

Module Title: PHIL 0162 The Self in Classical Indian Philosophy

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Course Description

In this module, we will consider debates about the nature of the self in classical Indian philosophy. We will look at two Buddhist (Abhidharma and Madhyamaka) theories of the self. We will then examine some arguments that the non-Buddhists (especially the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā philosophers) gave against these theories. Along the way, we will also discuss some of the questions that these debates raise in epistemology and ethics: for example, whether our memories give us any reason to believe in an enduring self, and whether denying the existence of the self can help us justify altruism.

Course Objectives

Through reading and careful analysis of key Sanskrit and Pali texts on the self (in translation), study of this module is intended to give students an overview of classical Indian metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology.

Intended Learning Outcomes

In this module, students will develop the general skills appropriate to a theoretical philosophy module at this level. They will also learn to engage with challenging classical Indian texts: they will familiarize themselves with the key concepts used in these texts, reconstruct the arguments offered in them, and critically assess these arguments.

Assignment Structure

The final grade will depend (i) attendance and participation (10%), (ii) 5 short fortnightly writing assignments (10%), and (iii) a summative essay (3500 words for undergraduate students).

Attendance

Please see UCL's Attendance Policy (for more information see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-3-registration-framework-taught-programmes/section-3-attendance-and-absence>)

Attendance of seminar meetings by students is mandatory. UCL recognises that students may sometimes miss seminars due to genuine extenuating circumstances, such as illness or bereavement. Therefore, provided that a student has an attendance record of 70% or higher, the student is eligible for the summative assessment in a module, and can gain credit for that module. If, for whatever reason (even illness or bereavement), a student's attendance is lower than 70%, then they can potentially be barred from summative assessment in the module, which will mean they are 'incomplete' in it. If a student is incomplete and it is their first attempt at the module, they have to resit. If it is their second attempt, they can't graduate.

Readings

All readings for this course will be made available on the Moodle site for the module.

Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Required Primary Texts:

1. Olivelle, Patrick (trans.). Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8. In *The Early Upaniṣads*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996.
2. Harvey, Peter (trans.). Anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta, Mahā-nidāna Sutta, and Milindapañha. In Edelglass and Garfield (eds.) *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Required Commentary:

1. Kapstein, Matthew. "Indra's Search for the Self and the Beginnings of Philosophical Perplexity in India." *Religious Studies* 24, no. 2 (1988): 239-256. Reprinted in *Reason's Traces*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2001.
2. Siderits, Mark. *Buddhism as Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007. [Chapter 3]

Week 2: The Abhidharma Theory of Selves and Persons

Primary Texts:

1. Lusthaus, Dan. Pudgalavāda Doctrines of the Person. In Edelglass and Garfield (eds.) *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
2. Duerlinger, James (trans.). A Translation of Vasubandhu's "Refutation of the Theory of a Person." Sections 1 and Section 2 (upto 2.5.3). In *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Required Background Reading:

SEP article on Vasubandhu

Optional Commentary:

1. Duerlinger, James (trans.). Commentary on Sections 1 and 2. *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons*. London: Routledge.
2. Ganeri, Jonardon. The Imperfect Reality of Persons. In *The Concealed Art of the Soul: Theories of the Self and Practices of Truth in Indian Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. [Chapter 6].

Week 3: The Nyāya Argument In Favour of the Self

Primary Text:

Dasti, Matthew, and Phillips, Stephen (trans.). *The Nyāya-sūtra: Selections from Early Commentaries*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2017. [Chapter 4] (Just read the Vātsyāyana argument)

Optional Commentary:

Ganeri, Jonardon. "Cross-modality and the self". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (2000):639-658.

Chadha, Monima. "The Self in Early Nyāya: A Minimal Conclusion." *Asian Philosophy*, 23 (2013):1, 24-42,

Week 4: The Abhidharma Response to the Non-Buddhist

Primary Texts:

Duerlinger, James (trans.). A Translation of Vasubandhu's "Refutation of the Theory of a Person." Section 4. In *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons*. London: Routledge.

Required Background Reading:

SEP article on Vasubandhu, Section 2.1.

Optional Commentary:

Duerlinger, James (trans.). Commentary on Section 4. In *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons*. London: Routledge.

Week 5: Ethical Consequences of the Abhidharma View

Primary Text:

Crosby, Kate and Andrew Skilton (trans.). *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Excerpts from Chapters 6, 8, and 9]

Required Background Reading:

SEP article on Śāntideva [Section 3].

Optional Commentary:

1. Bommarito, Nicolas. "Bile & Bodhisattvas: Śāntideva on Justified Anger." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 18 (2011): 356-381.
2. Williams, Paul, *Altruism and Reality: Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*, New York: Routledge, 1998. [Chapters 3 and 5]
3. Goodman, Charles. *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 5].

Week 6: The Mīmāṃsā Defence of the Self, Part 1

Das, Nilanjan (trans.) “Śabara's Commentary on Mīmāṃsā-sūtra 1.1.5.” Unpublished Manuscript: University College London, 2019.

Week 7: The Mīmāṃsā Defence of the Self, Part 2

Das, Nilanjan (trans.) “The Theory of the Self in Kumarila’s *Commentary in Verse*.” Unpublished Manuscript: University College London, 2019.

Required Commentary:

Taber, John A. "The Mīmāṃsā theory of self-recognition." *Philosophy East and West* (1990): 35-57.

Week 8-9: Uddyotakara’s Renewed Nyaya Defence of the Self, Part 1

Primary Text:

Kapstein, Matthew (trans.). “Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara on the Self.” In *Reason’s Traces*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

Required Commentary:

Taber, John. "Uddyotakara’s Defence of a Self." In *Hindu and Buddhist Ideas in Dialogue*, pp. 107-124. London: Routledge, 2016.

Chakrabarti, Arindam.” The Nyāya Proofs of the Existence of the Soul.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 10 (3):211-238 (1982).

Week 10: Śāntarakṣita’s Arguments Against the Self

Primary Text:

Kapstein, Matthew. “Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasaṃgraha*.” In In Edelglass and Garfield (eds.) *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Das, Nilanjan (trans.) “Śāntarakṣita’s Refutation of the Self in *The Compendium of Truths*.” Unpublished Manuscript: University College London.

Required commentary:

Kapstein, Matthew. Śāntarakṣita on the Fallacies of Personalistic Vision. In *Reason's Traces*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

Background:

SEP article on Śāntarakṣita.