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Public lecture

GRAZIANA CIOLA

Radboud University, Nijmegen

EXISTENCE AND EMPTINESS

IN LATE MEDIEVAL LATIN SEMANTICS



Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Latin 10538, fol. 22v. Cf. Gallica: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55013718p/f84>



Buddhist Manuscript Covers, San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.159.a

BIRGIT KELLNER

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute
of Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

RESPONDENT

Moderator: Jonathan Samuels

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute
of Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

Can we make true affirmative claims about things that don't exist? When we say "roses are flowers" in winter, or define "idealized gases are infinitely compressible" (which is actually impossible), what makes these statements meaningful or true? Many medieval logicians writing in Latin struggled with such problems, particularly with empty terms – i.e., terms that do not refer to anything in the world.

Historical presuppositions, linguistic features, and ontological commitments contributed to this struggle, but they also provided the background against which some late medieval logicians developed creative solutions.

Within this complex interplay of presuppositions, language, and ontology, fourteenth-century thinkers such as John Buridan and Marsilius of Inghen devised strikingly original semantic strategies.

Birgit Kellner will respond to the paper in a comparative context of Buddhist philosophy

Thursday,
Oct 30, 2025,
17:00

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



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