



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# DEMYSTIFYING THE GIVEN

CHINA UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LAW

BEIJING, 19-20 OCTOBER 2019

ORGANIZERS

HAOJUN ZHANG & ANDREA ALTOBRANDO

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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JAMES O'SHEA

DAVID WOODRUFF SMITH

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INVITED SPEAKERS

DUOYI FEI

DONGHUI HAN

HONG LI

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GALEN STRAWSON

MICHELA SUMMA

HAO TANG

REFENG TANG



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CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT  
AND  
CALL FOR PAPERS

It seems to be obvious that *something* is given to the experienter in almost any kind of experience. Whether this something be a flower, an attraction towards a person, a work of art, a beverage, the solution to a logical puzzle, or whatever other example we can come up, it seems to make no sense to speak of experience without some content which is there, “in”, or “through”, the very experience itself. In most human activities, cognitive, emotional, and volitional, we have something in view. Indeed, it seems that most of our mental and bodily life is comprised of a permanent engagement with the “givenness” of one thing or another. However, what is properly “given” is far from clear. In some cases, we even find that there arise some seeming paradoxes when we adopt an understanding of experience which makes use of the concept of givenness. This is especially true in cases such as hallucination, dreaming, imagination, or when we experience something specifically as absent, or as missing, and thus one would rather incline to consider it as *un-given*.

As is well-known, the very issue of givenness, i.e. how things are given in experience, and what in experience is properly given, is one of the main concerns – if not *the* concern – of Husserl's Phenomenology, as well as, to a large extent, of the Brentano School from which Phenomenology partially derives and of most of the followers of Husserl's project. Likewise, the same issue, though mainly under the label of “content” (of perception, experience, intentional states, etc.), also lies at the center of many debates in Analytic Philosophy of Mind, from Frege and Russell onwards. In both traditions there has been a great deal of debate on what it means to say that something is given and on the very legitimacy of speaking of givenness.

At any rate, in both the Analytic and in the Phenomenological traditions, the idea that something is directly given in experience has been sharply and vigorously criticized. The most famous critique is quite certainly that of Wilfrid Sellars. At first sight, his demolition of the “myth of the given” and his “Rylean” critique of qualia seem to constitute something tantamount to a total dismissal of Phenomenology. However, critiques similar to that made by Sellars against the myth of the given can also be found within the phenomenological tradition itself. Indeed, Heidegger, Derrida, and several other (more or less legitimate) descendants of Husserl's phenomenological breakthrough, have contested the idea of an immediate and direct givenness. In doing so, they have stressed the hermeneutic or semiotic character of experience itself

With that said, one should acknowledge that if we were to totally deny any kind of givenness, it would be very difficult to understand in which sense we can even



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speak of any phenomenological analysis. In all cases, phenomenology analyzes what is experienced, and to deny the existence of any sort of givenness “in” or “through” experience could possibly amount to denying the very possibility of Phenomenology as such. What is more, in the analytic tradition as well, the need to reconsider experience itself, and to avoid a kind of experience-less understanding of mind and intentionality, has become apparent.

Outgoing from this background, we can see that there is a need to rethink what has been referred to as the ‘myth’ of the given, and to carefully assess what is given in experience.

In this conference, we aim to gather scholars who are willing to participate in this enterprise. We would like to look at different understandings of “the given”, and the different myths which are connected to them. In this way, we hope to evaluate whether or not we can make a “secular” use of this term, and thus, finally endorse a demystified and fruitful understanding of what it refers to.

Although the conference is mainly concerned with questions concerning philosophy of mind, epistemology and metaphysics, we also welcome contributions which deal with the problem of the “given” as it relates to fields such as ethics and aesthetics as well.

**Deadline for title and abstract submission: July 1, 2019**

Conference Place: China University of Political Science and Law, Haidian District, Beijing  
Conference Time: 19-20 October 2019

Confirmed speakers:

Duoyi Fei (China University of Political Science and Law)  
Donghui Han (Renmin University)  
Hong Li (Beijing Normal University)  
Karl Mertens (Wuerzburg University)  
Michelle Montague (Texas University at Austin)  
Antonio Nunziante (Padua University)  
James O'Shea (University College Dublin)  
Galen Strawson (Texas University at Austin)  
Michela Summa (Wuerzburg University)  
David Woodruff Smith (University of California, Irvine)  
Shigeru Taguchi (Hokkaido University)  
Hao Tang (Tsinghua University)  
Refeng Tang (Beijing Normal University)

Organizers: Haojun Zhang & Andrea Altobrando



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**Submission guidelines:**

The paper proposal should include: name, affiliation, email address, contact telephone number, title of the paper, and an abstract of 200 to 300 words.

Deadline for title and abstract submission: July 1, 2019

Acceptance notification: before July 15, 2019

Deadline for paper submission: October 10, 2019

Please submit your abstract to the following addresses:  
andrea.altobrando@cupl.edu.cn; haojunzhang@cupl.edu.cn

Please write "Submission for Demystifying the Given  
conference\_CUPL\_Beijing2019" as the subject of your email.

**Registration fee:**

There is no registration fee.

**Board and lodging:**

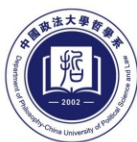
The conference will provide four nights (arrival October 18, departure October 22) accommodation for all speakers from without China.

The conference will offer three dinners (October 18, 19 and 20) to all participants in the conference.

**Travel costs:**

The conference will not cover the travel costs of the selected speakers.

For all enquiries, you can write to the following address: andalt@gmail.com



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