

Call for Papers

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‘The Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Conversations with Buddhist Philosophy’ Vienna, 28-30 June 2027

As part of a Starting Grant funded by the European Research Council, I am pleased to invite proposals for participation in a conference on ‘The Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Conversations with Buddhist Philosophy’ scheduled to be held at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (IKGA), part of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW), in Vienna on 28-30 June 2027.

Paper proposals are invited from philosophers working with Western and/or Buddhist sources on any topic concerned with the ethics of belief, broadly understood. Thus, for example, papers may be proposed regarding topics such as (but not limited to) the nature of belief, the norms of belief and normativity in relation to belief, evidence and evidentialism, and the epistemic basing relation. Discussions concerning the relationship of belief (including in terms of its formation, maintenance, and/or relinquishment) to notions such as credence, view, judgment, assent, conviction, faith, trust, hope, and knowledge (or their analogues in Buddhist sources) are welcome, as are those concerning the relationship of belief (and its ethics) to faculties such as consciousness, cognition, discernment, conceptualization, view-holding, volition, sensation, and emotion (or their analogues in Buddhist sources).

The research project of which this conference forms part is titled *The Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy in the ‘Period of Disunity’* (ChinBuddhPhil); for more information, see <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/projects/chinbuddhphil>. The project aims to bring Buddhist philosophical sources into conversation with Western ones, on the understanding that Buddhist philosophers merit consideration not only as historical artifacts but as genuinely interesting and insightful contributors to live philosophical problems. As such, the conference is intended to be dialogical, with specialists of relevant Western and Buddhist philosophical materials engaging in debate regarding overlapping topics, positions, and arguments.

Philosophers specializing in Western sources from any of the ancient, medieval, modern, or contemporary philosophical canons are welcome to apply; they need possess no prior knowledge of relevant Buddhist materials or debates.

As for philosophers specializing in Buddhist sources, in line with the overall focus of the ChinBuddhPhil project on the Sanlun 三論 school of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, those proposing papers on Sanlun are especially welcome to apply. More broadly, however, the call is open to philosophers specializing in Chinese Buddhist sources beyond Sanlun, and more broadly still to those specializing in sources from any other among the Buddhist traditions spanning diverse geographical regions and temporal periods. Philosophers specializing in Buddhist sources need possess no prior knowledge of relevant Western materials or debates.

Edited volumes based on two prior project conferences have already been submitted to Oxford University Press. An edited book comprised of chapters based on the papers presented at this conference is also planned, and potential speakers should keep in mind that they will be invited to submit a written chapter (6,000-9,000 words) based on their oral presentation. Each participant will also be invited to prepare a short response to another paper (1,000-2,000 words), thereby allowing philosophers working with Western sources to engage, from within their own sphere of expertise, with Buddhist materials, and vice-versa. Draft papers will thus be pre-circulated to respondents.

Timeline:

- 1 June 2026: Deadline for submission of paper proposals.
- 1 July 2026: Announcement of accepted papers.
- 1 April 2027: Deadline for submission of draft papers.
- 28-30 June 2027: In-person conference in Vienna.
- 1 September 2027: Deadline for submission of final papers.

Those interested in taking part are welcome to send 1) a paper abstract of circa 500 words, and 2) a CV or link to a professional profile, to rafal.stepien@oeaw.ac.at by the 1st of June 2026. Requests for further information are also welcome. In a dedicated effort to counteract long-standing discrimination, women and members of other identity-groups still under-represented in academe are especially encouraged to apply. This is an in-person conference; accommodation in Vienna for participants will be funded by the organizers, and funds are also foreseen to be available to offset travel costs to and from Vienna for those participants with no alternative sources of funding.

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