

Day 1 - Rediscovering the past

Session 1C:

Eastern and Western conceptions of religion

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Professor Alan Chan received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, Canada, in Chinese and comparative philosophy and religion. Prior to joining NTU in late 2009, he was Professor of Philosophy and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education at NUS. While at NUS, he was twice awarded the Teaching Excellence Award. He is a member of the Founding Editorial Board, Oxford Bibliographies of Chinese Studies; member of the Board of Directors, Consortium of Humanities Centres and Institutes; Chairman of the Board of Directors, Confucius Institute, NTU; member of the Board of Directors, International Confucian Association; member of the International Advisory Panel, Asia Competiveness Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS; member of the Editorial Board, Journal of Daoist Studies (USA) and Frontiers of Daoist Studies (China); and member of several other Boards. Previously, he served on the Board of Directors, Singapore Examination and Assessment Board (2007–2010).

Work in Progress

1. "Explorations in Confucian Philosophy," a MOOC to be launched in January 2017.
2. "From Uncrowned King to the Sage of Profound Greatness: Confucius and the Analects in Early Medieval China," in Companion to Confucius, edited by Paul Goldin. London: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming.

Selected Recent Publications

1. "The Art of Hearing and the Promise of Harmony in Confucian Self-Cultivation," in New Directions in Chinese Philosophy, edited by Chung-yi Cheng. Hong Kong: New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2014, 103-115.

2. "Embodying Nothingness and the Ideal of the Affectless Sage in Daoist Philosophy," in *Nothingness in Asian Philosophy*, edited by Jee-Loo Liu and Douglas Berger. London and New York: Routledge, 2014, 213-229.

3. "Daoism," in *Oxford Bibliographies: Chinese Studies* (<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>), 2013.

4. "Harmony as a Contested Metaphor and Conceptions of Rightness in Early Confucian Ethics," in *How Should One Live? Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity*, edited by R.A.H. King and Dennis Schilling. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011, 37–62.

5. "Interpretations of Virtue in Early China," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38.1 (2011): 158–174.

6. "Laozi" (2011) and "Neo-Taoism" (2009), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Zalta (<http://plato.stanford.edu>)

Abstract

This discussion will focus on the assertion that Eastern and Western religious traditions are radically different. Beliefs may be different and culture specific, but in what sense is faith different across cultures? The purpose of my presentation will be to provoke further reflection and debate on the alleged incommensurability between cultures and religions. The danger of essentializing traditions, I will argue, should not be underestimated.