

International Symposium on “Spirituality, Culture, and Chinese Societies:
Interdisciplinary and Interfaith Dialogues”

「靈性、文化與華人社會：跨學科與跨信仰對談」國際學術研討會

Session 1

Spirituality, Religions and the (Trans)Formation of Chinese Identity

Three Modes of Chinese Spirituality, Religion and Identity

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In this talk, I will take inspiration from the work of French anthropologist Philippe Descola to outline three modalities of spirituality and religion, each of which is based on a different mode of ontological relating with the environment. The first is based on nurturing relations between personified forces; the second is based on ordering the cosmos according to analogical principles; and the third is based on nurturing individual and collective subjectivity in the face of an objectified nature. In the contemporary Chinese world, we find all three modes of spirituality in different combinations, derived from different sources that are indigenous and foreign, traditional and modern. In the talk, I will discuss the anxieties associated with each mode of spirituality; the types of identity that each generates; and the possibilities each offers for relating to other forms of religious culture in the world.