



# Experience Day Philosophy: Global and Comparative Perspectives 27 March 2020

## Lecture:

**Title:** Narrative Self and Meaningful Life-Story

**Abstract:** Whenever we entertain the notion of the self, we tend to associate it with consciousness — I am the subject of my flow of consciousness that runs from the past to the present and further to the future. Nonetheless, what we take to be self-evident can always be problematized by philosophical skeptics: Can we maintain our sense of the self when consciousness gets interrupted and stops in deep sleep or in short coma? How do we really know what we have experience in our mind is real? How can we make sense of scenarios when we are so sure about our memory but only to find that our memory does not confirm to factual reality? These questions prompt us to explore an alternative approach to our self through which we can define our selfhood beyond consciousness. One of the alternatives that have been proposed and promoted by philosophers, Buddhists, cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, and psychiatrists, depicts the self in a narrative sense as that who can exercise agency to author a coherent and meaningful story for one's life. In the lecture, students will be introduced to the theory of narrative self, enquiring into how the narrative sense of self can respond to skeptics' challenge and examining how pure narrativity is a fruit of intellectual efforts in interdisciplinary studies of the self.

**Lecturer:** Dr. Jingjing Li is a university lecturer at the Institute for Philosophy. She is interested in theories of mind and consciousness preserved in East Asian and Continental philosophical traditions, with particular foci on Chinese Wei Shi (or "consciousness-only) philosophy and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. She believes these traditions can be brought into fruitful engagement with one another in a global context. Currently, she is working on a project that explores theories of other minds in East Asian Buddhist philosophy, an exploration that will open door for rethinking human nature and gender from non-Western perspectives. For the program Philosophy: Global and Comparatives, she is teaching courses on concepts selfhood, Buddhist philosophy of non-duality, and feminist theories in Chinese and Japanese Philosophies

## Tutorial:

**Title:** Early Buddhism and no-self (*anātman*)

**Abstract:** This talk offers a brief introduction to the early Buddhist metaphysics of no-self, that is the position that enduring unified selves do not exist. The talk will explain what Buddhists mean, and what they do not mean, when they claim that selves do not exist.

**Lecturer:** Dr. Stephen Harris is Assistant Professor (Universitair Docent) at Leiden University's Institute for Philosophy. He specializes in Cross-Cultural and Indian philosophy, with a particular interest in Buddhist ethical texts.

## Preparations:

Read: Chariot dialogue from *Questions of King Milinda*.