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Public lecture

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Revisiting Paul Hacker's 'Two Accounts of Cosmogony' in the Manusmṛti

Vedic Myth and Preclassical Sāṅkhya Theory of Emanation

[स्वयंभुवे नमस्कृत्य ब्रह्मणे ऽमिततेजसे ।
मनुप्रणीतान्विविधान्धर्मान्वक्ष्यामि शाश्वतान् ॥]
मनुमेकायमासीनमभिगम्य महर्षयः ।
प्रतिपूज्य यथान्यायमिदं वचनमब्रुवन् ॥ १ ॥
भगवत्सर्ववर्णानां यथावदनुपूर्वशः ।
अन्तरप्रभवाणां च धर्मान्नो वक्तुमर्हसि ॥ २ ॥
त्वमेकोऽयं स्वयंभुवः ।
यत्प्रभो ॥ ३ ॥
मभिः ।
ति

Wednesday,
June 11, 2025,
17:30

Seminar room 1,
Institute of South Asian, Tibetan
and Buddhist Studies,
University Campus,
Spitalgasse 2, Entrance 2.7
1090 Vienna

The *Mānavadharmasāstra*, or the *Manusmṛti* (Mn), is distinctive from any other Hindu law books, either earlier or later, in that its entire first chapter discusses cosmogony. Recently, Patrick Olivelle has proposed an archetype for the entire Mn. According to him, the archetype of the first chapter consists of the following two parts:
1-The creation of the world by Brahman (i.e., two accounts of cosmogony), culminating in the birth of the four classes of human beings.
2- Commission of *dharma* exposition from Manu to Bhṛgu.

In Olivelle's interpretation, the entire sections on the 'periodicity of the world' in which the annihilation and the recreation of the whole world recurs are entirely later interventions by the compilers.

Should the cosmogony in the archetype of Mn 1 then be seen as a single 'creation out of nothing,' *creatio ex nihilo*, as taught in the Old Testament of Genesis, rather than cyclical?

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