

# BSHP Annual Conference 2023

## *Knowing in Historical and Cross-Cultural Context*

**Peter Adamson** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

*Skepticism Across Borders: Arguments from Animal Difference in Chinese, Greek, and Arabic Philosophy*

This paper focuses on a skeptical argument that may be most familiar from its appearance in Sextus Empiricus, where it is treated as one of the skeptical “modes”: animals have a different perspective on the world from humans; there is no reason to prefer the human perspective on the world to animal perspectives; therefore one should suspend judgment about the veracity of the human perspective. Obviously this argument needs a lot of filling out before it can be evaluated. To undertake this task, the paper begins from a resonant passage in the Taoist classic, the *Zhuangzi*, before examining in more detail the skeptical mode from animals in Sextus and similar material in Montaigne. The paper then turns to an epistle from the Islamic “Brethren of Purity,” who imagined animals bringing a court case against humans. It is argued that this epistle adopts a view of animal difference that would make the skeptical mode especially powerful, by insisting on both the fundamental difference of animal perspectives and their equal validity. Finally, a response to the strengthened skeptical argument is suggested, one that brings us back to the *Zhuangzi*.

**Adam Bricker** (University of Turku)

*Knowledge and Mindreading in Pre-Gettier Epistemology*

In anglophone philosophy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, knowledge was widely viewed as a kind of direct cognitive contact with reality. Belief, in contrast, was largely seen as a distinct kind of mental state, which provided only indirect representations of the world. Today, this view is perhaps best associated with the Oxford Realists—Cook Wilson, Prichard, and Price, among others. However, the direct-contact view enjoyed broad popularity during this period. Contemporary epistemology has largely forgotten the direct-contact view, with knowledge now almost exclusively thought of as a relation to representations of the world, not the world itself. Remarkably, however, a number of cognitive scientists and psychology-minded philosophers have recently endorsed the view that our mindreading systems—the neurocognitive systems responsible for our representations of others’ mental states—represent knowledge states as direct cognitive contact with known reality. These proposals straightforwardly recapitulate the structure of the historical direct-contact view, despite, by all accounts, being independently developed on empirical grounds. Here I attempt to make sense of this unexpected convergence.

**Waldemar Brys** (University of New South Wales)

*Mengzian Knowledge Practicalism*

In the ancient Chinese text *Mengzi*, the term “knowledge” (*zhi* 知) most frequently occurs in expressions of the form “know + noun (phrase)” – call them knowing X expressions. I argue that underlying the surface grammar of knowing X expressions lies a conception of knowledge on which there is no distinction in kind between knowing that X is F and knowing how to phi X. More specifically, according to *Mengzi*, if a person is said to “know categories”, then she has a set of capacities to intelligently act in categories-related ways. This might (but does not have to) involve capacities for intelligently giving an account of categories, answering questions or making assertions about them, but it might (but does not have to) involve capacities for intelligently applying categories to specific cases. For *Mengzi*, possessing capacities for intelligently acting in X-related ways is sufficient for knowing N, even though no particular capacity is essential to it. The more X-related abilities a person has, the better her knowledge of X. I argue that such a *Mengzian* conception of knowing helps expand the contemporary debate about the nature of knowledge in the following two ways. First, it offers us a conceptual possibility that goes beyond the divide between knowing-that and knowing-how. On *Mengzi*’s view, what contemporary epistemologists would conceive of as expressions of either knowing-that X is F or knowing-how to phi X are both expressions of knowing X, given that both are expressions of X-related capacities. Second, it provides additional support for the conceptual option of practicalism – namely, the view that knowledge is a capacity (or a set of capacities), rather than a species of belief.

**Lea Cantor** (University of Cambridge)

**Panel: Of Knowledge and Ignorance: New Ways of Knowing the History of Philosophy from Cross-cultural, Comparative, and Connected perspectives**

*New ways of knowing ancient philosophy: a case study in cross-cultural epistemology*

This paper focuses on the epistemologies of two foundational thinkers in the early history of philosophy, the ‘Presocratic’ Greek philosopher Parmenides and the classical Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi. I highlight how the roles we see ascribed or denied to these thinkers in macro-narratives about the history of philosophy distorts the ways in which we interpret and reconstruct their respective engagement with the issue of knowledge and its limits. Furthermore, I show how approaching their philosophies dialogically – pursuing interpretive routes less travelled – can act as a corrective to these trends.

Parmenides is a figure generally regarded as the rationalist par excellence of ‘Western Philosophy’, and indeed of philosophy tout court (the two categories being often perceived as interchangeable). The more this narrative gets repeated, the greater the urge to read Parmenides as a thinker bent on unreservedly vindicating the power of human reasoning. My proposal is that the ossified view of Parmenides as a triumphalist rationalist misses the true depth of his reflections on the possibilities of human knowledge. Indeed, there are major exegetical and philosophical reasons to doubt that Parmenides displayed unmitigated epistemological optimism as to humans’ potential to achieve knowledge of reality. I show how adopting a dialogical approach to his thought, drawing on the resources of classical Chinese philosophy, can cast light on salient, second-order concerns underpinning his epistemology, which mainstream narratives about the origins of philosophy have long overshadowed.

Unlike Parmenides, Zhuangzi has long been marginalized from the purview of ancient philosophy – despite exercising an immense influence on Chinese intellectual history, literature, and culture for the

better part of two millennia. In fact, Daoist thinkers like Zhuangzi have been branded irrational, illogical, unreasoned – even unphilosophical – for as long as the Greeks have been championed as the initiators and figureheads of philosophical rationality. As a result scholars have been slow to recognize Zhuangzi’s sophisticated reflections on the very issue of human reasoning and its limits; on the power of analogies to push the limits of what can be known, but also to destabilize what humans already claim to know; and finally, on the issue whether monism is a coherent and/or defensible view to hold.

I argue that revisiting Parmenides’ and Zhuangzi’s philosophies dialogically, with a critical eye to metaphysical and historiographical work relating to the ancient world, leads to substantial rethinking of foundational texts in the history of both Greek and Chinese philosophy.

## **I Xuan Chong** (University of St Andrews)

### *Truth and Knowledge in Aristotle’s and Zhuangzi’s ethics*

This presentation compares the different ways in which “truth” and “knowledge” are understood in Aristotle’s and Zhuangzi’s ethics.

In Aristotle, while the theoretical intellect grasps theoretical truth, the practical intellect grasps “the truth that is practical” (ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτική) (NE 1139a20-30). Grasping practical truth does not just consist in having evaluative knowledge about the good life (1140a25-29; 1140b8-10); more importantly, practical truth is “truth in agreement with correct desire” (1139a30). As such, Aristotle’s practical-evaluative knowledge concerns the whole soul: such knowledge is both truthful and desiderative (cf. *Protagoras* 352b-d) (Olfert 2017, Richardson Lear 2004).

“Truth” (ἀληθεία, ἀληθές) in Aristotle can be understood as true assertions (*Metaphysics* 1011b26–7), or, more robustly, “reality as such” (e.g. 993a27-993b8, 993b17–20; *Physics* 191a24–5; *EE* 1215b1–2). Practical truth arguably includes both (Broadie 2019). I suggest that the robust notion of “truth” (as “reality”) helps to illustrate Zhuangzi’s idea of the “True Person” (真人), who possesses “True Knowledge” (真知) (“Dazongshi” 大宗師).

First, the notion of “truth/reality” helps us better understand Zhuangzi’s argument in “Qiwulun” 齊物論. True Knowledge is similar to “knowledge by acquaintance” as it is directly in touch with (metaphysical) reality/Dao, but it is more than acquaintance as True Knowledge transcends the subject-object dichotomy (Graham 2003, Mou 1983, Xu 2022). But grasping any truth/reality need not be mystical (Hansen 1992; *pace* Ivanhoe 1993, Roth 1999, Schwartz 1985, Yang 2003, Yearley 1996). And yet it can be more robust than “constructive skepticism” (e.g. Wong 2022). Second, “truth/reality” gives a non-deflationary account of Zhuangzian ethics. Zhuangzi is not only targeting conventional values (e.g. Mou 2002-2003, Lai 2008); rather, Zhuangzi is against any kind of dogmas, false dichotomies, hypocrisy and insincerity (“Yufu” 漁父; Chong 2011). Accordingly, True Knowledge must be embodied in the True Person’s whole soul (“Dechongfu” 德充符): this echoes how Aristotle’s practical-evaluative knowledge is both truthful and desiderative.

Aristotle and Zhuangzi have different metaphysics (teleology vs. Qi氣-ontology) and moral psychology (practical intellect vs. “spirit” 神 in “Yangshengzhu” 養生主). But in both cases the ideal agent has knowledge that grasps “truth/reality”. And in both cases this is an ethical ideal: in Aristotle, the virtuous activities of the (practical) intellect partly constitutes *eudaimonia* (NE I.7, X.7-8); in Zhuangzi, True Knowledge allows us to live a free and equanimous life (“Xiaoyaoyou” 逍遙遊).

**Graham Clay** (University College Dublin)

*Hume's Denial of the Entailment Thesis*

Inevitably, the historian of philosophy tends to view the dogmas peculiar to contemporary philosophers with a healthy dose of suspicion. The historian sees how things could be different—because they see how things *were in fact different*—and is more cautious as a result. The early modernist should feel this way about the recently popular position that knowledge entails belief. After all, it is not obvious if any of the early moderns endorse this so-called 'entailment thesis', and it is clear that many of them reject it.

In this paper, I will argue that Hume would deny the entailment thesis with respect to the kinds of beliefs that he maintains are relevant for philosophy and life in general. Hume's denial follows from how some of the core claims of his account of the mind—especially those concerning the nature and origin of cognitively significant beliefs—combine with his normative views about knowledge. The story is, in brief, as follows. Hume maintains that both beliefs and instances of knowledge are mental objects that he calls 'perceptions'. Cognitively significant beliefs are especially phenomenally intense, and they arise either from causal reasoning or from mere repetition (as in the case of rote memorization). By contrast, instances of knowledge have intentional objects of a special kind, and they arise either from sense perception, from causal reasoning, from mere repetition, or from non-causal reasoning (as in the case of arithmetical calculation). Given these features, there are possible cases where, by Hume's lights, one knows and has a cognitively significant belief in the object of one's knowledge, as well as cases where one knows but does not believe in this way. So, Hume denies the entailment thesis. And since some of these latter cases are of central importance to philosophy, Hume denies it in a way that is especially troublesome to the contemporary dogma.

By explaining how Hume ends up in this position, I will show that there are deep connections between one's positions on the entailment thesis and the philosophy of mind, as well as one's philosophical methodology. I will conclude by suggesting that Hume's positions and accompanying methodology represent a significant challenge to those who seek to defend or presume the entailment thesis while remaining silent on (i) the nature of the mind and (ii) the reasons—explanatory and normative—that they define parts of the mind as instances of knowledge or beliefs.

**Paul Cultus** (Humboldt University of Berlin)

*The Wheelwright's Knowledge*

The story of the Wheelwright at the end of the Way of Heaven chapter in the *Zhuangzi* presents a problem for both the philosopher as well as the historian. It calls into question the usefulness of knowledge that can be written down and at the same time posits that some knowledge cannot be expressed in words. It might be seen as support for the view that the *Zhuangzi* differentiates between knowledge-that and knowledge-how. Like the other so-called skill stories, it suggests a special appreciation for know-how. The Wheelwright could be read to explicitly dismiss propositional knowledge in calling any book's content "chaff and dregs". Thus, it is an especially strong indicator of a knowledge-how/that distinction in the *Zhuangzi*.

I argue that this interpretation distorts our understanding. It obscures the most important aspects of the wheelwright's knowing: flexibly responding and being knower-dependent. By referencing contemporaries and other stories in the *Zhuangzi* I show the importance of the wheelwright working without a standard. According to the *Zhuangzi*'s worldview, this allows him to respond freely and flexibly, a commonly found virtue among figures in the book. I reject the claim that Zhuangzian skepticism runs along the how/that distinction. I argue that the underlying uncertainty necessitates flexible responding across all forms of knowing.

Next, I argue that the wheelwright's knowledge is specific to him and not generalizable, by drawing on comparable stories from other chapters. This makes his knowledge non-transferable. Words in a book function as a contrast to the wheelwright's knowledge in that they are inflexible and detached from a knower.

I conclude by suggesting that the *Zhuangzi's* stylistic approach—presenting philosophy through parables—is partly a response to the problem of non-transferable knowledge posed by the Wheelwright. The stories enable the reader to experience the underlying problems and can circumvent the limitations of language to some extent.

**Tom Hercules Davies** (University of Melbourne)

**Panel: Of Knowledge and Ignorance: New Ways of Knowing the History of Philosophy from Cross-cultural, Comparative, and Connected perspectives**

*Knowledge, Ignorance, and Debate in early Indian Cosmology*

This paper explores the emergence of an agonistic philosophical tradition (one whose primary engine of development was debate between rival schools) in the Indian subcontinent. It compares this historical movement with a similar one in archaic Greece, and argues that typological study of the beginnings of these traditions illuminates the development of each.

The earliest recorded texts from India are hymns preserved in a collection known as the R̥gveda. Many Vedic hymns contain cosmological claims, especially about the origins of the world. In early phases of this tradition, such claims are made incidentally, in the course of praising gods. But in a later phase (c. 9–7 cs. B.C.E.), hymnists began to theorize directly about the origins and nature of the cosmos.

Motives for this innovation differed. Some late hymns (e.g. R̥V 10.121), attempted to systematize existing traditions, arranging details found in earlier hymns into a rational sequence and structure. Others instrumentalized cosmogonic theory to justify contemporary social structures (e.g. R̥V 10.90). But as programmatic accounts proliferated, their general effect was to highlight ambiguities and inconsistencies in Vedic cosmology. This provoked responses from within and without the tradition. A radical internal critique is preserved in the Nāsadiya sūkta (R̥V 10.129), which challenges the evidentiary grounds for claims about the origin of the universe. Nobody observed the origin of the world: all witnesses, mortal and divine, postdate creation, so cosmogony can have authority. An external critique is exemplified in the Buddha's teaching that cosmology is irrelevant to the proper goals of philosophy (e.g., Cūlamālukyasutta, Aggivacchasutta).

This process is structurally similar to the coeval emergence of an agonistic philosophical tradition in Greece. Here too, early attempts to systematize ritual traditions into a coherent cosmological theory met with criticism. Here too, authoritative sites of knowledge production generated competitor institutions, which organized themselves around rival answers to this criticism. But where in Greece, the productive critiques were primarily ontological, the ancient Indian challenge to cosmology was epistemological and metaphilosophical: on what basis can we speculate about the universe? And how does this speculation relate to the goals of philosophical activity? The paper closes with some remarks on how this difference in emphasis affected the development of these traditions.

**Zahra Donyai** (University of Freiburg)

*The epistemological role of dialectic in Nasr al-Din al-Tusi's theory of knowledge*

What are the epistemological implications of dialectical reasoning? This question will be addressed by exploring Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's discussion of dialectical skill and its importance for achieving knowledge and building beliefs in a social context. The first step is to summarize Tusi's classification of starting points for knowledge. His list of starting points for knowledge, also known as the catalog of principles of syllogisms, modifies the idea of propositions that are assented to by way of concession (taslīm). In Tusi's view, concession is not just the cognitive state produced by dialectical reasoning, but also the starting point for building new beliefs and making decisions about controversial issues. The connection between dialectical reasoning and epistemic justification can be made through this broader sense of concession. Even though dialectic is not capable of proving anything, it can justify a set of beliefs by examining its coherence. Therefore, dialectical skill is not a competitor, but rather a complement to the demonstrative method. I suggest that this acknowledgment of the function of dialectical skill can be interpreted as recognizing the significant role of coherence in epistemic justification.

**Jonathan Egid** (King's College London)

**Panel: Of Knowledge and Ignorance: New Ways of Knowing the History of Philosophy from Cross-cultural, Comparative, and Connected perspectives**

*Historiography as a philosophical problem: Three approaches to the global history of philosophy*

This paper aims to tackle the historiography of philosophy as a philosophical problem. In particular want to look at the particular challenges for thinking about the historiography of philosophy from a global or cross-cultural perspective. To this end, I sketch three related methodological approaches, and provide a case study in my preferred approach.

The first approach is that of 'comparative philosophy', usefully defined by Wong as "bringing together philosophical traditions that have developed in relative isolation from one another and that are defined quite broadly along cultural and regional lines". A second approach is that of examining philosophical parallels grounded in parallel socio-economic developments: most famously in Jaspers' notion of the 'Axial Age', but more recently in much greater detail in Seaford's examination of 'the Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and India'. A third approach is what we might call, following Subrahmanyam, a 'connected' history of philosophy. This approach emphasises the diffusion of the same patterns in different places with a focus on common material circumstances, viewing these patterns not as isolated developments but rather as connected to each other by some particular material-causal process.

In the final section I provide a sketch of how this approach can shed light on an enigmatic work of philosophy from Ethiopia, and briefly consider some other cases where a connected analysis might shed light on the history of philosophy: Francois Bernier's translation of Descartes into Persian in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of Neoplatonism in Dara Shukoh's work of Sufi-Hindu syncretic mysticism *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, and Kwame Nkrumah's appropriation of Anton Wilhelm Amo's metaphysics.

**Yuchen Guo** (Humboldt University of Berlin)

*Knowing-as in the Analects*

In the last few years, the concept of knowing-to has been articulated by Karyn Lai (2012) (2015), Stephen Hetherington(2012), Yong Huang (2017) to grasp 知/智 *zhī*, one of the core concepts in Confucianism. Compared to knowing-that and knowing-how, this conception can indeed capture some important implications of *zhī*. Nowadays, despite debates on some details, most scholars have reached a consensus that Confucian knowledge is practice-oriented with the aim of developing virtuous character. I also agree with this consensus. However, inspired by the conception of knowing-as proposed by Michael Beaney (forthcoming 2023) developed from Wittgensteinian seeing-as, I argue that knowing-as can be a useful approach to understanding *zhī* in Confucianism since it can better grasp the characteristics of *zhī* as a process of improvement related to moral cultivation.

In this paper, I begin with a famous Confucian story of Kongzi learning the Qin(琴) from Master Xiangzi. Led by this case, I introduce and explain the concept of knowing-as and apply this concept to several critical points in the Kongzi's story above.

Next, by analysing the etymology of the Chinese character 知/智, I argue that knowing in the traditional Chinese context is not only an epistemic state but also involves a master-pupil transmission process based on classics. Thus, in order to grasp 知/智 in the Confucian context, it is indispensable to investigate the question-and-answer dialogues in the *Analects*. These dialogues illustrate Kongzi's strategies for imparting knowledge to his disciples and his way of guiding their personal development. With this in mind, I demonstrate the role of knowing-as in the question-and-answer dialogues in the *Analects* from three dimensions: knowing the people, knowing new knowledge, and knowing virtues. For each dimension, I provide a case study from the *Analects* to illustrate the crucial role of knowing-as in the *Analects*.

From these cases, we can see that when his disciples asked Kongzi some general questions, he always gave them aspect answers according to their personalities and specific contexts. To Kongzi, directly imparting comprehensive and definite knowledge is impossible. He can only lead his disciples to the aspect most appropriate for them. Then, it is the disciples' task to know more aspects through reflection, learning and practice in their life.

**Dino Jakušić** (University of Warwick)

*Christian Wolff and the Strong Belief-Knowledge Distinction*

In her recent work, Maria Rosa Antognazza<sup>1</sup> argued that, from the perspective of a broader (i.e., pre-Gettier) history of philosophy, the practice of conceiving knowledge as 'justified, true belief' is neither a 'standard' nor a 'traditional' way of apprehending what knowledge is supposed to be. The two principal aspects of the traditional conception of knowledge that she introduces are a) knowledge and belief being 'strongly' distinct, i.e., being mutually exclusive mental states, different and not being explicable one through the other; b) knowledge being comprehended as direct cognitive contact between the knower and reality, often understood analogously to *seeing*. But beyond correcting the common misunderstanding about the historical prominence of the JTB conception of knowledge, Antognazza seeks to employ the traditional conception of knowledge to devise a new account of cognition that would engage contemporary epistemology.

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<sup>1</sup> Ayers, M., Antognazza, M.R. (2019) 'Knowledge and Belief from Plato to Locke,' in *Knowing and Seeing: Groundwork for new empiricism* (Oxford: OUP); Antognazza, M. R. (2020), 'The Distinction in Kind between Knowledge and Belief' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 120(3), pp. 277–308.

I will use Christian Wolff's (1679-1754) logical and psychological works to support, problematise, and expand Antognazza's endeavours into developing this neo-traditionalist theory of knowledge. I will bolster Antognazza's historical analysis by showing that Wolff's rendition of knowledge and belief stands very close to Antognazza's model. According to Wolff, knowledge and belief are qualitatively different. Knowledge is neither a species of belief nor is belief a kind of 'botched' knowledge, and Wolff's epistemology operates in a way close to Antognazza's 'epistemic seeing' model.<sup>2</sup> However, I will also problematise Antognazza's position by showing that while her traditional view of knowledge applies well to Wolff's understanding of *cognition* (perception of truth), it does not fit Wolff's conception of *knowledge* (habit of inference). Finally, I will expand Antognazza's proposal of integrating this historical understanding of knowledge into 'mainstream' epistemology. One of Antognazza's aims is to use her epistemic model to allow us to say that something is collectively known by the community while not distributively by each member.<sup>3</sup> The Wolffian elements lacking from Antognazza's account (e.g. the conception of knowledge as a habit) can be fruitfully integrated with her broad epistemological framework to allow for a more elaborate version of social knowing.

**Karyn Lai** (University of New South Wales)

*Knowing exemplary people*

The Confucian tradition upholds people such as Confucius, and its sages, as reliably exemplary. However, early Confucian texts do not articulate a set of defining qualities of exemplary persons. Instead, exemplary people are known by any one or more aspects of moral life they reliably embody or enact—such as their moral commitments, or their honed capacities, or their wisdom, or their apt actions—or by the beneficial outcomes they achieve. This prompts the questions: how do we identify exemplary people? And how do we know them *as* exemplary people? These questions are particularly important for a tradition that establishes its moral vision on the basis of (the influence of) people who lead exemplary lives.

In this talk, I explore some epistemological issues concerning how people know exemplary people. This has important implications for how we are meant to learn from them. I demonstrate that early Confucian philosophy offers exemplars as moral reference points. I propose that knowing exemplary people, that is, knowing them *as* exemplary people, is a central feature of Confucian moral life. In brief, to know a person as exemplary is to view the person's qualities as desirable. From a Confucian perspective, these qualities are often also morally desirable. This account of knowing exemplary people weaves together Confucian ethics and epistemology and, as such, provides a more in-depth view of how moral influence via exemplarism works. It also offers a new way to think about knowledge in Confucian philosophy.

**Manhua Li** (Royal Holloway College)

*Forgetting as a Bodily Form of Knowing: An Intercultural Perspective*

Recent studies, following ancient Greek ethics of self-cultivation, tend to focus on the therapeutic aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy as a knowledge of self-healing or self-care. In contrast, I argue that such interpretations downplay the creative aspects in Nietzschean epistemology that necessitates what I call intercultural perspectivism. In this paper, I propose an intercultural reading of Nietzschean epistemology in terms of a bodily, creative, and life-affirming practice of cultivation. To demonstrate

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<sup>2</sup> See Antognazza (2020) 278-281.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 303.



this, I will begin his critique of the ascetic ideal as a form of rational knowledge in Western philosophy that nihilates what he calls the body-self (*Leib-Selbst*). I will then demonstrate that Nietzsche attempts to look beyond the European traditions for a bodily form of knowing, as even in ancient Stoic and Epicurean therapy, the body is not epistemologically important. Finally, I will evaluate this bodily form of knowing from an intercultural perspective, by positing what Nietzsche calls “forgetting” as an active way of knowing in relation to the Daoist practice of “mind-fasting”, which entails a bodily exercise of the vital energy (*qi*) and an engagement with creative activities that help to detach oneself from the knowledge of names (*ming*).

**Xiaolan Liang** (Humboldt University of Berlin)

*Knowing Chinese Language in Light of knowing-as*

It has been long neglected that Wittgenstein links seeing-as and reading in his talk of aspect perception (Scotto, 2019), which could be found in his middle period work (BB) and later works on philosophy of psychology (PPF, RPP I/II). However, what Wittgenstein dealt with was reading alphabetic language. Facing such a writing system, in which perceiving script aspectually is taken for granted, Wittgenstein had to devote considerable effort to demonstrating the vital role that aspectual perception plays in understanding/knowing the meaning of words. But one wonders: how would things change when the Chinese language comes into picture – what form of knowing can better capture knowing Chinese language?

Beaney draws a nice analogy between seeing/seeing-as and knowing/knowing-as and points out that the ideas of sample and internal relation are what is in common between the experience of seeing-as and knowing-as (Beaney, forthcoming 2023). The Chinese language is known for its wealth of homophones, which are distinguished by their figures. It is more of a visual than an aural symbol. (Beaney and Liang, forthcoming 2023) Built on these insights, knowing-as, as a form of knowing, can offer us a new perspective of seeing and reading Chinese language, both of characters and (composite) words. For Chinese characters, the sample in seeing-as/knowing-as works as a precondition by which an internal relation between things can be drawn, for when we see/know any one given Chinese character (once we have acquired even a minimal knowledge of Chinese) we see/know it as like certain others—semantically and pragmatically. This is particularly manifest in phonetic-semantic compound characters, where knowing a certain character is knowing it as having identical semantic component and/or having identical phonetic part (Arcodia and Basciano, 2021). For Chinese words, getting to know or creating a Chinese word is involved with knowing the relations between two or more characters and also knowing it in relation to other words that share a common character. Then, words stand in an internal relation with others, where one of them can be sample for some other ones.

I argue that not only does the Chinese script offer a better bridge between seeing-as and knowing-as than a European one can, but also allows us to see ‘knowing’ in a new way. In terms of reading Chinese language, knowing-as can shed new light on getting to know Chinese language than other forms of knowing.

**Yan Lu** (Humboldt University of Berlin)

*Two Cognitive Powers and Knowing-what in Plato*

There are two classic views on understanding Plato's epistemology: one is that knowledge is a version of 'justified' true belief, although there is controversy about what kind of 'justified' Plato refers to, knowledge (*epistêmê*) and belief (*doxa*) then are distinct but *overlapping*; the other view is that

knowledge and belief are exclusively *non-overlapping*, which is also called the epistemology two worlds theory (TW). The former tends to regard knowledge in Plato primarily as propositional knowledge or knowing that. The latter tends to view it mainly as non-propositional intuition or knowledge by acquaintance.

This sharp contrast is predominantly present in interpretations of the 'powers argument' at the end of *Republic V*. According to the powers argument, knowledge, and belief are regarded as cognitive powers (*dunamis*). Plato appeals to two criteria to individuate any power, i.e., what it is set over (*epi relatum*) and what it accomplishes (*apergazetai relatum*). Knowledge and belief as powers have structural similarities, i.e., they involve *epi* and *apergazetai* relations. They are different regarding the relata to which *epi* and *apergazetai* are related, which further turn out to be different in terms of the infallibility-fallibility difference. Scholars have proposed different readings of the various details of the argument, leading to overlapping and non-overlapping interpretations of Plato's epistemology. This paper aims to argue that the 'powers argument' is a continuation of Socrates' investigation of knowing-what with *techne-ergon* in *Republic I*, in which Plato conceives knowledge-what as an action of knowing-how. Cognitive powers such as knowing and believing in Plato should be grouped with verbs of craft, such as building, which have ends of their own and accomplish themselves in a process towards a resultant achievement. In this *techne*-knowledge model, Plato attributes cognitive powers to *accomplishment* verbs rather than state, activity, and achievement, which are *telic* and have *stages* according to Vendler and Rothstein's classical fourfold classification of verbs based on tense and aspect. It enables Plato to speak of knowledge as a kind of knowledge-that in terms of its process' stages and a kind of knowledge by acquaintance in terms of its end. After clarifying the basic model and specific characteristics in Plato's investigation of knowing-what, I will attempt to resolve the difficulties in understanding the 'powers argument' and Plato's conception of knowledge in general.

**Abida Malik** (Johannes Kepler University Linz)

### *The Value of Understanding in Plato's Republic*

For centuries, propositional knowledge has been the major focus of epistemological debates. Only in the last two decades, more attention has been dedicated to other forms of knowing like understanding, starting with Jonathan Kvanvig's seminal monograph on the topic (whether understanding is to be conceived as a form of knowledge is controversial though). Especially underrepresented in the contemporary debate seem to be forms of knowing which cannot be (fully, or successfully) communicated, i. e. tacit knowing. If we look far back to antiquity and especially to Plato, however, we can see that understanding (*nous, epistêmê*), taken as a highly demanding and partly tacit form of knowing, figures center-stage in his epistemology.

In this paper, I aim to show that *theôria* as discussed in the central books of the *Republic* (V- VII) is not only to be understood as providing us with highly demanding propositional knowledge but with an achievement even greater: understanding of first causes. This kind of understanding is an immediate effect of contemplating *theôria*'s highest objects (i. e. Forms) and attainable only by philosophers. Through the directness of apprehension it has more similarities with knowledge by acquaintance than propositional knowledge. While the latter in the contemporary view can sometimes be transmitted via testimony (i. e. A passes on a simple fact to B), contemplation of the Forms as the culmination of *paideia* is something every philosopher needs to experience personally. Although understanding Forms as first principles or causes (esp. the Form of the Good) enables philosophers to give a causal account of phenomena and therefore provides them with propositional inferential knowledge (516b-c, 517b-c), this knowledge is only a consequence of the immediate understanding gained through acquaintance with the Forms. This direct contact is often described as intuitive grasping (*ephaptesthai*) – a conception which has regained popularity in contemporary accounts of understanding. While understanding, on the one hand, according to Plato implies being able to give

an account (534b-d), how understanding of the Forms works, on the other hand, remains partly tacit. While usually the Meno is taken as proof for the Platonic interest in tacit knowing (see Polanyi 1966), I believe that an analysis of the central books of the Republic provides even further evidence for his interest in tacit forms of knowing.

**Josh Platzky Miller** (University of the Free State)

**Panel: Of Knowledge and Ignorance: New Ways of Knowing the History of Philosophy from Cross-cultural, Comparative, and Connected perspectives**

*Historiography as a philosophical problem: Reflections on the Possibility of a Global History of Philosophy*

In 2017, Linda Martín Alcoff argued that Eurocentrism is an ‘Epistemology of Ignorance’: that Eurocentric understandings of the world are illusions created to the benefit of Europeans and their colonies, and to the disadvantage of others. Building on these insights, this paper argues that multiple forms of ignorance have shaped our understanding of the philosophical canon, and indeed that ignorance shapes the history of philosophy in general. The result of these forms of ignorance is a framework for the history of philosophy that remains trapped by Eurocentrism, unable to deal adequately with philosophy globally.

To exemplify this case, I focus on a class of ‘legitimacy debates’ about whether something really counts as philosophy. Over the last two centuries, and especially since the mid-20th century, such ‘legitimacy debates’ have taken place in what is generally called African Philosophy (see e.g., Momoh 1985), Chinese Philosophy (Defoort 2001; Lee 2018), Indian Philosophy (Guerrero, Kalmanson and Mattice 2019), Islamic Philosophy (Diagne 2018), Latin American Philosophy (Vargas 2007), and Indigenous/First Nations Philosophy (Muecke 2011). In each case, philosophy proper is taken to be ‘Western Philosophy’, supposedly a millennia-old bastion of logic, argument, and reason (Bernasconi 2003). Crucially, ‘Western Philosophy’ is itself never called into question, only whether other traditions live up to its purported standards (Allais 2016). Built into these debates are several assumptions, including that there exist different, hermetically sealed ‘traditions’ of philosophy, and most foundationally a ‘Western Philosophy’. As I argue in the paper, these assumptions are instances of Eurocentric epistemic frameworks that undermine genuine engagement with the history of philosophy globally.

I thus draw on contemporary theorising in social epistemology to offer new insights into epistemic injustice in the historiography of philosophy, with a view towards epistemic justice in how the history of philosophy might be rewritten.

**Matyas Moravec** (University of St Andrews)

*C. D. Broad on Psychic Research and Paranormal Knowledge of the Future*

I argue that historians of philosophy should pay more attention to the role that research into paranormal and psychic phenomena played in early 20th-century British philosophy. I will argue for this claim by highlighting the role of paranormal cognitions of the future in C. D. Broad’s (1887-1971) philosophy, especially in recently discovered archival material.

First, I will address Broad’s methodological views on psychic research. Broad’s interest in paranormal phenomena followed him his entire career. The Broad archives include horoscopes that Broad made for his friends or purported evidence for the existence of ghosts, and Broad later became interested in telekinesis, trance-mediumship, out-of-body experiences, or survival after death.

Nevertheless, Broad scholars have generally downplayed the importance of the paranormal for Broad's metaphysics. To highlight this omission, I will discuss Broad's engagement with the thought of John William Dunne (1875-1949), specifically Dunne's account of paranormal knowledge of the future through dreams.

Second, I will provide evidence of specific influence of psychic research on Broad's thought: his philosophy of time. Broad developed three different accounts of time over the course of his career. Emily Thomas (2019) has argued that the shift from the first to the second was motivated by his engagement with Samuel Alexander. I argue that the shift from the second to the third was instigated by Broad's work on paranormal cognition of the future in dreams discussed by Dunne.

Third, I will conclude by observing a tension between the institutional exclusion of psychic phenomena from early analytic philosophy and the later inclusion of identical phenomena in analytic philosophy of religion. Early analytic philosophy excluded topics deemed too "metaphysical" or "spiritualist" from legitimate enquiry. And yet, the types of problems generated by psychic research that Broad had to defend including within the scope of philosophy eventually became perfectly routine topics in analytic philosophy of religion. This is attested by the mountains of papers published on prophecy and divine foreknowledge. I will argue that this tension is purely ideological since phenomena deemed as too "spooky" to contemplate as purely conceptual possibilities by analytic metaphysicians suddenly become respectable once given the institutional certification of theology.

**Kurt L. Sylvan** (University of Southampton)

*Knowledge and the Presentation of Reality in Nyāya, Vedānta, and Traditional Western Epistemology*

This paper shows how attention to classical Indian epistemology (*pramāṇa-śāstra*) can illuminate the overall history of epistemology, improving on both the Gettierological narrative and a recent counter-narrative from Antognazza (2015, 2020). Antognazza argued that the dominant historical account of knowledge in Western epistemology was not the JTB theory or indeed any belief-based account: instead, most assumed that knowledge yields *perception-like* contact with reality (call this the *presentational conception*). A presentational conception also dominates classical Indian epistemology. Almost all schools assume that knowledge-episodes, which are the focus in classical Indian epistemology, are presentational mental episodes. In particular, it is widely assumed that *pramā* (the most general knowledge-episode) is a kind of *anubhava*, a term ordinarily used for perception. Importantly, however, this idea was assumed to be compatible with the project of analyzing knowledge, and indeed with analyses that resemble TB+ accounts, as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemology illustrates. Classical Indian epistemology also makes clear that such analyses needn't be 'offspring of a skeptical outlook', as Antognazza claimed. Indeed, rejection of such analyses in favor of a primitivist presentational conception was associated with skepticism in classical Indian epistemology, as Advaita Vedāntin and Buddhist epistemology illustrate. With these ideas in mind, the paper proceeds as follows. In §2, I contrast two versions of the presentational conception—*primitivist* presentationalism and *anti-primitivist* presentationalism. In §2, I suggest that many Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemologists accept an anti-primitivist presentationalism which conflicts with Antognazza's narrative. In §3, I will describe how Advaitin opposition to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemology supports a form of primitivism that leads either to skepticism or transcendental idealism. In §4, I briefly explain how parallel points go for other schools. I conclude by hypothesizing that many traditional Western conceptions of knowledge may be better understood as similar to either Nyāya or *Mīmāṃsā anti-primitivism in their anti-skeptical forms*, or to Advaitin or Buddhist primitivism in their skeptical forms.

**Johannes M. J. Wagner** (University of Cambridge)

*Unitive Knowledge of God in Spinoza*

Contemporary epistemology has been preoccupied with analysing knowledge as a type of justified belief, or the drawing of contrasts between knowing-that, knowing-how and understanding. A historically important type of knowledge eclipsed in these debates is knowledge that constitutes a form of union with God.

In this talk I analyse the notion of unitive knowledge of God in the philosophy of Spinoza, where this idea takes centre stage. The case of Spinoza is particularly illuminating as one of the most detailed philosophical accounts of the idea, developed within an intellectual and spiritual background of several traditions thematising a union of God through knowledge. This includes Christian, Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy and mysticism, as well as Renaissance Neoplatonism. I highlight historical and philosophical connections of Spinoza with these traditions concerning unitive knowledge.

I argue that an essential feature of the notion of the unitive knowledge of God is radical existential transformation. This differs from much of contemporary epistemology, insofar a subject can hold various propositional beliefs or have a cognitive grasp of a topic without a change in its way of existing. By contrast, in Spinoza's highest form of knowing God, the epistemic subject realises its union with the divine essence by means of a practice of inward cultivation. The emerging sense of union with God constitutes a deep alteration of the epistemic agent's sense of self. Indeed, Spinoza asserts unitive knowledge as the most authentic form of self-knowledge, as we come to understand our true nature as a mode of God. Consequently, in unitive knowledge, God is not a mere objective content that is known, but is revealed as the very subject of our experience – our true Self. According to Spinoza, we come to realise that we are God, in a qualified sense.

The unitive aspect of this highest form of knowing God also explains two further characteristics that Spinoza ascribes to it: joy and eternity. These features are explained by the fact that, through unitive knowledge of God, we directly participate in God's supreme bliss and eternal life. It is in virtue of these features of joy and eternity that Spinoza links the unitive knowledge of God with traditional soteriological terminology: Beatitude, the love of God, the Spirit of Christ, eternal life, salvation.

Because unitive knowledge of God is also a highly significant theme in non-Western philosophies and religions, I outline the vast potential for comparative study.

**Simon Wimmer** (Technical University Dortmund)

*Cook Wilson's accretion*

Cook Wilson (1926, pp.100, 107) is widely regarded as having accepted what Travis (2005, pp.289-94) and Travis and Kalderon (2013, pp.500-1) call the accretion (see also Marion, 2000, pp.313-5): very roughly, that knowing entails knowing whether one knows. Travis and Kalderon emphasize that the accretion makes knowledge contract beyond plausibility (p.501). I argue that Cook Wilson did not let knowledge contract in the way Travis and Kalderon suggest. Once we draw two distinctions between different types of knowing, which Cook Wilson regarded as important, but which tend not to be made in contemporary epistemology, the accretion leaves intact much, if not all, of the knowledge philosophers typically theorize about today. First, Cook Wilson distinguishes knowledge qua standing power ("power-know-ledge") and knowledge qua occurrent exercise of that power. To talk about the latter, Cook Wilson (1926, pp.35, 107, 816) exploits the verb 'apprehend' (and its cognates) or modifies 'know' using words for occurrences like 'process', 'activity', or 'decision'. Unlike contemporary epistemologists and contemporary speakers of English more broadly, who

typically focus on power-knowledge, Cook Wilson theorizes about apprehension. For this reason, Cook Wilson should be read as claiming only that apprehension entails apprehending whether one apprehends. So understood, the accretion is consistent with denying accretion-like claims for power-knowledge. Second, Cook Wilson distinguishes thinking from non-thinking species of consciousness. Thinking is an “originative activity of our own” (ibid., p.35, also p.81), and its forms include opinion, wondering, and remembering (ibid., pp.36-7). By contrast, perception, the apprehension of a feeling, and being under an impression form a separate passive category (ibid., pp.36, 110). Amongst cases of apprehension, Cook Wilson distinguishes thinking from non-thinking ones, with perception-based cases as paradigm examples of the latter. Importantly, in the context of the passages Travis (2005) and Travis and Kalderon (2013) use to ascribe the accretion to Cook Wilson, he focuses on thinking. Thus, Cook Wilson should be interpreted as further restricting the accretion’s scope, so that only thinking-apprehension entails apprehending whether one apprehends. Given this restriction, the accretion does not concern non-thinking, e.g. perception-based, apprehension. Thus, not only does the accretion not make power-knowledge contract, even apprehension does not contract as much as Travis and Kalderon argued. Thus, the accretion leaves intact much, if not all, of the knowledge philosophers typically theorize about today.

**Bartosz Żukowski** (University of Lodz)

*Knowing-by-being: the Forgotten Dimension of Epistemology*

The distinction between knowing-that and knowing-how has become one of the pillars of analytic philosophy. There is, however, yet another concept of knowledge running through the history of Western philosophy – related to but distinct from knowledge-how – namely ‘knowing-by-being’. By ‘being-based epistemology’ I mean a variety of conceptions sharing the non-dualistic idea or ideal of cognition e.g.: knowing-by-being-such or -so (e.g. to know goodness by being good, to know what it is like to be a person by being a person), knowing-by-being (or becoming)-like (e.g. by becoming similar to God) etc.

The origins of the being-based approach can be traced to the Platonic philosophy (see esp. the ideas underpinning his ethical intellectualism, the relationships between *epistēmē* and *technē*, and unity with the object as the highest form of knowledge), and even further to the Greek principle of ‘like is known by like’. Thereafter, as Steven (2020) has recently reminded us, an epistemological ideal of being-like became a central tenet of the theories of knowledge developed by the most prominent patristic (e.g. Origen, Crouzel 1985) and more generally Hellenistic philosophers (Plotinus, *Enn.*I.6). The same idea lay behind, otherwise so different, intellectual traditions as the medieval mysticism of imitation, most famously exemplified by à Kempis, and perspectivist optics with its interpretation of cognition in terms of ontological assimilation to the object (Denery 2005).

The concept of being-based knowledge has by no means disappeared in modern philosophy – a point that can be illustrated even by relatively recent examples. Thus, the superiority of knowing-by-being is clearly presupposed in Heidegger’s view of *Dasein*’s privileged cognitive access to Being or Durkheim’s similar view of human access to knowledge of social powers (*Elem.* 3.B.3). Likewise, the famous Nagel’s bat thought experiment can be interpreted as identifying the limitations of knowledge deprived of the being-like component. However, the continuity of this rich epistemological tradition is often overlooked due to the failure to distinguish knowing-by-being as a distinct kind of knowledge.

My paper aims to fill in this gap by presenting a general survey of being-based epistemological tradition as well as identifying the main patterns of development and historical variants of this approach, of which perhaps the most noteworthy are those that emerged from Neoplatonism, mysticism, modern anti-scepticism, and German idealism.