



Eastern Philosophy Section
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Call for Papers

3rd International Conference on the Eastern Thought

Word in the cultures of the East

Sound – language – book

28-30th of November 2013

It is our great honour to announce the third conference on the Eastern thought, which will be organised on 28-30th November 2013 by the Eastern Philosophy Section of the Philosophy of Culture Department at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. This year's meeting will be dedicated to the issues of **sound, language and book** which, although frequently featuring in contemporary Western thought, are rarely and still insufficiently addressed through their long lasting reflection in the Eastern cultures. Continuing the tradition established by our two highly successful conferences held in 2009 and 2011, we would like to invite scholars who conduct research into cultures, religions, and philosophies of the East (India, China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, and the Middle East), as well as those who are interested in the mutual influences between the East and the West.

Unquestionably, language is one of the central themes in contemporary philosophical, cognitive and cultural thought in the West. Having been researched from many different points of view, language appears both as a logical tool, a means of thinking or a medium of communication and as a creative factor within culture. Being a strictly human phenomenon, language has always sparked interest – the Western civilisation is certainly not the first to explore it. Yet although it is broadly acknowledged that the Western linguistics owes its modern development to the Sanskrit grammarians, in case of other aspects of language it seems that the Western thinkers prefer to reinvent the wheel rather than to ask the ancients. Our goal in this conference is to show all the richness of the speculations, conceptions and solutions concerning language through various Eastern philosophies and cultures.

Starting at the same point where the Indian grammarians begin their science of language, we will first address **THE SOUND**. Just as phonemes are the basis of language, so the sound in general can be seen as one of the foundations of the phenomenal world. Thus we ask the following questions:

- What ontologies of sound Eastern philosophies offer? In what modus does sound exist? How is it connected with other dimensions of reality?
- How is the sound perceived? What are the functions of sonic cognitions?

In the oral cultures – such as the Vedic India - sound is very strongly connected with acquiring and passing the knowledge. How does it influence the conceptions of sound, cognition, and knowledge itself? In Chinese, the term *sheng* or ‘sage’ refers to the faculty of hearing, whereas in Sanskrit, the revealed knowledge is called *śruti*, ‘heard’. Contrary to most of European languages, the Eastern concept of ‘knowledge’ does not refer to the faculty of seeing. What are the consequences of the relationship of knowledge to the sense of hearing?

One of the exceptional sound types, ineradicably present in the human world, is **MUSIC** – which, although recognized universally by all the civilizations, is nevertheless defined, valued and practiced in many disparate ways. Let us consider the following problems in the field of music:

- What is music? What are the differences between the answers given by philosophers, aestheticians, musicologists or musicians? How does music exist, where does it come from, what is it grounded on?
- What are its functions – does music have a purpose? How and why is it created and listened to?
- What is its role and position in a culture and society? In what dimensions of the human life, in what kind of activities it is used?

The Chinese culture and languages specialists know that one of the most striking factors influencing notions of sound in general and music in particular is the fact that Chinese languages are tonal. What is the impact of this fact on the development of music and its notions?

How can we describe the differences in musical paradigms? How does a culture condition the perception and creation of music? It is obvious that development of music followed different patterns in Europe and in Asia. In Europe the most important component was the structure of musical pieces, which resulted in the development of polyphony and functional harmony in dur-moll system. In Asia the development of music followed different paths. Do the differences between the European and the Asian music result from differences in paradigms, or, as some Europeans maintain, from the lack of any development in the music of the Far East?

Another particularly human kind of sound is a **WORD**. All civilizations are, in one or other way, cultures of the word - be it oral or written. In this section of our conference we would like to consider human being as a verbal being and the human culture as a word-world.

- Let us start with ontology again - how does a word exist? What kind of being is it? Is a word a symbol? How does it function?
- What can be the word’s role in a society or a culture? How does it function as an element of culture and as a vehicle for cultural communication?
- What are the peculiarities of oral cultures?
- How different cultures recognize and define capabilities of the word, be it rhetoric, eristic or sophistic?

- Can we talk of a performative power of words – such as is the case with spells, curses, prayers, mantras? How are they understood and explained? What is the function of words unuttered (taboo)?

- How is the word stored? Why are the mnemotechnics invented in different cultures so diverse – whether they are based on meaning, on sound, or on rhythm? What does it tell us about the respective cultural backgrounds?

Do (and how) words influence social structure? How do linguistic forms create and define social hierarchy?

An indispensable part of the reflection on word and language is the question of **WRITING** and written texts. Not only our civilisation - as based partly on Judeo-Christian religion - is a civilisation of the Book. Other cultures also consider books - and Books - as their point of reference. Let us consider various themes connected with writing:

- Graphic signs of language - icons, ideograms, letters: how do they convey meaning and what kind of meaning is it? What is their symbolic value? How do they function in society, science, religion, art?

- Calligraphy as a cultural phenomenon - is it just a kind of painting? What can be its role and function in culture?

- Writing as a cultural production and text as an artefact: what is its contribution to culture? What roles can a text play?

There is no need to mention the well recognized difference between oral and written cultures. How does the attitude to writing influence various cultures, their auto-definition, hierarchies and identities? What significance for a culture has the fact of recognizing literary and demotic languages?

The final section of the conference will focus on the main theme of our interest - the **LANGUAGE**. Surprisingly enough for the Western world, philosophies of language existed in many cultures for long millennia. Yet we still do not benefit from them as much as they deserve it. Let us then reflect on the Eastern philosophies of language through the consideration of the following fields:

- Metaphysics / ontology of language: how does language exist, what are its components, structures and mechanisms?

- Words and sentences: what is their mutual relation and dependence? What is the basic unit of language?

- Functions of language - communicative, prescriptive, performative - and what more?

- What is the meaning of language? How do words relate to the world? How do they convey their meaning? Where does an understanding of language stem from? On what depends the understanding of language? How is it acquired?

- Language as a cognitive means: how is it related to thought? Is thinking a purely linguistic phenomenon? Or is language more of a handicap in the processes of thinking proper and of gaining the truth?

- Philosophies of grammar, linguistic worldviews: is there any connection between the structure of language and the structure of the world?
- How is language intertwined with human activity? Does it (and how) influence social patterns?

Registration and abstract submission

Abstracts of 250/300 words accompanied by a short bio should be sent to the Secretary of the Conference, Małgorzata Ruchel at malgorzata.ruchel@uj.edu.pl **by the 15th of June 2013.**

Please use the Abstract Submission Form available at the Eastern Philosophy Section website - www.iphils.uj.edu.pl/zfw/eng/konf.html

Authors will be informed by e-mail on the acceptance of their abstract by the 25th of June.

Proposals received after the deadline but before the 15th of July 2013 may be accepted if space in the programme is still available.

There is no registration fee. All participants are also invited to the Closing Dinner on Saturday the 30th of November.

The Organizers do not provide accommodation. However, we will recommend some good places to stay in Kraków. The relevant information will soon appear on our website.

Selected papers will be published in the peer-reviewed proceedings of the conference. The deadline for the submission of full papers will be announced at a later stage.

For more information contact malgorzata.ruchel@uj.edu.pl
or check our website www.iphils.uj.edu.pl/zfw

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