

Date: Feb. 25, 2019 (Mon.)

Time: 3pm – 4:30pm

Venue: CPD 4.34, Centennial Campus, The University of Hong Kong

**The Path and the Castle:
A Comparative Study of the Dynamics of Spiritual Life
in *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* of Buddhaghosa
and *The Interior Castle (Castillo interior)* of Saint Teresa of Ávila**

Presenter: Mr. MILLET GIL Daniel

PhD student, Centre of Buddhist Studies

(Supervisor: Prof. T. Endo)

Abstract

Parallels between the spiritual paths of Theravāda Buddhists and Discalced Carmelites have long been noted, although not satisfactorily explained. This Seminar aims to present my research whose focus is twofold: clarifying the similarities and differences between the two paths; and to make sense of their phenomenological and structural similarities. This latter goal is carried out by identifying relationships between both religious systems, and by determining if there is an underlying level where they converge, irrespective of their undeniable differences. To this end, the research examines the dynamics of spiritual growth as described in two iconic works from the respective traditions: *The Path of Purification* by Buddhaghosa and *The Interior Castle* by Saint Teresa of Ávila, focusing on the stages of virtue (*sīla*) and concentration (*samādhi*) in *The Path of Purification*, and Mansions One to Six in *The Interior Castle* where the similarities are more pronounced. After introducing the rationale that leads to the research, the study discusses some of the critical theoretical and methodological issues that arise in interreligious comparisons. It then reviews a series of methodological contributions by the school of new comparativism, whose principles and tools are adopted throughout the study. The study goes on to introduce background information and context requisite to understanding the doctrines of spiritual development laid out by Buddhaghosa and Teresa. Next, there is a systematic and synoptic comparative analysis of the spiritual paths described by our two authors. Through this structural comparison, the study identifies a series of phenomenological coincidences and symmetric structures along both paths. The interpretive part of the study builds on the phenomenological and structural parallels identified in the comparison. Here is tested the hypothesis that underneath both paths a process of “transformation and transcendence of the empirical self” takes place. We conclude that “transformation and transcendence of the self,” as hermeneutical principle, has explanatory efficacy to make intelligible the parallels identified in the comparison and invites reflection on several current debates in religious studies, comparative religion and the psychology of religion.

The seminar will be conducted in English.

ALL ARE WELCOME

For enquiry, please contact Ms. Josephine Lai at 3917-5075.

