

**FINO PhD Program in Philosophy
Ethics and Politics Curriculum
A.Y. 2021-2022**

The course is open to all Curricula, all years of the FINO PhD program, but is mandatory for cycles 36 and 37 of the Ethics and Politics Curriculum

Title: *Aristotle on cognition, desire and weakness of the will*

Course Description

In this module, we look at the interaction between cognition and desire in order to shed light on Aristotle's views about weakness of the will. Our key questions will be: What does it mean for a desire to be recalcitrant? Do our beliefs govern our desires? What is akratic action? Can we knowingly act against our best beliefs and decisions? We will rely on Aristotle's works on ethics, psychology and epistemology in order to reconstruct and evaluate his answers to these questions.

Course organization

7 hours of lectures followed by discussion; 3 additional hours of class presentations and discussion.

Teachers:

Elena Cagnoli Fieconi (UCL)

Maria Silvia Vaccarezza (University of Genova)

Duration and Credits

10 hours; 5 credits

Teaching period

May 30-31, 2022

Requirements

The students will have to read the assigned bibliography and give a short class presentation.

Details

Assigned Readings and discussion sessions

Key readings are marked with *. For each discussion session, a presentation paper and a question are listed. The class should split in two groups and each group should pick a presentation paper. The presentation should last not more than 10 minutes. The task is not to give a summary of the paper, but to answer the question assigned. In this case, less is more: do not try to fill the time with unrelated problems, but focus on the question and answer it as well as you can. Once you have answered the question, it is ok to devote a little time to any further questions or criticism that the paper raises.

Session 1: *Phantasia* & Emotion

Primary Text: *Rhetoric* book II; *de Anima*, book III.3

Secondary Reading:

*Jamie Dow, 'Feeling Fantastic? Emotions and Appearances in Aristotle', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 37 (2009), 143-75 PRESENTATION PAPER

Dorothea Frede, 'The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle', in M. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle's de Anima* (Oxford, 1992), 279-95

Hendrik Lorenz, ch 13 of *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 2006), 187-200

*Jessica Moss, most of ch. 4 of *Aristotle on the Apparent Good* (Oxford, 2012), 69-92

*Giles Pearson, 'Aristotle and the Cognitive Component of Emotions', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 46 (2014), 165-212

Presentation Question: How does Dow explain the irrationality of recalcitrant emotions?

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Session 2: Virtue and *Akrasia* (weakness of the will)

Primary Text: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.1-10

Secondary Reading:

Elena Cagnoli Fieconi, 'Aristotle on the Structure of Akritic Action', *Phronesis* 63 (2018), 229-256

*David Charles, 'Aristotle's Weak *Akrates*: What does her Ignorance Consist in?', in Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (eds.), *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy* (Leiden, 2007), 193–214

David Charles, 'Nicomachean Ethics VII.3: Varieties of *akrasia*', in C. Natali (ed.) *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics book VII: Symposium Aristotelicum* (OUP: 2009), 41-71

*Hendrik Lorenz. (2014). Aristotle's Analysis of Akritic Action. In R. Polansky (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (2014), pp. 242-262.

*Jessica Moss, 'Akrasia and Perceptual Illusion', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 91, (2009) PRESENTATION PAPER

Presentation question: In what sense is the akritic ignorant, according to Moss? Can the akritic be aware that she is acting akratically?