

DVPR 48700:
Intentionality & Personal Identity in Philosophy of Religion

Spring term, 2005
MEM Library
Thursdays, 1:00-3:50

Instructor: Dan Arnold
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Objectives of the Course:

This course will explore the hypothesis that a great many seemingly disparate issues in philosophy of religion can be understood to relate to (or indeed, to be expressions of) views of the person. The course will focus on a particular category that has figured prominently in modern attempts to characterize “persons”: that of *intentionality*. Most closely associated with the rather different disciplines of phenomenology and philosophy of mind, this concept turns out to comprise many of the features that may be thought to be most distinctively *human* – and particularly features that may be said to figure in characteristically religious assessments of the human situation. Thus, the concept of intentionality, proposed by some as the defining feature of subjectivity or “the mental” (as contra insentient objects), involves a whole range of phenomena (belief, knowledge, desire) that relate, most basically, to the very idea of *meaning* – given which, it is not surprising that many seemingly disparate discussions in philosophy of religion can be seen to involve this.

The course will chiefly be dedicated to a survey of some of the most influential literature on the topic of intentionality – beginning with a consideration of Kant’s “transcendental unity of apperception” (which arguably can be understood as a forerunner of the modern idea of intentionality), and including works by Brentano and Husserl, as well as some influential contemporary works in philosophy of mind and “cognitive science.” The course will then conclude with consideration of some arguments in philosophy of religion that are usefully understood as centrally involving intentionality – in particular, Richard Swinburne’s contemporary arguments for theism, and some classical Buddhist arguments concerning the nature of the person, perception, and consciousness.

Required Readings:

Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, is available at the Seminary Coop (and on reserve at Regenstein). Most of the other readings are selections from larger volumes, and have not been made available for purchase since the length of the selections and/or the expense of the volumes from which they are selected seem not to justify the expense. Most selections will be available on electronic reserve; those that are not thus available will be on regular reserve, and may be made available in other ways as well.

Course Requirements:

In addition to regularly attending class and participating in discussions, students will be required to submit a paper (of around 20 pages or so) at the end of the term.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

WEEK 1 (Thursday, March 31):

Introduction to course: *Intentionality* as a term of art in modern philosophy.

WEEK 2 (Thursday, April 7):

Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception" as background to the idea of intentionality. **Reading:** Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A95-110, A115-128; B129-168.

WEEK 3 (Thursday, April 14):

Brentano's retrieval of the category of "intentionality" from Medieval philosophy. **Reading:** Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, 3-27, 77-154.

WEEK 4 (Thursday, April 21):

Husserl's reaction to Brentano: Intentionality in *transcendental* philosophy. **Reading:** Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Investigation I ("Expression and Meaning"), Chapters 1 and 2 (pp.269-311), Chapter 3, §24-26 (pp.312-319); Investigation V ("On Intentional Experiences and their 'Contents'"), Introduction (pp.533-34), Chapters 2-4 (pp.552-635); Investigation VI ("Elements of a Phenomenological Elucidation of Knowledge"), Chapter 1, §8-Chapter 2 (pp.694-718); Chapter 3, §21 (pp.728-31), §26-29 (pp.740-748), Chapters 5-8 (pp.760-834).

WEEK 5 (Thursday, April 28):

Intentionality in "Cognitive Science": Are there beliefs, and can they be "naturalized"? **Reading:** Jerry Fodor, "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology"; "Fodor's Guide to Mental Representation"; "A Theory of Content, II: The Theory"; Daniel Dennett, "Intentional Systems," "True Believers"

WEEK 6 (Thursday, May 5):

Is Cognitive Science coherent? **Reading:** John Searle, "Minds, Brains and Programs"; Frank B. Farrell, "The Disenchantment of Mind"; Lynne Rudder Baker, *Saving Belief*, pp.113-174.

WEEK 7 (Thursday, May 12):

A case study in how intentionality can figure in theistic arguments. **Reading:** Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (entire).

WEEK 8 (Thursday, May 19):

A religious and radical *selflessness*: Some Buddhist case studies. **Reading:** Matthew Kapstein, “Vasubandhu’s Treatise on the Negation of the Persons”; Dignāga’s “Exposition of the Theory of Perception” (Hattori, trans.); Richard Hayes, “Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition.” (Suggested background reading for the uninitiated: Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism*.)

WEEK 9 (Thursday, May 26):

A modern defense of some Buddhist arguments (to be assessed vis-à-vis the category of *intentionality*). **Reading:** Mark Siderits, *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*.

WEEK 10 (Thursday, June 2):

Reading period. Concluding discussion.