

SCHOOL OF SANSKRIT, PHILOSOPHY AND INDIC STUDIES • GOA UNIVERSITY

HOW I SEE MYSELF SELF-PORTRAITS AND AESTHETIC AND EPISTEMIC PURISM

An online guest lecture by

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I intend to counter two kinds of Purism – Purism in Aesthetics and a kind of Epistemic Purism that seems to be prevalent in philosophical literature regarding Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness. I take self-portraits as a case study that shows how these two kinds of Purism have to be doubtful. The Purism in Aesthetics that I am addressing here is a view that was held by Kant. He believed that aesthetic perception must be pure, that is, “free of all interest.” This view is unable to address self-portraits as a truly distinctive art form where the artist cannot be anonymous but is present with all his/her histories. Self-portraits may be seen as essentially a species of fiction and their aesthetic appreciation is an appreciation of these fictions that they embody. In Philosophy, we are keen to know how we see ourselves and what is it that we see when we see ourselves. Do we indeed have a privileged and incorrigible access to ourselves? Are we indeed aware of a mere subjective presence? Epistemic Purism regarding self-awareness seems to suggest that we do indeed have a privileged and incorrigible access to ourselves and the things that are presented in such an awareness have to be a mere subjective presence. But if self-portraits are depictions of how one sees oneself, then the answer to these questions will be in the negative. I intend to make a brief study of self-portraits to show how Aesthetic Purism and Epistemic Purism regarding self-awareness cannot be correct.

BIO

Prof. Madhucchanda Sen is a Professor of Philosophy at Jadavpur University, where she has been teaching since 2011. She taught at Rabindra Bharati University from 2001 to 2011. She was educated at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and University College London. Her major areas of research interest are Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Language, Critical Thinking, and Epistemology. She was a faculty member of the Module on Critical Thinking under Project E-QUAL, Jadavpur University, funded by EU. She works in the area of computer-aided learning of Critical Thinking. She was a Visiting Professor under ERASMUS programme at Department of History, Cultures and Civilisation, University of Bologna, Italy, April 2017. Her publications include *Externalism and the Mental* (2015); *Introduction to Critical Thinking* (2010); with Stan Baronett, *Logic* (2009); and with Marilyn Anderson and Pramod Nayar, *Critical Thinking, Academic Writing and Presentation Skills* (2009).