Table of Contents

1. Queer Theory, Postmodern Identity and Truth	2
2. Introduction to the Dhammapada	3
3. Embodied Idealism	4
4. The Sickness unto Death	6
5. Evolutionary and Neuroscientific Perspectives on Morality	7
6. Our Relapse into Fascism: An Investigation into the Conditions making Fascis Possible	
7. Philosophy Reading Group	. 12
8. Philosophy of esotericism: Mystery and Metaphysical Possibility	. 13
9. Symbolism, Myths, Meaning	. 14
10. Chinese Philosophy Reading Group	. 16

1. Queer Theory, Postmodern Identity and Truth

by Fabius Schöndube

In this class I would like to take my students through the history of queer theory and ist "Postmodern" forebears in order to think about what it means when we speak of "our true identity" for the sake of political emancipation. To do this we will do an in-depth study of Judith Butler's work, as well as that of Foucault, Nietzsche, Marx and maybe even Hegel. Exactly where we go will be decided by the class, and the aim of this class is the creation of a collective pressure free space for thinking about queerness, identity and intersectionality.

By the end of this class I hope to have inspired my students to think more thoroughly about what identity is, how queer theory as a philosophical approach reframes our understanding of gender and sexuality, as well as how these topics always intersect with race, class and dis-/ability.

And besides this serious stuff you can expect chaotic and energetic discussions of Autism, Trans Identity, Lord of the rings, Anime, Hyperpop, Internet Culture, the joys of biking and what it means to pump iron in a non-binary way.

Sessions:

Most of it TBD Week 1: Butler "Gender Trouble" Introduction Week 2: Foucault "Notes on Marx" Week 3: Nietzsche by Eugen Fink Week 4: Malabou on Hegel Week 5: Marx by Balibar

Week 6-12: TBD

2. Introduction to the Dhammapada

by Mariam Ismailov

The Dhammapada is a relatively short text that is part of the Buddhist Pali canon. It is a quintessential text of Buddhist philosophical and religious thought and is highly influential in both Theravada and Mahayana schools. Reading the Dhammapada is useful in many ways: it will teach the reader about important Buddhist ethical and metaphysical principles, it will foster philosophical discussions and questions about these principles, and moreover, the reader can apply these principles to guide their own life and conduct.

Sessions:

The Dhammapada itself is around 64 pages. My session plan is to assign a couple of chapters (2 or 3, give or take) for each week. There are 26 chapters in total and each chapter is only about 2-6 pages long. The exact way the chapters will be divided among sessions will depend on the amount of sessions, but ideally there would be a session each week.

Reading List:

I will be using the following translation of the Dhammapada: <u>https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/scrndhamma.pdf</u>

3. Embodied Idealism

by Ruben Venema

In my bachelor thesis, *The mind in the world and the world in the mind*, I was inspired to formulate a form of idealism through reading Vasubandhu, an Indian Buddhist scholar who lived in the 5th and the 6th century CE. I interpreted his *mind-only* thesis as a positing a kind of idealist monism, that I called Mind substance monism.

The inspiration has not yet dried up, and I want to continue to explore this type of idealism beyond the Buddhist context, independent from Vasubandhu. For one, I believe this form of idealism to not be opposed to a materialistic science, nor to a more mystical or shamanic worldview, in fact, I will argue that it unites them. In this I attempt to reconcile different metaphysical views. It is through comparative philosophy that we can see unity where others only see division.

We generally take external, physical objects to be the cause for our experience; we see a tree, because there is a tree in front of us. In the *Vimsika*, Vasubandhu's opponent argues that we need to think of it this way, for without positing external, physical objects, we can not explain our experience. The body is per excellence considered to be physical, and contrasted with the immaterial mind. If we then claim that everything is mind, what becomes of the body?

The body, and our relation to it, has always been a difficult topic. Disembodiment -- the loss of connection with the body -- is a real problem. And it seems to loom darkly above - especially -- idealism. In this seminar we will explore embodiment in the metaphysics of idealist monism. To see what place the body has and can have when everything is Mind.

Sessions:

bi-weekly meetings to have 5-8 seminars together (I have classes on Tuesday 9-12 and Wednesday 12-3, so some time aside from then)

Set-up lectures:

- first half consists of a lecture that discusses and explains the topic of the week and the related readings
- second half is filled with discussion, based on questions from the participants and discussion questions prepared by me

I will suggest readings, but I plan them to not be necessary. I will introduce their ideas and set the stage for a discussion and guide a group discussion through prepared and spontaneous questions, as we together explore this form of idealism.

The readings and exact planning will follow my progress of my Master's thesis, as I will be writing it about exactly this topic: embodied idealism.

Reading list:

Week 1:

Ruben Venema, 2024. The world in the mind and the mind in the world. (My BA thesis).

Vasubandhu, twenty verses and treatise on three natures

Week ?:

Frank Chouraqui, The body and embodiment, selections

4. The Sickness unto Death

by Oliver Kuivasto

The Sickness unto Death (A Christian psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening) is a deeply Christian work, perhaps the utmost one out of the vast Kierkegaard catalogue. It is a thought-awakening, devastatingly honest, and most of all a desperate plea by Kierkegaard, to us, to look inward, to be released, escape the chains of ideology, the mass of humans; instant gratification of pleasure, money, and entertainment; and the horror called "journalism".

In this seminar, we will discuss and read through, The Sickness unto Death (1849) by Søren Kierkegaard. No prior knowledge of Kierkegaard is required. The seminar will feature a heavy analysis of Christian symbolism and biblical insight and context – vital for reaching the heart of Kierkegaard's message. However, this will be done with our 21st-century perspective, remaining critical yet immersing ourselves in the 19thcentury picture and the roots of Christian existential philosophy and theology. Furthermore, SUD features a subtle socio-cultural critique, which we attempt to penetrate.

To conclude, this seminar is ("philosophically") not for the faint-hearted. But for all those who desperately desire to dwell in the mysterious existential Kierkegaard— whether it be in a semi-relaxed lecture room or in a cozy bar setting contemplating The Sickness unto Death (often) dubbed Kierkegaard's most difficult work – you are wholeheartedly welcome.

"So to be sick unto death is not to be able to die – yet not as though there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness in this case is that even the last hope, death, is not available."

Readings: The Sickness unto Death (1849), *Sygdommen till døden* And some shorter selections of other works, including *The Present Age*

Preliminary plan:

I. The Life and Works of Søren Kierkegaard; Critique of modernity and secularity.

II. The Universality of the Sickness unto death.

III. Forms of despair. Finitude and infinitude. Temporal and eternal. Possible and necessary.

IV. Despair is Sin.

V. Attack: Socratic notion of Sin.

VI. Defence: Christian definition of Sin. The continuation of Sin.

VII. * Film analysis: The Man Who Wasn't There or The Seventh Seal.

5. Evolutionary and Neuroscientific Perspectives on Morality

by Richard Bell

"You cannot derive an ought from an is". Ever since David Hume pointed out this gap, respectable philosophers kept their normative and empirical eggs in separate baskets. Proper ethics was far beyond mundane empiricism. However, all *oughts* are constructed by humans. It would not hurt to explore what humans *are* in order to understand what they say they *ought*. Such exploration is the core of our seminar. We visit three key topics: evolution, game theory and the neuroscience of morality.

Session plan:

Students are encouraged to read the suggested chapters/papers. However, a participation in the seminars is still possible without having completed all the readings.

1) Evolution of morality

We start with the foundational works on evolution of morality written by Daniel Dennett (Freedom Evolves, chapter 7 "The evolution of moral agency") and Richard Dawkins (The Selfish Gene, chapters 10 "You scratch my back, I'll ride on yours" and 12 "Nice guys finish first").

2) Behavioral game theory

We focus on game theory as a useful theoretical framework for understanding evolution of group behavior. We read the introductory chapter of "Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction" by Colin F. Camerer and the entry on "Game Theory and Ethics" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

3) Complexity theory and experiments in moral psychology

After the theoretical foundation is laid, we build upon it by looking at complexity theory in a very captivating way, namely by watching the lecture by Robert Sapolsky on "Emergence and Complexity" which is part of his Human Behavioral Biology course in Stanford. We read the Chapter 13 "Morality and doing the right thing, once you've figured out what that is" of his book Behave to learn about all kinds of experiments in moral psychology.

4) Primate "morality" and human externalization of norms

We take a step back to examine our evolutionary relatives: the apes. We watch Sapolsky's video on key differences between humans and apes (spoiler: there are not so many, and Sapolsky knows his stuff after having lived with apes for months). We pay tribute to recently deceased prominent Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal by watching his interview and reading his co-authored paper "Any Animal Whatever': Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes" in the book Evolutionary Origins of Morality edited by Leonard D. Katz. Yet we also explore an important objection to Frans de Waal proposed by Kyle Stanford in his lecture and paper "The difference between ice cream and Nazis: Moral externalization and the evolution of human cooperation".

5) Human moral emotions

Now we are prepared to embark on moral emotions in humans. First, we read Chapter 7 "Emotions and feelings" from Descartes' Error by Antonio Damasio, an established authority in neuroscience. Then we focus on moral emotions specifically by reading an introductory Chapter 13 "A vision (and definition) of moral emotions" in The Routledge International Handbook of the Psychology of Morality together with Jonathan Haidt's seminal paper "Moral emotions".

6) Neuroscience of moral judgment

Finally, we arrive at the neuroscience of moral judgment. We read Joshua Greene's "Trolleyology" chapter from Moral Tribes and selected chapter(s) from Patricia Churchland's Braintrust in order to gain insight into the functioning of the brain related to morality. To wrap up our whole seminar, we read a short note by Jonathan Haidt called "Forward: The century of moral psychology" in The Routledge International Handbook of the Psychology of Morality

Preferred time/frequency: a total of 6 biweekly meetings starting in the week of September 23d. Exact timeslots to be defined by polling of interested participants.

Reading list (selected chapters where applicable):

- Camerer, Colin F. Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Churchland, Patricia. Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Damasio, Antonio. Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Dawkins, Richard. The Selfish Gene. 40th anniversary ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Dennett, Daniel C. Freedom Evolves. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

- Ellemers, Naomi, Stefano Pagliaro, and Félice van Nunspeet, eds. The Routledge International Handbook of the Psychology of Morality. London: Routledge, 2024.
- "Game Theory and Ethics." In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2023. <u>https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-ethics/</u>
- Greene, Joshua. Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.
- Haidt, Jonathan. "Moral Emotions." In Handbook of Affective Sciences, edited by Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith, 852-870. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Katz, Leonard D., ed. Evolutionary Origins of Morality: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives. Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2000.

- Sapolsky, Robert. Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst. New York: Penguin Press, 2017.
- Sapolsky, Robert. "Emergence and Complexity." Lecture, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, May 21, 2010. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_ZuWbX-CyE</u>
- Sapolsky, Robert M. "The Biology of Human Behavior Emotions, Stress, and Health." Lecture, Stanford University, February 20, 2009. YouTube video, Posted by "Stanford," August 12, 2009. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWZAL64E0DI</u>
- Stanford, P. Kyle. "The Difference between Ice Cream and Nazis: Moral Externalization and the Evolution of Human Cooperation." Behavioral and Brain Sciences 41 (2018): e95. <u>https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X17001911</u>.
- Stanford, P. Kyle. "Moral Externalization and Cooperation." Lecture, University of California, Irvine, May 12, 2022. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YMiv4n2rbk</u>

6. Our Relapse into Fascism: An Investigation into the Conditions making Fascism Possible

by Sven Bouman

In this seminar we will try to understand the current political reality of Europe and 'the West' more generally; the rise of fascism. Race riots in the UK, Wilders' landslide win here, the rise of the AfD in Germany, Orbán in Hungary, the list goes on. We will do this by both looking at philosophical work dealing with the subject and by investigating the historical, ideological and material roots of fascist ideology.

Note on the readings: Everyone is busy, I guess these are not required readings, just what I'll be basing the sessions on. I've tried to keep everything in English, but unfortunately the Schinkel book has not yet been translated. However, I have made an extensive analysis in English of the book, so if you really want to do some reading and can't read dutch, I can send that to you. If you would like a more extensive bibliography because you're a nerd, I have more – especially texts that focus on what fascism *is*, or actual Nazi texts.

Session plan:

1) Yet the fully radiated earth radiates disaster triumphant. Again.

An introduction into how fascism is a result of systems already in place, which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is the enlightenment and its material base.

Readings: Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Chapter 1

2) Fascist notion of Home: Blut und Boden

An analysis of National Socialist 'ideology.' What is the meaning of their selfdescribed core concept of Blood and Soil? We look at how blood and soil coconstitute each other, and how their relation can best be described as *Heimat*, which is a very specific notion of home.

> Readings: Bouman, 'Blut und Boden? Husserl's Transcendental Earth as Heimat and its Relation to National Socialism,' Chapter 1 part 1&2.

3) Nation States as Blood and Soil: Migration and Refugees

An analysis of how Blood and Soil ideas aren't solely present in National Socialism, but already are the foundation of modern nation states.

Readings: Agamben, Homo Sacer, Chapter 3 part 2

Van Reekum en Schinkel, Theorie van de Kraal, Chapter 2

4) Capital and the Nation State: Whiteness

An analysis of the entanglement of capitalism and the nation state, of class and race.

Readings: Van Reekum en Schinkel, Theorie van de Kraal

Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'

5) Fascism as the Truth of Liberal Democracy

Bringing everything together, where we see how our current nation states as capitalist liberal democracies manufacture their own crises and therefore will always become fascist. Fascism is the unfolding of liberal democracy precisely through the fear of fascism.

Readings: Van Reekum en Schinkel, Theorie van de Kraal

Marx, Estranged Labour

7. Philosophy Reading Group

Initiated by Javier Oro Bracco

The idea of this seminar is to form a reading group where students can gather and discuss around a text they have previously chosen. It is not a seminar in the sense that there is no student lecturing his colleagues; rather, it is a self-study support group, were students encourage each other to read and engage in discussion. It can help students to engage critically with philosophical texts, which can be intimidating at first; and, of course, we can learn about philosophers and ideas that are not covered by the program.

Session plan:

Week 1: Introduce and build the idea of the reading group, set some guidelines for discussion and invite students to propose possible text to read.

Week 2: Gather all proposed texts and build the seminar plan, select students for introductions of the text.

Week 3: Start of the reading sessions

I would like to propose two authors for the reading group: Plato, and Hanna Arendt.

Plato needs no introduction as he is wildly influential in the history of philosophy (not only European, but also middle eastern philosophy). Not only his dialogues have a lot of philosophical content, of course, but they also have a literary quality that make them very enjoyable. They are also a great introduction to philosophical reasoning and philosophical discussion.

I propose we read a selection of the Socratic Dialogues, to move on to The Protagoras, The Fedro and The Symposium.

Of course, this selection can be discussing upon and changed.

The second author I would like to propose is Hanna Arendt's On Human Nature.

Arendt is mainly known for her works on political philosophy and for her critic of authoritarianism. We have to read a fragment of this book for *philosophy of culture*. The text we read was not only very interesting, but the ideas also it contained were very useful to analyse the phenomenon of social (mass) media.

8. Philosophy of esotericism: Mystery and Metaphysical Possibility

- An exploration to the ontological and metaphysical depth offered by occult and esoteric thought-

by Jacques Weil--Kennedy (both semesters) and Eric Rojas (second semester)

This seminar will attempt to break from the traditional categories with which different domains of thought are understood to be delimitated. Taking time to discuss the history of the ideas at hand and the context in which they emerge, we will engage in the world of occultism and esotericism in the varied historical and cultural contexts in which it thrived. Using both older and modern sources treating of esoteric thought, practises, and understandings we will try to elucidate the similarity and dissimilarities between them and attempt to develop an understanding for the dynamics of esotericism and occultism in relation to hegemonic interpretations of religion and philosophical or scientific methodology.

Through these, we will begin linking and conceptually reuniting those poles which seem farthest apart, be it religious faith, or even zeal, and scientific production, or Divine Mania and the fundamental exoteric dogma.

This nebulous and fascinating world of historical, religious, and philosophical perspectives between which lines are blurred, intentionally and not, allows us to add a layer of depth to our fundamental hermeneutical understanding of the "delimitations" of each preconceived domain of thought; from religion to art, and from scriptural productions, to modern philosophy.

Theory and topics:

Rudolf Steiner - *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity/Freedom*, evolution of consciousness/ esoteric teleology

Edouard Shure – *Hermes and Plato*, and others, comparative mythology and intercultural esoteric productions

Kant, Descartes, Bergson, Heidegger - Contemporary Metaphysics and questions of perception

Friedrich Nietzsche - Thus Spoke Zarathustra, ethical metaphysics

Julius Evola (maybe Crowley) - Discussion of the state of Will

Grujieff/Ouzbensky – Discussion on the state of Attention

Hermetic Fragments – Varied

Alchemical and Occult science treaties – Outlining metaphysics of sympathy and antipathy in the ouranian and sub-lunar planes

Rene Guenon - Varied

Eliphas Levy – Varied

9. Symbolism, Myths, Meaning

Weekly reading and discussion group for exploring symbolic thinking, archetypes of the unconsious, and the deeper meanings within myths, legends, and other stories that shape human understanding

by Nándor Darabán & Joacim Öholm

This will be a reading and discussion group for those who want to learn about symbolic thinking and archetypes, and the deeper meanings found in myths, legends, and other ancient stories. We will do this by reading those sources along with the science and art of deciphering them, comparing them, and explicating them. This will be a hub that offers us the structure to engage with a symbolic view of reality.

We are fascinated by uncovering the depths of the collective unconscious, the "great cauldron of story" bubbling in the backdrop of human drives as well as the legends we tell each other and use to orient ourselves in the world. We are enchanted by the narrative nature of our consciousness. We believe that studying the great stories of mankind offers a unique way of understanding the world. The perspective of the olden world is not subsumed by modern rational reasoning or an alternative to it. Instead, they complement each other. Narrative and rational approaches are parallel ways of describing reality, each capturing different patterns. It is our nature to look for patterns and strive to discover the fuller view of reality and our place within all of it.

We believe that there is much to be discovered, once we sharpen our eyes for patterns -outwards as much as inwards. Stories and their analyses are crucial for this. Because within the works of human sensibility, the inside and outside meet. We read about ourselves in the epics of the old and see the patterns of our lives dramatized already by people long gone. As such, within our own lives, we dedicate room to reading stories -myths, fairy tales, and epic poems. As well as newer stories about old stories -psychoanalysis, anthropology, or anything about the theory of symbols, archetypes, and the patterns of human life. We want to share this pursuit and make it a communal ride towards the depths and heights of who we are as humans.

Below you will find some selected titles that should make a representative impression of the kind of literature that we are going to read and discuss week by week. The aim is not to get through all of them, of course, and the amount and genre of reading will vary. The list is here to serve as an anchor to the content and themes we want to explore, as well as assert the right kind of mindset we need to open ourselves up to this new way of looking at the world. This group is for you if you want to join us in learning about recurring preoccupations of humanity, the structure of our thinking, legends of right and wrong, great dramas, ancient myths and fairy tales, and hopefully, along the way sharpening our eyes to pick up on patterns in our own lives and in the world around us.

Reading list and References

1. Understanding a Symbolic Worldview, the Meaning Behind Stories, the Patterns Within the Great Cauldron of Collective Human Imagination

Literature

- Joseph Campbell: The Hero with a Thousand Faces
- Ananda Coomaraswamy: Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art
- Mircea Eliade: Images and Symbols
- C.G. Jung: Man and His Symbols
- C.G. Jung: Modern Man in Search of a Soul
- C.G. Jung: On the Nature of the Psyche
- C.S. Lewis: *The Discarded Image*
- Erich Neumann: *The Great Mother*
- Erich Neumann: The Origins and History of Consciousness
- Jordan Peterson: Maps of Meaning
- J.R.R. Tolkien: On Fairy Stories

Podcasts and Lecture Series

- Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick and Fr. Stephen DeYoung: The Lord of Spirits
- Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick: Amon Sûl
- Jonathan Pageau: Symbolic World
- Jordan Peterson: *Biblical Series*
- Jordan Peterson: Maps of Meaning
- Jordan Peterson: Personality and Its Transformations
- John Vervaeke: Awakening from the Meaning Crisis
- John Vervaeke: After Socrates

2. The Stories Themselves: Religious Literature, Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Epics and Myths

- The Bible
- Beowulf
- Joseph Campbell: Occidental Mythology
- Dante: Divine Comedy
- Homer: Odyssey
- Ovid: *Metamorphoses*
- J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Lord of the Rings*
- Virgil: Aeneid
- James J. Wilhelm: The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation
- Chanson de Roland

10. Chinese Philosophy Reading Group

Initiated by a few philosophy students and began meeting since June 2022, this reading group project welcomes people who are interested in either (classical) Chinese philosophy or reading texts classical Chinese. During the sessions, we aim at a slow, close, and careful reading experience that would be valuable for both philosophical research and China studies, quality over quantity. Current members range from BA to PhDs, with varying background including philosophy and China Studies. Professors and visiting scholars may also join.

On a social level, this group creates a friendly environment that brings together people who share the same interests in these areas. On an academic level, the project hopes to provide a platform for intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogues based on not only serious engagement with the primary texts and their translations, but also openness towards different approaches and opinions, either within or across cultural or disciplinary boundaries.

Readers from all backgrounds and levels are welcome. Chinese proficiency will be an advantage but not required; a few current members have no such proficiency at all. The assigned text will be made available in both English and Chinese and the discussions will have an emphasis on the philosophical connotations instead of Chinese language itself. However, members with Chinese proficiency (or interest in it) are encouraged to read the Chinese texts and all questions about the language are welcome in the discussions. The same applies to prior background knowledge of Chinese history, Chinese philosophy and its history, etc., though these will be an advantage too. When needed, relevant information will be provided and discussed during sessions. Members are encouraged to consult secondary literature for their own knowledge building, while questions of such nature are welcome in discussions and members with better knowledge will try their best to answer.

Workload & Meeting Format

At the moment, we meet fortnightly, i.e. every other week. See information on top for upcoming meetings. Each meeting lasts for two hours, while overtime may be anticipated.

Members propose and decide which materials to read. Readings will be prepared, assigned, and distributed before the next meeting. Based on our experience so far, we only read a few sentences per meeting, so workload should be bearable. During the meeting, we read the assigned texts slowly and closely, spending as much time as we like with the texts and discussions. All questions from the language itself, social-historical contexts, to philosophical contents are welcome. More experienced members could try to answer these questions, or we try to figure out together.

Resources & Links Group Related

• WhatsApp Group Join-Link

https://chat.whatsapp.com/D4u3CQaRN6nItbTR1LVvWt

• Syllabus & Announcements (includes meeting dates and location, links to WhatsApp group, and other resources)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y7FrKvCxVgScNGmMchY3dGSr2YK6tfLk/edit?u sp=sharing&ouid=106872014218052200428&rtpof=true&sd=true