Experience Day Philosophy: Global and Comparative Perspectives 22 November 2024



Introduction

A student of Philosophy: Global and Comparative Perspectives will tell you about your first year at this programme.

Lecture

Title

The Person is not a Self: Personhood in Indian Buddhist Metaphysics

Short description

The talk discusses early Buddhist views about what a person is, and their arguments that persons are not enduring unified selves ($\bar{a}tman$). It introduces the Buddhists idea of persons as causally connected collections of impermanent physical and mental events. Finally, it considers the relation between these claims and the Buddhist commitment to ending suffering (duhkha).

Lecturer: Dr. Stephen Harris (s.e.harris@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Stephen Harris is Assistant Professor (Universitair Docent) at Leiden University, where he teaches in the Institute for Philosophy and the International B.A. program. He has also taught philosophy at the University of New Mexico and the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. He specializes in Cross-Cultural and Indian philosophy, with a particular interest in Buddhist ethical texts.

Seminar

Title

The Taste of Confucianism and Daoism

Short description

In this class, students collaboratively read well-known texts from the Confucian and Daoist traditions and share their perspectives.

Lecturer: Dr. Dobin Choi (d.choi@phil.leidenuniv.nl)

Dobin Choi is a University Lecturer Korean and Comparative Philosophy at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Before joining Leiden in 2023, he taught philosophy at various universities in the United States and Korea, including the University of Iowa and Seoul National University. His research focuses on comparative studies of the ethics and aesthetics of Confucianism and British Moralists.

Q&A

Do you have any questions regarding the programme? The student will answer them all at the Q&A.

Preparation

The homework for the seminar is attached down below.

- Dobin Choi, d.choi@phil.leidenuniv.nl
- Dobin Choi is a University Lecturer Korean and Comparative Philosophy at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Before joining Leiden in 2023, he taught philosophy at various universities in the United States and Korea, including the University of Iowa and Seoul National University. His research focuses on comparative studies of the ethics and aesthetics of Confucianism and British Moralists.
- Title of lecture(s): The Taste of Confucianism and Daoism
- Brief description of the content of the lecture:
 - In this class, students collaboratively read well-known texts from the Confucian and Daoist traditions and share their perspectives.
- Homework assignment for the seminar in word/pdf/video of a maximum of 2 hours of preparation time. NB: royalty free so it can be published on the website: BELOW

University Lecturer Korean and Comparative Philosophy

• The *Analects* (*Lunyu*): the teachings and dialogues of Confucius (551–479 BCE)

1.1 子曰:「學而時習之,不亦說乎?有朋自遠方來,不亦樂乎?人不知而不慍,不亦君子乎?」

The Master said, "Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters? Is one not a person of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though humans may take no note of one?"

1.2 有子曰:「其爲人也孝弟,而好犯上者,鮮矣;不好犯上,而好作亂者,未之有也。君子務本,本立而道生。孝弟也者,其爲仁之本與!」

The philosopher You said, "They are few who, being filial and fraternal, are fond of offending against their superiors. There have been none, who, not liking to offend against their superiors, have been fond of stirring up confusion. The exemplary person bends the attention to what is radical. That being established, all practical courses naturally grow up. Filial piety and fraternal respect! — are they not the root of the virtue of benevolence?"

2.4 道子曰:「吾十有五而志于學,三十而立,四十而不惑,五十而知天命,六十而耳順,七十而從心所欲,不踰矩。」

The Master said, "At fifteen, I set my mind upon learning; at thirty, I took my place in society; at forty, I became free of doubts; at fifty, I understood Heaven's Mandate; at sixty, my ear was attuned; and at seventy, I could follow my heart's desires without overstepping the bounds of propriety."

- Read the texts above and consider the questions below.
 - What do you think are the ideal goals of the Confucian way of living?

• What do you find interesting about Confucius's teachings? Identify three points.

• The *Daodejing* (道德經) (*Laozi* 6th century BCE)

1. 道可道,非常道。名可名,非常名。無名天地之始;有名萬物之母。故常無欲,以觀其妙;常有欲,以觀其徼。此兩者,同出而異名,同謂之玄。玄之又玄,衆妙之門。

The Dao that can be spoken is not the enduring and unchanging Dao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. Having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; having a name, it is the Mother of all things.

Always without desire we must be found, If its deep mystery we would sound; But if desire always within us be, Its outer fringe is all that we shall see.

Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful.

• What do you think about the distinction between the "nameless" and the "named"? Why do you think that they are collectively called the Mystery?	lo

• **Zhuangzi** Ch.3. How to nurture life.

Cook Ding was carving an ox carcass for Lord Wenhui. With each touch of his hand, heave of his shoulder, step of his feet, thrust of his knee – whop! whish! – he wielded his knife with a whoosh, and every move was in rhythm. It was as though he were performing the Dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping to the beat of the Constant Source music.

"Ah, marvelous!" said Lord Wenhui. "Surely this is the acme of skill!"

Cook Ding laid down his knife and replied, "What your servant loves, my lord, is the Dao, and that is a step beyond skill.

"At the beginning, when I first began carving up oxen, all I could see was the whole carcass. After three years I could no longer see the carcass whole, and now I meet it with my spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding cease and spirit moves as it will. I follow the natural form: slicing the major joints I guide the knife through the big hollows, and by conforming to the inherent contours, no vessels or tendons or tangles of sinews — much less the big bones — block my blade in the least.

"A good cook changes his knife once a year, but this is mere slicing. An ordinary cook changes his knife once a month, because he hacks. I've been using this knife now for nineteen years; it has carved thousands of oxen, yet the blade is as sharp as one fresh off the grindstone. You see, there are gaps between these joints, but the blade edge has no thickness. If a knife with no thickness moves into a gap, then it's wide as need be and the blade wanders freely with plenty of leeway. That's why after nineteen years the blade of my knife is as sharp as one fresh off the grindstone.

"But nevertheless, whenever a tangled knot lies ahead, I spot the challenge and on the alert I focus my sight and slow down my hand – then I flick the blade with the slightest of moves, and before you know it the carcass has fallen apart like earth crumbling to the ground. I stand with knife raised and face all four directions in turn, prancing in place with complete satisfaction. Then I wipe off the knife and put it away."

"How fine!" said Lord Wenhui. "Listening to the words of Cook Ding, I have learned how to nurture life!"

What is the Lord's learning about "how to nurture life" from the story of Cook Ding?								