

THE PROBLEMATIC SELF: identity, embodiment, sex and sincerity

Course Outline (exact times spent on each topic will vary)

The history and geography of the self

To what extent, in human history, and in the personal history of each of us, is the self discovered, invented, developed, or fabricated? We'll look at an anthropologist's account of geographically varying views of self, and at the journey (in Western philosophy) from psyche → soul → mind → nothingness.

The embodied self

In one way I can only be my body; in another way I can't possibly only be my body; physics and biology, however complex, can't give a full account of who I am. The mind/body problem – which is currently at the top of philosophy's agenda. John Locke on personal identity.

Sincerity and the self

Who or what am I to be true to? 'I am not who I am' – Iago's villainous utterance is one we are all forced to make: we are at odds with ourselves. The Eden myth and self-awareness. Acting. *Hamlet*. Sartre on 'the homosexual'. (BN 1, 2, 2)

The social self

'Being who you are' invariably appeals to a defining category—proclaiming yourself an 'x'. The self as a product of its sex, sexuality, race, nationality, culture, class, etc. Identity politics versus Enlightenment universalism. Identity politics versus the 'nothingness' notion of Sartre and de Beauvoir.

The biological self: Sex, gender and transgender

What is 'sex'? The conventions in what is sometimes presented as the most spontaneous of actions. What is it to *be a particular sex* as a form of identity? Does the notion of 'trans-' rely on a new version of Cartesian dualism? Is there such an entity as 'a woman'?

BOOK LIST (more or less in order of topic)

There is no necessity to read all, or even any, of these essays, articles and books, except the starred ones.

*"From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding', Clifford Geertz http://hypergeertz.jku.at/GeertzTexts/Natives_Point.htm

(I am going to send a shortened version of this article nearer the beginning of term)

Greek Models of Mind and Self (Harvard) A A Long

The Idea of the Self (Cambridge) Jerrold Siegel

(very long but worth dipping into)

Soul Machine (Norton) George Makari

**Modern Philosophy of Mind* (Everyman) edited by William Lyons

(an excellent set of papers, each by a famous representative of a particular position on the Mind/Body Problem – for sale secondhand on Amazon for 1 pence + postage.)

Chapter 27, Book 2, of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/locke/john/l81u/B2.27.html>

(You can also get on-line Jonathan Bennett's modernised version of this chapter, and I'll probably send excerpts nearer the time)

*The Bible, Book of Genesis, chapters 2 and 3

Sincerity and Authenticity (Harvard), Lionel Trilling

The Rhetoric of Sincerity, (Stanford) edited Ernst van Alphen et al

(worth looking at some of these papers, especially Korsten, de Vries, and Casarino)

*'Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology' by Jean-Paul Sartre

(an essay written by Sartre, probably in 1933 when he had just started reading Husserl. Although his ideas on the subject developed further, *Being and Nothingness* is too large a text to suggest as reading.)

http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/SourcesPrimary/Sartre_Intentionality.pdf or (another translation) http://www.let.osaka-u.ac.jp/~cpshama/text/Sartre_HusserlsIntentionality_en.pdf

*Part 1, chapter 2, section 2 'Patterns of Bad Faith' in *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre

‘Discourse, desire and sexual deviance: some problems in a history of homosexuality’, Jeffrey Weeks (chapter 4 in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, edited Kenneth Plummer – it was published in 1981, and things have changed since then. Also in *Culture, Society and Sexuality: a reader*, (Routledge) edited R Parker, P Aggleton (it’s very expensive, and I must admit I haven’t yet read it)

The Second Sex (Vintage) Simone de Beauvoir, translated C. Borde and S Malovany-Chevallier

(again, just dip into it)

‘What is a woman?’ Kathleen Stock and Amia Srinivassan

<https://philosophybites.com/2019/05/kathleen-stock-on-what-is-a-woman-.html>

‘Being transgender and transgender being’, Sophie-Grace Chappell, 27.2.16

(This paper is on-line, and I’ll send a word doc of it)

‘In Defense of Transracialism’ Rebecca Tuvel in *Hypatia* first published: 29 March 2017

<https://cryptome.org/2017/05/in-defense-of-transracialism.pdf>