

Swami Medhananda (Ayon Maharaj)

Program in Philosophy
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute
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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

PhD, English, 2009

Dissertation: "The After of Art: Kant, Hegel, and the Dialectics of Aesthetic Agency"

Committee: Charles Altieri (Chair), Anthony Cascardi, C. Daniel Blanton

BA *summa cum laude* with Highest Honors in English (minor in philosophy), 2002

Honors Thesis: "Towards the Primitive Terror: T.S. Eliot's Metaphysics of Boredom"

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Fulbright Fellow at the Institut für Philosophie, 2006-2007

Supervisor: Rolf-Peter Horstmann

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Visiting Student at Magdalen College, 2000-2001

FACULTY APPOINTMENT

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE (India)

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, 2010-present

Head of the Program in Philosophy, 2010-present

Section Editor for Hindu and Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (Springer), 2018-Present

BOOKS

Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism (under review).

Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality: Sri Ramakrishna and Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018; OUP South Asian edition, 2019).

- The *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (Springer) will publish a Book Review Symposium in which 13 international scholars will write responses to the book
- Reviewed in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, *Reading Religion*, *The Indian Express*, *The Telegraph India*, *Anandabazar Patrika* (Bengali), *Desh Patrika* (Bengali)

The Dialectics of Aesthetic Agency: Revaluating German Aesthetics from Kant to Adorno (London: Bloomsbury, 2013; paperback reissue, 2014).

- Reviewed in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, and *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*

- Recommended in two *Oxford Bibliographies Online* entries (Clive Cazeaux, “Continental Aesthetics,” and Beat Wyss, “G.W.F. Hegel: Aesthetics”)

EDITED VOLUMES

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedānta (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

- A volume of sixteen newly commissioned chapters by leading international scholars

Special Issue on “Swami Vivekananda as a Philosopher and Theologian,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (in progress).

Special Issue on “Vedāntic Theodicies,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (forthcoming).

ARTICLES

1. Medhananda, Swami. “A Great Adventure of the Soul’: Sri Aurobindo’s Vedāntic Theodicy of Spiritual Evolution,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (forthcoming).
2. Medhananda, Swami. “Continuing the Philosophical Conversation on Śrī Rāmākṣṇa—A Response [to the Book Symposium on *Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality*],” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (forthcoming).
3. Medhananda, Swami. “*Asminnasya ca tad yogaṃ śāsti*: Swami Vivekananda’s Interpretation of *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.19 as a Hermeneutic Basis for Samanvayī Vedānta,” in Rita Sherma, ed., *Vivekananda: His Life, Legacy, and Liberative Ethics* (forthcoming in 2020).
4. Medhananda, Swami. “Why Sri Aurobindo’s Hermeneutics Still Matters: Philology and the Transformative Possibilities of Scripture,” in Rita Sherma and Arvind Sharma, eds., *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Volume II* (Springer, forthcoming).
5. Medhananda, Swami. “Mysticism without the *Mustikos*?: Some Reflections on Stephen Palmquist’s Mystical Kant,” *The Kantian Review* (forthcoming).
6. Medhananda, Swami. “Was Swami Vivekananda a Hindu Supremacist? Revisiting a Long-Standing Debate,” *Religions* 11.7 (2020), 1-28.
7. Maharaj, Ayon. “*Śiva jñāne jīver sevā*: Reexamining Swami Vivekananda’s Practical Vedānta in the Light of Sri Ramakrishna,” *Journal of Dharma Studies* 2 (2020), 175-87.
8. Maharaj, Ayon. “Panentheistic Cosmopsychism: Swami Vivekananda’s Sāṃkhya-Vedāntic Solution to the Hard Problem of Consciousness,” in Godehard Brüntrup, Ludwig Jaskolla, and Benedikt Paul Göcke, eds., *Panentheism and Panpsychism: Philosophy of Religion Meets Philosophy of Mind* (Paderborn: Brill Mentis, 2020), 273-301.
9. Maharaj, Ayon. “*Sarvamukti*: Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s Aporetic Metaphysics of Collective Salvation,” *Philosophy East and West* 70.1 (January 2020), 136-54.
10. Maharaj, Ayon. “Seeing Oneness Everywhere: Sri Aurobindo’s Mystico-Immanent Interpretation of the Īśā Upaniṣad,” in Ayon Maharaj, ed., *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedānta* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 309-340.

11. Maharaj, Ayon. "Infinite Paths, Infinite Doctrines': Perry Schmidt-Leukel's Fractal Approach to Religious Diversity from the Standpoint of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Tradition," in Paul Knitter and Alan Race, eds., *New Paths for Interreligious Theology: Perry Schmidt-Leukel's Fractal Interpretation of Religious Diversity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 100-114.
12. Maharaj, Ayon. "Hard Theological Determinism and the Illusion of Free Will: Sri Ramakrishna Meets Lord Kames, Saul Smilansky, and Derk Pereboom," *Journal of World Philosophies* 3.2 (Winter 2018), pp. 24-48.
13. Maharaj, Ayon. "Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Critique of Schopenhauer's Doctrine of the Will," *Philosophy East and West* 67.4 (October 2017), pp. 1191-1221.
14. Maharaj, Ayon. "The Challenge of the Oceanic Feeling: Romain Rolland's Mystical Critique of Psychoanalysis and His Call for a 'New Science of the Mind,'" *History of European Ideas* 43.5 (2017), pp. 474-493.
15. Maharaj, Ayon. "Kant on the Epistemology of Indirect Mystical Experience," *Sophia* 56.2 (June 2017), pp. 311-336.
16. Maharaj, Ayon. "God Is Infinite, and the Paths to God Are Infinite': A Reconstruction and Defense of Sri Ramakrishna's *Vijñāna*-Based Model of Religious Pluralism," *Journal of Religion* 97.2 (April 2017), pp. 181-213.
17. Maharaj, Ayon. "Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa's Philosophy of Vijñāna Vedānta," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 21.1 (2017), pp. 25-54.
18. Maharaj, Ayon. "Toward a New Hermeneutics of the *Bhagavad Gītā*: Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, and the Secret of *Vijñāna*," *Philosophy East and West* 65.4 (October 2015), pp. 1209-1233.
19. Maharaj, Ayon. "Śrī Harṣa *contra* Hegel: Monism, Skeptical Method, and the Limits of Reason," *Philosophy East and West* 64.1 (January 2014), pp. 82-108.
20. Maharaj, Ayon. "Yogic Mindfulness: Hariharānanda Āraṇya's Quasi-Buddhistic Interpretation of *Smṛti* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* I.20," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 41 (2013), pp. 57-78.
21. Maharaj, Ayon. "Why Poetry Matters: The Transpersonal Force of Lyric Experience in Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*," *Arizona Quarterly* 66.4 (Winter 2010), pp. 71-92.
22. Roy, Ayon. "Hegel *contra* Schlegel; Kierkegaard *contra* de Man," *PMLA* 124.1 (January 2009), pp. 107-126.
23. Roy, Ayon. "The Specter of Hegel in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68.2 (April 2007), pp. 279-304.
24. Roy, Ayon. "Postmodern Convexity and Hegelian Dialectics in Ashbery's 'Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,'" *Ginkgo Tree Review* 4.1 (2007), pp. 25-46.

25. Roy, Ayon. "In seinem Anderen bei sich selbst zu sein: Toward a Recuperation of Hegel's Metaphysics of Agency," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11.1 (Fall 2006), pp. 225-255.
26. Roy, Ayon. "From Deconstruction to Decreation: Wallace Stevens' Notes toward a Poetics of Nobility," *Wallace Stevens Journal* 29.2 (Fall 2005), pp. 249-262.

BOOK REVIEW

Review of Urs App's *Schopenhauer's Compass*, *Philosophy East and West* 67.3 (July 2017), pp. 942-948.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Sri Aurobindo Award for Excellence in Scholarship, 2018
 American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting Travel Grant, 2017
 Dharma Civilization Foundation Research Grant, 2017
 AAS-in-Asia Travel Grant for Kyoto Conference, 2016
 Franklin Postdoctoral Research Grant, American Philosophical Society, 2010
 Dean's Normative Time Fellowship, University of California, Berkeley, 2008-2009
 Fulbright Scholarship for Doctoral Research, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2006-2007
 Barbara H. Kurtz Award for outstanding achievement in PhD Program, 2006
 English Department travel grant for language study in Germany, Summer 2005
 Chancellor's Fellowship for PhD study, University of California, Berkeley, 2003-2006
 Award for outstanding achievement in undergraduate major, UC Berkeley, 2002
 WISC Scholarship for study at University of Oxford, 2000-2001

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Peer reviewer for *Philosophy East and West*, *Journal of World Philosophies*, *Sophia*, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, *Journal of Dharma Studies*, *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, *Archiv Orientalní*, *Journal of Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, and SAGE Open
 Peer reviewer for book publishers Bloomsbury, Rowman & Littlefield, and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study
 Member of Board of Studies, Dept. of Behavioral and Contemplative Studies, Sri Sri University, 2018-Present
 Coordinator of Doctoral Programs in Philosophy and English (RKMVU), 2010-Present
 Coordinator of Doctoral Program in Sanskrit (RKMVU), 2013-2015
 Chair, Townsend Center Working Group on German Idealism (Berkeley), 2008-2009
 Chair, Townsend Center Working Group on Frankfurt School (Berkeley), 2007-2008

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

"Vivekananda's Religious Pluralism: A Diachronic Approach," Invited Online Lecture, Vivekananda Study Circle, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, 8 August 2020.

"The Vedānta Outlook," Invited Lecture, Department of Contemplative and Behavioural Sciences, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Orissa, India, 2 May 2020.

“Perceiving God: Swami Vivekananda’s Argument for the Epistemic Value of Supersensuous Perception,” International Seminar on the Relevance of Indian Philosophy to Contemporary Western Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (Kolkata), January 2020.

“Swami Vivekananda’s Reconceptualization of Advaita Vedānta in the Light of Sri Ramakrishna,” Distinguished Lecture, Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Shimla), 21 October 2019.

“From Good to God: Swami Vivekananda’s Vedāntic Virtue Ethics,” Three-Day International Seminar on Indian Virtue Ethics, Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Shimla), October 2019.

“Sri Ramakrishna’s Philosophy of Religious Harmony,” Invited Lecture, St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata, September 11, 2019.

“Swami Vivekananda’s Religious Cosmopolitanism in the Chicago Addresses and Beyond,” Invited Lecture, Presidency University (India), January 2019.

“Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality: Sri Ramakrishna’s *Vijñāna*-Based Doctrine of the Harmony of All Religions,” Invited Lecture, Princeton University (USA), November 2018.

“*Siva jñanē jīver sevā*: Reexamining Swami Vivekananda’s Practical Vedānta in the Light of Sri Ramakrishna,” Dharma Academy of North America Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado, November 2018.

“Why Sri Aurobindo’s Hermeneutics Still Matters: Philology and the Transformative Possibilities of Scripture,” Plenary Speech, Symposium on Semiotics of Visual Culture & Textual Hermeneutics in Indian Traditions, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, November 2018.

“‘The Deification of the World’: Swami Vivekananda’s Philosophical Expansion of Advaita Vedānta,” National Workshop on Yoga-Vedānta Renaissance, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, September 2018.

“Sri Ramakrishna’s Philosophy of Vijñāna Vedānta,” Three-Day ICPR National Seminar on Sri Ramakrishna’s *Kathāmṛta*, Delhi, India, February 2018.

“Science versus Scientism,” St. Xavier’s University, Kolkata, India, February 2018.

“Hard Theological Determinism and the Illusion of Free Will: Sri Ramakrishna Meets Lord Kames and Saul Smilansky,” Seminar on Indo-Analytic Inquiry, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, India, January 2018.

“Integral Advaita: The Philosophies of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo,” Invited Lecture, Bengal Theosophical Society, Kolkata, India, December 2017.

“Yogic Mindfulness,” Invited Lecture, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Orissa, India, September 2017.

“Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa’s Philosophy of Vijñāna Vedānta,” Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, May 2017.

“The Challenge of the Oceanic Feeling: Romain Rolland’s Mystical Critique of Psychoanalysis and His Call for a ‘New Science of the Mind,’” Invited Lecture, Alliance Française du Bengal, Kolkata, India, May 2017.

“Sri Ramakrishna’s Doctrine of the Harmony of All Religions,” Vichar Manthan, Sunnyvale, California, USA, April 2017.

“Mysticism without the *Mustikos?*: A Critique of Stephen Palmquist’s ‘Mystical’ Kant,” Author Meets Critics Panel, American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting, Seattle, Washington, USA, April 2017.

“Sri Ramakrishna’s Doctrine of the Harmony of All Religions,” American Consulate, Kolkata, India, March 2017.

“Two Spiritual Paradigms for Art: Sri Aurobindo and Theodor Adorno,” The Language of Art Conference, North Bengal University, India, February 2017.

“The Challenge of the Oceanic Feeling: Romain Rolland’s Mystical Critique of Psychoanalysis and His Call for a ‘New Science of the Mind,’” ICCSAE International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Meaning, Art, and Culture, Derozio Memorial College, Kolkata, India, January 2017.

“The Challenge of the Oceanic Feeling: Romain Rolland’s Mystical Critique of Psychoanalysis and His Call for a ‘New Science of the Mind,’” Asian Studies Conference in Japan, International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan, July 2016.

“Toward a Cross-Cultural Theodicy: Sri Ramakrishna’s Multidimensional Response to the Problem of Evil,” AAS-in-Asia Conference at Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan, June 2016.

“‘God Is Infinite, and the Paths to God Are Infinite’: A Reconstruction and Defense of Sri Ramakrishna’s Vijñāna-Based Model of Religious Pluralism,” International Conference on the Sociology of Religion in a Pluralistic Society, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, April 2016.

“Toward a More Robust Religious Pluralism: Bringing Sri Ramakrishna into Dialogue with John Hick,” ICCSAE International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Knowledge, Morality, and Spirituality, Vedic Village, Kolkata, India, Jan. 2016.

“Buddhist Śūnyavāda and Advaita Vedānta,” Seminar on Buddhism, Monastic Probationers’ Training Center, Belur Math, Howrah, India, July 2013.

“The Methodology and Argument of Śrī Harṣa’s *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādyā*,” Navya-Nyāya Workshop, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, India, June 2012.

Participant in roundtable, “How to Get Published in *PMLA*,” Modern Language Association Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA, December 2008.

“The Problem of Aesthetic Pleasure in Kant’s ‘Analytic of the Beautiful,’” International Graduate Philosophy Conference, Johns Hopkins University, March 2008.

“Aporien des ästhetischen Wohlgefallens in Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft*” (presented in German), Forschungskolloquium, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, February 2007.

“Why Poetry Matters: The Transpersonal Force of Lyric Experience in Ezra Pound’s *The Pisan Cantos*,” Twentieth-Century Literature Conference, University of Kentucky, February 2005.

“Adorno’s Revenge” (response paper), Panel on New Technologies, Berkeley-Stanford English Conference, May 2004.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

“Philosophy 250/Sanskrit 250: The Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna,” Spring 2014

“English 250: Scholarly Approaches to Sri Ramakrishna,” Fall 2013

“Philosophy 250/Sanskrit 250: Critical Thinking in Advaita Vedānta,” Spring 2013

“Philosophy 130: Introduction to German Philosophy,” Spring 2013

“English 230: William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*,” Spring 2013

“English 200: Literary Theory and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*,” Fall 2012

“English R1B: Boredom,” 2008

Teaching Assistant, “Literature in English, mid 19th-20th c.,” 2005-2006

LANGUAGES

Fluency in German and Bengali and reading proficiency in Sanskrit, Pāli, and French