

## 6th Ancient Philosophy Workshop for Women Graduate Students and Early Career Researchers

November 9-10 2022 · Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Main Building, Unter den Linden 6, room 2249A, 10117 Berlin

### Abstracts for the pre-read workshop on November 10

9:15 – 10:25am      **SARAH FELDMAN** (University of Ottawa)  
**Assimilation to the Bovine? Heraclitus on Natural Ignorance of Natures**  
Chair: tba

Abstract: In fragments B9, B13, and B61, Heraclitus juxtaposes the perspectives of humans and animals on materials such as mud, garbage and seawater. These juxtapositions are typically read *either* as attacks on human assumptions via unflattering comparisons to pigs, donkeys and fish, *or* as instances of the unity of opposites. On the surface, the two interpretations appear mutually exclusive. Heraclitus' unity of opposites seems to be an expression of the actual natures of things. Yet if the comparisons to animal perspectives challenge the human perspective on a given material, this suggests that neither perspective offers insight into that material's true nature. In this paper, I argue that Heraclitus invites us to apply *both* of these apparently incompatible interpretations. In doing so, he points towards the limitations which our natural constitution, with the needs and values it implies, imposes upon our ability to grasp the natural constitution of the wider world.

The animal-human juxtapositions raise doubts about human knowledge by placing the human perspective on the same footing as the perspectives of animals traditionally associated with ignorance. Yet the force of these doubts depends upon an interpretation of the juxtapositions as instances of the unity of opposites, since the opposites (e.g., pure/polluted) ascribed to a given material by different creatures are only unified if the conflicting judgements of those creatures embody equal insight into the nature of that material (e.g., seawater is pure/seawater is polluted). The attempt to grasp the equivalence of the conflicting judgements, however, reveals a problem: our tendency to ascribe certain properties rather than others to particular materials is part of how we, as creatures with a given constitution or nature, experience the world. As a result, we are unable to unify these opposites or learn the materials' true natures – suggesting that the human and animal judgements on these materials do not embody equal insight so much as equal ignorance.

10:25 – 10:45am      Coffee Break

Organiser: Juliane Küppers

Paper selection: Juliane Küppers, Ronja Hildebrandt, Sinem Kılıç

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Equality Fund of the *Research Training Group Philosophy, Science and the Sciences*.

**THE WORKSHOP IS OPEN TO GUESTS OF ALL GENDERS.**

This is a **pre-read workshop**. There are no registration fees. If you would like to attend, please send a message to [juliane.kueppers@fu-berlin.de](mailto:juliane.kueppers@fu-berlin.de) before November 8<sup>th</sup>.

10:45 – 11:55am      **ELENA BELLINI** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  
**Socrates between Pregnancy and Midwifery**  
Chair: tba

Abstract: Both Plato and the Platonic Socrates attribute a relational and erotic nature to the knowledge-making process: one cannot come to know anything unless some sort of intercourse takes place where ἔρωϛ is involved. What kind of an intercourse is that? The answer is alluded to in many Platonic *loci* (*Laws*, *Republic*, etc.), but it is most straightforwardly developed in the *Symposium* and in the *Theaetetus* through the very effective metaphor of the knowledge-making process as a sensual/sexual intercourse that happens at the level of the soul and leads to knowledge, virtue, and truth coming to light.

My paper focuses on the role of Socrates within the erotic knowledge-making process as described in these two dialogues, oftentimes taken to depict not only different versions of the metaphor of soul-pregnancy, but different roles for Socrates himself: one where he is taken to be the pregnant philosopher for excellence, ironically ignorant but full of (*i.e.* pregnant with) virtue (*Symp.* 206c-212a); the other where he claims for himself the role of midwife who, rather than helping women with the birth of their bodily offspring, helps men to give birth to their soul-offspring (*Thet.* 149a-151d; 157d; 160e-161b; 210b-d). I would rather propose to read the two roles as perfectly compatible with one-another, if not as one and same, finding the perfect embodiment in the liminality of the midwife figure.

12:00 – 1:10pm      **CLAUDIA YAU** (University of Houston)  
**Wisdom in the *Republic***  
Chair: tba

Abstract: Plato was an active participant in a longstanding debate about wisdom (*sophia*). The debate stretches back to the archaic period, when ‘wisdom’ marked out the highest intellectual ability, thought to be bestowed by the gods and associated with the ability to grasp what normally cannot be grasped by human senses. The primary aim of the paper is to defend an interpretation of Plato’s conception, according to which it is the ability to make good judgments, by the standard of the Forms, about how the city or soul would fare best. This account is an alternative to a prominent conception of wisdom in the literature, according to which, in the *Republic*, wisdom is identical to knowledge of the Forms. The interpretation I offer gives full weight to an important and surprising feature of Platonic wisdom that has not been fully appreciated in the literature: that Plato, like Protagoras, conceives of wisdom as a kind of judiciousness (*euboulia*).

1:10 – 2:15pm      Lunch

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2:15 – 3:25pm

SEUNGHYUN ANGELA YEO (Yale University)

**Division in Aristotle's Moral Psychology: A closer look at *NE* 1.13**

Chair: tba

Abstract: A certain conception of Aristotle's moral psychology presents the virtuous person as one of perfect integrity, and in particular, one in whom *phronesis* and the character virtues are "integrated" in some way. In this paper, I will argue against this conception. I will claim that Aristotle commits himself to a view on which *phronesis* and character-virtue belong to different parts of the soul and that this precludes any straightforward integration between the two, even in Aristotle's most virtuous person. I will argue for the following three claims. First: the division described in *NE* 1.13 is one that we should take seriously as having real implications for (and thus imposing real constraints on) Aristotle's conception of virtue. Second: the division in the soul corresponds to the division of the virtues such that the intellectual virtues (including *phronesis*) are a function of one part and the ethical virtues are a function of the other. And third: this division resists the kind of integration between *phronesis* and the character virtues attributed to the virtuous person.

3:25 – 3:45pm

Coffee Break

3:45 – 4:55pm

SARA DIACO (Universität Tübingen)

**Lucretius on the Role of the Body in the Birth of the First Human Relationships**

Chair: Juliane Küppers

Abstract: This paper offers an interpretation of *De rerum natura* 5.1011-18 and attempts to understand how it is possible for the pre-social and isolated human beings to start forming family units and bonds between neighbours. The paper identifies the centrality of the body in the pre-social stage and argues that a shift in focus from the self and one's body to other people creates the conditions for the first social bonds. By highlighting the role of the body in Lucretius' account, this analysis explains the process by which attention for others appears and creates the conditions for association. The study further sets this reflection in the context of the scholarly discussions on whether Lucretius' account is compatible with Epicurean philosophy. Moreover, since similarities between this Lucretian passage and the Stoic image of the concentric circles has been pointed out by scholars, the paper will take this into account and show how this parallel and the interpretation here offered may be connected and help to clarify how Lucretius reflects on the birth of the first social relationships.

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