

Department of Religion presents:

The Buddhist Conception of Creation

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Jan Westerhoff was educated at Cambridge and the School of Oriental and African Studies. He has taught Philosophy at the Universities of Oxford and Durham and is presently Professor of Buddhist Philosophy at the University of Oxford, Fellow and Tutor in Theology and Religion at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, and a Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His books include *Ontological Categories* (2005), *Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka* (2009), *Twelve Examples of Illusion* (2010), *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nagarjuna's Vighavyavartani* (2010), *A Very Short Introduction to Reality* (2011), and *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (2018), all published by Oxford University Press.

Abstract

Buddhism does not assume the existence of a creator god, and so it might seem as if the question of creation, of how and why the world came into existence was not of great interest for Buddhist thinkers. Nevertheless, questions of the origin of the world become important in the Buddhist context, not so much when investigating how the world came into existence, but when investigating how it can be brought out of existence, i.e. how one can escape from the circle of birth and death that constitutes cyclic existence in order to become enlightened. If the aim of the Buddhist path is the dissolution of the world of rebirth in which we live, some account must be given of what keeps this world in existence, so that a way of removing whatever this is can be found. In the context of this discussion we will discuss how some key Buddhist concepts (such as causation, karma, dependent origination, ontological anti-foundationalism, and the storehouse consciousness) relate to the origin of the world, and what role they play in its eventual dissolution when enlightenment is obtained.

Details:

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

4:30-6:00pm

Academic Building Room 1180
College Avenue Campus

Co-sponsored by Center for Chinese Studies