

## MA IN MYTH, COSMOLOGY AND THE SACRED

### OPEN LECTURES SUMMER TERM 2018

Ng07 6.15-7.45

**19 May: Professor Bee Scherer, *Empty Re-becoming: Buddhist perspectives on existence(s)***



In this session, Bee will introduce philosophical essentials and lived approaches to life and death. The session aims to introduce Buddhist thought around rebirth (*jati*), realms of existences (*gati*), cause and effect (*karma*), no-self (*anatman*), mind (*citta*), consciousness (*vijnana*) and tantric metaphysics/alchemy as well as hybrid practices related to ancestors and spirits.

Professor Bee Scherer PhD is the Director of *Intersectional Centre for Inclusion and Social Justice* (INCISE), at Canterbury Christ Church University. As Professor of Religious Studies (Buddhism) and Gender Studies, they studied among others classics and Indology in Germany, the USA and the Netherlands. Bee's PhD thesis (Groningen, NL, 2001), dealt with questions of comparative myth and narratology. An expert in Buddhism and critical theory, their publications include eleven authored books, ten edited volumes and more than forty articles and book chapters.

**2 June: Dr Simon Wilson, *You too can have the body of a God***

"God became man in order that man might become God" (St Athanasius of Alexandria)

"The body is deified at the same time as the soul" (St Maximus the Confessor)

“If you will, you can become all flame” (Abba Joseph of Panepho)



The Eastern Orthodox Church harbours spiritual practices which, it is sometimes claimed, can “transform the body into something better and deify it” (St Gregory Palamas). Shining as bright as the sun, this divine body possesses hyper-senses with an almost infinite range and will never die. Those who have been so transfigured enjoy the bliss of the Age to Come, but here and now. This new body is neither a metaphor nor a symbol but an actual state. It can be achieved through practices such as prayer, and veneration of icons. This talk will show that deification is an endless and endlessly dynamic process, in which deified senses reveal ever more of God without ever reaching the end of gnosis. The body is thus endlessly transformed, and its desire for God increases into infinity. Just imagine.

Dr Simon Wilson is a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University, where he teaches on the Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred MA. His research interests include the Grail, literary re-imaginings of landscape and place, the body and the sacred, the mystical theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Jocelyn Brooke, the writings of Charles Fort, and the co-creation of self and landscape. He is the co-editor with Angela Voss of *Re-enchanting the Academy* (Rubedo Press, 2017), and is currently attempting to bring together most of his interests in a study of the Elham Valley as Centre of England. Simon is also a member of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge.

**16 June: Elliot Cohen, *Paradise Lost and the Pure Lands: sacred geography and transpersonal psychology***

“If we have not found the heaven within, we have not found the heaven without” (James Hilton, 1933, *Lost Horizon*).



In this session we shall be exploring the idea of sacred space and place, from the Garden of Eden, to the hidden kingdom of Shangri-La. We shall investigate the various ways spiritual adepts have envisioned, travelled to (physically or spiritually/astrally) and attempted to gain access to these realms (with varying degrees of success), whilst also considering their psychological meaning/s and significance. I will be providing examples from my own intrepid travels and the various Wisdom Traditions that I have been studying, including the Kabbalistic, Buddhist and Daoist.

Dr Elliot Cohen is a chartered psychologist, psychotherapist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He is the current secretary of the BPS Transpersonal Psychology Section and Senior Lecturer in Social and interdisciplinary psychology at Leeds Beckett University's School of Social Sciences. He has been studying in Hasidic, Buddhist and Daoist traditions for over twenty years and is an authorised teacher of mindfulness meditation.