National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow  
Bachelor’s programme: 4th year, module 2

SYLLABUS OF RESEARCH SEMINAR

Johann Friedrich Herbart  
Metaphysics, psychology, and critique of knowledge

Outline

During the course, students will be provided with a systematic introduction to the core conceptual issues of Johann Friedrich Herbart’s theoretical philosophy: general metaphysics and psychology. Herbart (Oldenburg, 1776–Göttingen, 1841) was a major German philosopher, who held Kant’s chair in Königsberg (1809–1833) and opposed German idealism from a realist perspective. Not only did he influence subsequent philosophy in the German, Austrian, and Bohemian areas to a great extent—suffice it to mention Lotze, Hanslick, Mach, Cohen, Husserl, as well as the numerous ‘Herbartians’: Hartenstein, Zimmermann, Steinthal, Lazarus, etc.—but his philosophical and educational theories were widely discussed also in Italy, the United States (cf. Peirce, the Herbart-Society), and Japan.

Based on contextualisation within post-Kantian philosophy and close text reading, Herbart’s relationships to Kant’s Critique of pure reason, his metaphysical realism, epistemological functionalism, and establishment of scientific psychology will be analysed.

Pre-requisites: students should be familiar with the Kantian philosophy and German idealism.
Course type: compulsory

Lecturer: Nadia Moro (Assistant professor of philosophy)  
office hours: please check www.hse.ru/staff/nmoro  
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Learning objectives

During the course, students should:  
* be introduced to the complexity of post-Kantian philosophy in the German area;  
* gain knowledge of the main achievements of Herbart as a prominent post-Kantian philosopher;  
* master the terminology of Herbart’s epistemology and theory of mind;  
* develop skills in close reading, analysis, contextualisation, and critical evaluation of Herbart’s psychological and epistemological texts (cf. Bibliography);
During the course, students may:
* become able to explore 19th century German philosophical texts further and relate them to the post-Kantian epistemological discussion;
* present their analysis and critical evaluation of Herbart’s texts with reference to the philosophical context, e.g. Kant or Fichte.

Content and schedule

Week 1  Introduction: Herbart in the context of post-Kantian philosophy; Herbart in philosophical and psychological historiography.

Week 2  Methodology and epistemology in Herbart’s metaphysics; Herbart and Kant
*G.H. Langley* (1913). The metaphysical method of Herbart;

Week 3  Herbart’s rejection of faculty-psychology and the establishment of scientific psychology

Week 4  Empirical psychology.

Week 5  Herbart’s functional theory of the mind. Space and time

Bibliography

Required readings (cf. Schedule):


Recommended literature:


Further readings may be suggested during the seminar.

**Guidelines for students**

The course is held in English and it is based on text analysis and discussion. Thus, you will be expected to comply with the reading assignments (cf. Content and schedule) and take part in class discussions. Attendance is mandatory.

**Assessment**

In order to attain a passing grade you will have to:

- regularly attend classes, read the assigned texts (cf. Content and schedule), and engage in class discussion:
  30% of your final grade;
- present or discuss the content of an assigned text (7–10 minutes) once during the seminar according to a schedule arranged together with the lecturer:
  30% of your final grade;
- pass a final test consisting in the analysis and commentary of quotations from Herbart’s texts:
  40% of your final grade.