

EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



KENOSIS
AND ITS ETHICS
IN A CONTEMPORARY
AND INTERCULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE

7–8 FEBRUAR 2024
UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN
NEUE AULA, ROOM 236 | ZOOM

ORGANISATION:
DR NORIHITO NAKAMURA

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS



Today, we are living in excesses: Information, population, production, and consumption surpass any previous point in our history, and the global movement of people, goods, and money continues to escalate. Since the 19th century, nation states have devoted themselves to increasing their wealth in imperialistic competition and educated people to conform to this nationalistic discipline. However, suffering from multiple crises, our global society seeks for a new, different way of life based not on growth and triumph, but on reduction and renunciation. We need an alternative, “weak” image of the human being capable of humility and negation, rather than a “strong” image oriented toward growth and overcoming.

In this workshop, we aim to explore this “weak” ethical way of life through the concept of “*kenosis*”. Derived from the Letter to the Philippians, it refers to the act of humility in which Jesus renounced his immortality and eternity and dared to die a slave. Since Luther, this has been considered as an important motif underlying the “theology of the cross,” which emphasizes the finitude of God rather than the “theology of glory,” which emphasizes God’s omnipotence.

Since the late 20th century, as we have become more aware of the environmental crisis, the threat of nuclear war, the negative consequences of colonialism, and gender inequality throughout human history, *kenosis* has been widely considered beyond the confines of Christian theology. (I) Within theology or religious studies, Salie McFague focused on *kenosis* as an ethical way of life to criticize contemporary consumerism, and proposed kenotic Christianity as a new figure of religion in climate change. (II) In the field of contemporary philosophy, Gianni Vattimo placed *kenosis* at the center of “weak thought,” his project to critique metaphysics. Emmanuel Levinas and Hans Jonas observed the possibility of a dialogue between Christianity and Judaism within the concept of *kenosis*. (III) From an intercultural perspective, Japanese philosophy can also serve as a point of inquiry. Kazoh Kitamori, one of the leading theologians of postwar Japan, reflected on the catastrophes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and criticized conventional Christianity from the standpoint of the “theology of the cross.” Kitamori drew inspiration from the Kyoto School, particularly Keiji Nishitani and Hajime Tanabe. His influential work *The Pain of God* (1946) is said to have influenced Jürgen Moltmann, credited with sparking the contemporary renaissance of *kenosis*. This narrative reveals the practice of a philosophical dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism and between the West and the East.

What *kenosis* teaches us is that to survive this crisis we must learn to give up, abandon, be unable, rather than to gain, triumph or overcome. Such a message is not only topical but also traditional. In this workshop, we will investigate contemporary challenges from a foundational vantage point, employing the dialectic of orthodoxy and innovation. Consequently, might not the ideals of *kenosis* empower us to illuminate the essence of past philosophies and religions in a novel light, contextualized within the milieu of the contemporary crisis? Moreover, could this novel interpretation not also unite philosophers from diverse cultural spheres and disciplines within the same hermeneutic horizon, thereby catalyzing the conceptualization of an alternative and ethical mode of existence?

7 FEBRUARY (DAY 1)

14:00 – 14:30

Greeting & Introduction

14:30 – 15:30

Kenosis that matters
as an actual critique of modern society –
Norihito NAKAMURA (Tübingen)

15:30 – 16:00 *Coffee break*

16:00 – 17:00

Towards a Phenomenology of Kenosis:
A Reading of Jean-Luc Nancy –
Nikolaas CASSIDY-DEKETELAERE (Leuven)

17:00 – 18:00

Kenosis: A Dialogue between Nicholas of Cusa
and Nishitani Keiji – Myriam-Sonja Hantke
(Hannover)

19:00

Dinner

8 FEBRUARY (DAY 2)

9:30 – 10:30

Kenosis: a theologico-political remark–
Saitya Brata Das (New Delhi)

10:30 – 10:45 *Coffee break*

10:45 – 11:45

A Hidden Japanese Source of Kenosis
in Contemporary Christian Theology? :
Kyoto School, Kazo Kitamori and J. Moltmann
– Yusuke Okada (Torino)

11:45 – 12:45 *Lunch Break*

12:45 – 13:45

Mystici Corporis: From the Kenotic Christ
to the Kenotic Church – Tobias Bartneck
(Kyoto)

13:45 – 14:00 *Coffee break*

14:00 – 15:00

“Kenosis” of Buddhas in modern
Shin Buddhism – Satoshi Urai
(Kopenhagen / Hokkaido)

15:00 – 15:30

General Discussion

Zoom-Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/96802664738?pwd=cmNUQk5QeUJJUmVQSFFWSU0xN1FaUT09>

Meeting-ID: 968 0266 4738

Kenncode: 551930

Cover: © jplenio/pixabay

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz · Keplerstraße 2 · 72074 Tübingen
Telefon: +49 7071 29-77239
info@cof.uni-tuebingen.de