as well as in representations of social reality.

The lecture will be followed by a discussion that will first address the challenges inherent in approaching ancient Indian thought within its own framework of reference, with particular emphasis on the difficulty of discerning the implicit and often unarticulated presuppositions underlying these systems of thought, which diverge markedly from dominant Western paradigms. The discussion will then explore how multivalent logic, as it evolved and flourished in ancient Indian discourse, may inform and contribute to the development of new, alternative modes of thinking for addressing contemporary global challenges – such as ethical dilemmas, conflicting identities, and environmental concerns.

Tamara Ditrich has held research and teaching positions at several universities in Australia, including the Australian National University, the University of Queensland, and the University of Sydney, as well as at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Her expertise encompasses ancient Indian religions, philosophies, and languages, particularly Sanskrit and Pāli. She is currently Professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana and Research Associate in the Department of Indian Sub-Continental Studies at the University of Sydney. Over the past decade, much of her research has focused on Buddhist textual studies, with particular emphasis on the Theravāda Pāli Canon and its commentarial literature. She has an extensive publication record, has been awarded numerous competitive research grants, and has served as an active member of several international scholarly associations and the editorial boards of academic journals.

Upgoing and Downgoing: Heraclitus, Laozi, and the Possibility of an Aesthetic Philosophy of the Way

Fabian Heubel
Academia Sinica, Taiwan

In his 1943 lectures on Heraclitus, titled “The Inception of Western Thinking”, Martin Heidegger not only criticizes Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s dialectical interpretation of Heraclitus as “entirely un-Greek”, but rejects “dialectical thinking” and the “language of dialectics” altogether as misleading. In contrast, he seeks to develop another language shaped by motifs of counterturning (*Gegenwendigkeit*), counterturning belonging-together (§2), and attunement or fitting (*Fügung*, ἀρμονία) (§7).

In this talk, I proceed from the assumption that this alternative language can be described as a language of the Way (*Wegsprache*, 道的語言). By understanding Being itself, in these lectures, as intrinsically counterturning, Heidegger brings Being and the Way into relation, linking a philosophy of Being with a philosophy of the Way. In what he calls “inceptual thinking”, the two converge. Among the “basic words of inceptual thinking” are “upgoing and downgoing” (*Aufgehen und Untergehen*, §§5–6).

On this basis, Heidegger turns against the “priority of upgoing” (as well as of light and illumination), in order to develop an interpretation of *physis* (φύσις) centred on the counterturning movement of upgoing and downgoing (§8). This leads to the suggestion that the philosophy of the Way emerging in Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus can be

understood as an aesthetic philosophy, insofar as – following Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Hölderlin – such “harmonic opposition” constitutes “the essence of beauty”.

The counterturning or paradoxical thinking that Heidegger sets in opposition to Hegel’s dialectical thinking can thus be understood as a continuation of an aesthetic philosophy articulated in texts such as Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, “The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism”, and Hölderlin’s poetological fragment “When the poet has once mastered the spirit...” Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus reconnects with these approaches to aesthetic philosophy that emerged around 1800.

Yet it is only insofar as Heidegger develops these approaches in terms of a philosophy of the Way that deeper connections to Chinese philosophy become discernible – connections that I will explore in the second part of this talk. To elucidate these connections, I will draw in particular on selected chapters of the *Laozi*, as well as on the aesthetic theory of Li Zehou, which was strongly shaped by the Chinese reception of Schiller.

This ultimately leads to the question of in what sense the counterturning or paradoxical thinking developed in this context can still be understood as dialectical – if we take into account, for instance, the theory of “negative dialectics” that Theodor W. Adorno sought to articulate in opposition to Hegel.

Fabian Heubel (何乏筆) is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Taipei (since 2013). From 2023 to 2025, he has also served as Guest Professor of Classical and Modern Chinese Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy, Free

University of Berlin. His main research interests include classical and modern Chinese philosophy, comparative and transcultural studies (with a recent focus on the constellation of Chinese, Greek, and German philosophies), contemporary German and French thought, aesthetics, and the philosophy of breath. He is currently working on a book with the tentative title *Being and Way*.

His publications include *Das Dispositiv der Kreativität* (2002), *Chinesische Gegenwartsphilosophie zur Einführung* (2016), *Gewundene Wege nach China: Heidegger–Daoismus–Adorno* (2020), *Was ist chinesische Philosophie? Kritische Perspektiven* (2021), *Self-cultivation and Critique: The Late Foucault in Transcultural Perspective* (2021, in Chinese), as well as two edited volumes on transcultural Zhuangzi studies (in Chinese). His recent book, *Schlucht und Atemwandel: Zur Philosophie des Weges* (2025), is a philosophical experiment inspired by chapter six of the *Laozi*.

Dialogical Thinking Through Anecdote: Contradiction in Classical Chinese Philosophy

Graham Parkes
University of Vienna, Austria

The foundational text of the Confucian philosophical tradition, the *Analects*, is full of sayings attributed to Confucius, as attested by the number of sections that begin, "The Master said:..." As with Socrates in Plato's dialogues, we hear the Master responding differently to different students, depending on their character and stage of development. These exchanges constitute a fundamentally dialogical mode of philosophical teaching, one that often presents apparently contradictory perspectives and thereby invites the reader into a dialectical process of reflection aimed at understanding how these diverse insights belong together. Numerous passages in the *Analects* also describe the Master's bearing, gestures, manner of speaking and listening, and ritual comportment. Together they present not simply doctrines but an embodied model of a life worth emulating.

The *Zhuangzi*, which alongside the *Laozi* is a foundational text of classical Daoist philosophy, likewise develops its philosophical vision through a series of dialogues and anecdotes. Confucius himself appears repeatedly, sometimes in ways that seem strikingly anti-Confucian, while stories involving rulers, artisans, animals, and even trees continually shift the reader's perspective. Rather than resolving tensions into a single doctrine, these narratives encourage the reader to inhabit contrasting viewpoints and to engage dialectically with their apparent contradictions. Alongside exemplary ways of acting, the text offers powerful images that stimulate the imagination and invite the reader to integrate diverse perspectives into a richer philosophical understanding.

A native of Glasgow, **Graham Parkes** has taught philosophy at universities in the United States, Europe, and East Asia, and is now a Professorial Research Fellow at the University of Vienna. His main interests are in Chinese and Japanese and Continental European philosophies, aesthetics and philosophy of art, and environmental philosophies. Among his books and translations are *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (1987), *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* by Nishitani Keiji (1990), *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (1991), *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (1994), *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work* by Reinhard May, *Reading Zen in the Rocks: The Japanese Dry Landscape Garden* by François Berthier (2000), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche (2005; 2nd ed. 2026), *How to Think about the Climate Crisis: A Philosophical Guide to Saner Ways of Living* (2021), and *Orienting Philosophy 1: From Nietzsche toward Asia* (2026). He has also published over 120 chapters in books and journal articles, and a number of videos, on his topics of interest.

Sublating Dialectics: A Transcultural Theory of Mediation

Jana S. Rošker
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

In this lecture, I will develop and apply the transcultural philosophical method of sublation to two paradigmatic models of dialectical thought that have evolved independently within the European and classical Chinese philosophical traditions. Rather than offering another comparative account of “Western contradiction” and “Eastern harmony”, I aim to reconstruct these traditions as two coherent dialectical models – IDENCO (the dialectics of identity, determinate negation, and contradiction) and COCO (the dialectics of correlative complementarity) – and investigate their respective modes of mediation. The purpose is not to determine which of the two models provides the more adequate account of dialectical development, but to explore the philosophical potential that emerges when their respective conceptions of mediation are brought into a process of transcultural sublation.

Although both models conceive reality as a dynamic process grounded in an indeterminate ontological ground and unfolding through the mediation of bipolar oppositions, they diverge fundamentally in their understanding of emptiness, opposition, differentiation, and negation. These differences are then reconstructed within the referential frameworks and paradigms to which they belong, demonstrating that distinct modes of mediation emerge from internally coherent semantic networks grounded in fundamentally different ontological and logical constellations. The analysis subsequently identifies the explanatory insufficiencies of both models, establishes their mutual

complementarities, and ultimately explores their transcultural sublation as the basis for a richer conception of dialectics.

The lecture argues that the contrast between contradiction and correlative complementarity should not be understood merely as a difference between two philosophical doctrines. Rather, it reveals two distinct ways of conceiving transformation itself. In *IDENCO*, development proceeds through contradiction and determinate negation, generating successive determinations. In *COCO*, by contrast, transformation unfolds through reciprocal self-negation and the continuous reconfiguration of complementary relations. By reconstructing these models within their own conceptual horizons, the study challenges several long-standing but misleading assumptions that have shaped comparative intercultural philosophy, including the widespread view that only contradiction can account for genuine novelty or that correlative dialectics merely reproduces a static state of harmony through cyclical repetition.

I will thus argue that transcultural philosophy can move beyond the descriptive comparison of traditions toward the constructive development of new philosophical knowledge. In this process, mediation itself emerges as a central philosophical problem rather than merely a methodological category. The transcultural sublation of contradictory and correlative modes of mediation ultimately points toward a broader conception of dialectics – one that preserves the explanatory strengths of both traditions while opening conceptual possibilities that remain inaccessible from within either of them alone.

Jana S. Rošker, studied Sinology and received her PhD from the Vienna University. She is the first Slovenian Sinologist, co-founder and long-time head of the Department of Asian Studies at the University of

Ljubljana (Slovenia). To date, she has published 30 books and over 150fifty articles and book chapters. She is editor-in-chief of the journal *Asian Studies* (<https://journals.uni-lj.si/as>), former president of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (ISCP), and founder, first president, and honorary member of the European Association of Chinese Philosophy (EACP). Her research focuses on Chinese philosophy, epistemology within the Chinese context, and the methodology of transcultural research, emphasizing (post)comparative transcultural philosophy. She is the recipient of numerous distinguished academic awards and prizes, recognized both nationally and internationally. Over the last ten years, she has spearheaded four significant national and three international research projects with notable success.

Dynamics and Dialectics in the *Zhou Yi* Commentary Tradition and Contemporary French Philosophy

Tzuchien Tho

University of Bristol, United Kingdom

An interesting point of intersection between Classical Chinese and contemporary philosophy is the use of formalism to express and understand the nature of change. Within both the *Zhou Yi* (周易/*Yijing* 易經) tradition and French structuralism, the range of positions represent variation, and the operations over these variations represent the possible movements, and therefore produce the constraints of change. This array of possibilities generated by combination therefore gives a theory of cosmic or metaphysical totality and the limits between the possible and the impossible.

However, these structures also refuse to remain the neat arrangement of a totality. The *Zhou Yi* commentary tradition bubbles with debates over the dynamics of this transformation itself, and produces a question about the possibility of expressing the nothing or nothingness (無) within the structure of change. The dynamics of the structure is therefore caught in the three-fold necessity of being immanent, part of the variations themselves, genetic, the anterior origin of these positions, and also transcendent, governing the totality of variations. A dialectic emerges in which neither incorporation nor exclusion are conceptually acceptable for different reasons. The commentary therefore presents a fundamental tension in conceptualizing the nature of change.

Our experiment here is to take these tensions and map them onto fundamental issues in 20th century structuralism. This is only to partially show how some patterns of thought can converge over such a stretch of time and distance. The more profound aim is to explore the strategies of negation, emptiness, and totality in these different philosophical configurations. We will see what experiments may be carried out with Deleuze's concept of (counter-)actualisation and Badiou's concept of the event given this transformed context.

Tzuchien Tho is a philosopher and historian of mathematics and physics. He is currently working on questions about causality in 18th century physics, focusing on the development of analytical mechanics. He is also working on issues related to Badiou's mathematical ontology, the philosophy of algebra, the reception of Leibniz in the 20th century, and epistemological methods of history. He currently teaches at the University of Bristol.

An Alternative to Cartesian Dualism: François Noël's interpretation of *Li* and *Qi*

Yves Vendé

Université Catholique de Lille, France

François Noël's *Philosophia Sinica* (1711) has long been a forgotten witness to the early modern encounter between European scholasticism and Chinese philosophy. Educated in a system comparable to Descartes (using Coimbra Commentaries of Aristotle as manuals, and Jesuit colleges organized by the Ratio Studiorum, 1599), Noël interpreted Confucian Sources and Neo-Confucian commentaries through conceptual categories inherited from Aristotle, Aquinas, and Francisco Suárez. His treatment of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣 is especially significant, because it offers an alternative to a sharply dualistic account of the relationship between the spiritual idea of self and the material idea of the body.

Indeed, Cartesian dualism defines the human being through the conjunction of these two fundamentally distinct substances: *res cogitans*, the thinking substance, and *res extensa*, extended matter. Although Descartes affirmed their interaction, the ontological distinction between them tended to isolate rational agency from embodiment, affectivity, habit, and character formation in a community (traditions). Noël's approach differs because his scholastic background, reinforced by his engagement with Neo-Confucianism, led him to view human beings as integrated agents whose intellectual, affective, and corporeal dimensions remain distinguishable yet inseparable, especially when making decisions, taking actions, and experiencing relationships. His anthropology thus follows the Aristotelian language of form, matter, disposition, and actualization rather than the Cartesian

opposition between consciousness and extension, as he attempts to introduce Neo-Confucianism to a European audience.

Within Neo-Confucian philosophy, *li* and *qi* do not designate two independently existing substances. *Li* refers to the pattern-coherence (Tiwald & Angle), or immanent normative structure through which elements-events possess determinate characteristics, while *qi* denotes the psycho-physical material or vital configuration through which these patterns are concrete. Every existing thing-event involves both: there is no *li* apart from its embodiment in *qi*, and no concrete *qi* wholly devoid of intelligible organization. Their distinction is not substantial but epistemological.

Noël nevertheless renders this relation through scholastic metaphysical grammar. In the First Treatise of the *Philosophia Sinica*, he connects Neo-Confucian cosmogony, especially as articulated through commentaries on the *Yijing*, with biblical accounts of creation, conservation, and divine concurrence. He interprets the generative transformations of the cosmos not as the autonomous activity of an impersonal material principle, but as the activity of secondary causes, continuously dependent upon a transcendent First Cause (*Taiji sive natura*, which he analogically equates to the biblical God). In the context of the 17th century, this construction does not lack consistency, as Noël relies particularly on Suárez's account of continuous creation: created beings genuinely exercise causal agency, yet their existence and operations simultaneously depend upon God's (*Dao/Taiji*) sustaining concurrence.

Nevertheless, this interpretation cannot be followed today, as it distorts the Neo-Confucian meanings of *li* and *qi*. Indeed, there is a tension in Noël's writings as he tends to identify *li* with the rational soul and *qi* with the vital breath and vital principle. Such a correspondence tends

to impose a foreign structure on the Neo-Confucian concepts. Here, *li* provides the intelligible ordering of reality, while *qi* constitutes the dynamic medium through which this order is embodied, differentiated, and enacted. The relation is closer to the Aristotelian unity of form and matter than to the Cartesian juxtaposition of two substances.

The ethical consequences are central. In Noël's treatment of Chinese ethics, moral cultivation involves the transformation and regulation of *qi*: affects, desires, bodily dispositions, habits, and spontaneous reactions must be ordered through learning, ritual, reflection, and repeated practice. Rationality does not act upon the body from outside; it emerges within an embodied process through which the agent progressively acquires stable dispositions. As such, Noël's classifications of voluntary and involuntary actions coexist with a Confucian account of self-cultivation in which moral freedom is achieved by welcoming and integrating rather than suppressing psycho-physical movements.

Noël's interpretation remains a scholastic reconstruction rather than a neutral representation of Neo-Confucianism. Yet its philosophical interest lies precisely in this creative hybridization. By reading *li* and *qi* through Aristotelian and Suárezian categories, Noël develops an anthropology and cosmology in which reflexivity and materiality, freedom and disposition, are distinguished without being separated. His work thus provides an early transcultural alternative to Cartesian dualism.

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Beyond Contradiction and Complementarity: *Yinyang* as a Dynamic Logic of Subtle Proximity

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Standard interpretations of *yinyang* often oscillate between two models: contradiction and complementarity. In the first, *yin* and *yang* are treated as opposing forces whose tension drives change; in the second, they are understood as mutually completing counterparts that together form harmony. This talk argues that both readings remain insufficient. Drawing on Daoist texts and a broader framework of relational ontology, I propose a third model: *yinyang* as subtle proximity. On this view, transformation does not arise primarily through negation or static balance, but through shifting degrees of nearness and distance, mutual responsiveness, alternation, and threshold-sensitive adjustment. *Yin* and *yang* are neither fixed opposites nor stable complements, but dynamically co-constituted orientations whose viability depends on calibrated relation. This reinterpretation helps illuminate classical Daoist ideas such as *tong* 通 (circulatory openness), *rou* 柔 (flexible responsiveness), *ming* 明 (clarity through attunement) and *shi* 勢 (emergent configuration of proximal power). It also offers a constructive contribution to transcultural dialectics by presenting an East Asian model of development in which productive change emerges without requiring antagonism, synthesis, or binary resolution. Recasting *yinyang* in terms of subtle proximity thus provides a new conceptual vocabulary for thinking about dynamic processes, social relations, and global crises under conditions of uncertainty.

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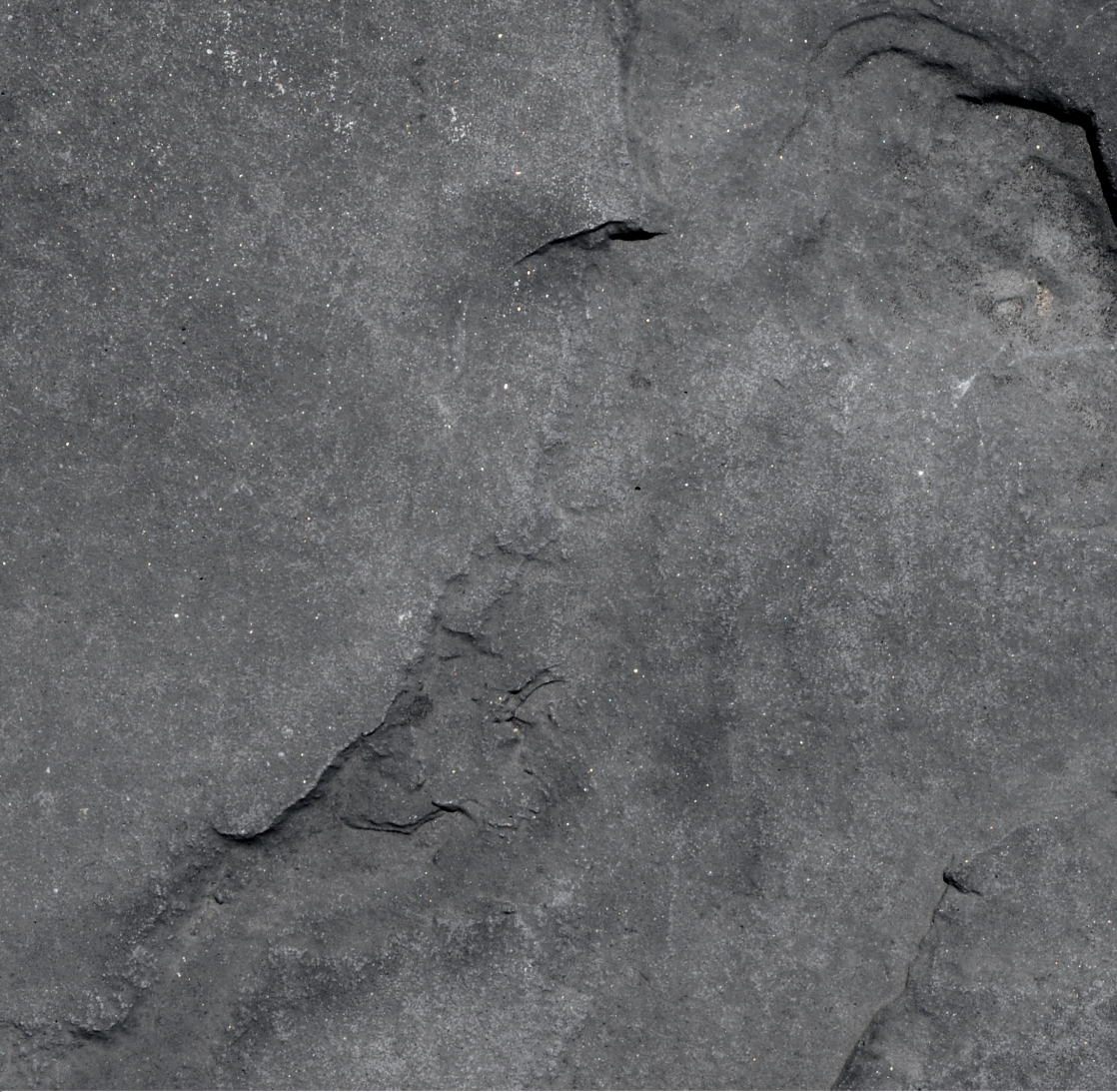
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