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OBERSEMINAR
Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*
April-July 2023

Schellingzimmer, Alte Burse
Tuesday, 16:00-18:00

Course description: Aristotle's short essays in natural philosophy (also known as *Parva naturalia*) are not a random collection of works. Quite the opposite: they occupy a precise slot Aristotle's research agenda. Aristotle tells us that they contribute to the study of what is common to the soul and the body. Our main aim in this research seminar is to give some content to this remark. We will reconstruct how these short essays contribute to Aristotle's research agenda by looking at the systematic connections that these essays entertain with Aristotle's study of the soul (his *De anima*) on the one hand and with Aristotle's science of perishable living beings on the other.

Willingness to engage in a close reading of a philosophical text in the original language is required. Basic knowledge of ancient Greek is therefore expected.

Language of Instruction: English

Attendance and participation: Attendance and active participation are expected from all students taking this class for credit.

Textbook: We will use the Greek text printed by Ross in Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1955). An inexpensive translation of this text can be found in D. Miller (tr.), *Aristotle's On the Soul and Other Psychological works*. Oxford University Press 2018.

Assessment

Students taking this *Oberseminar* for full credit (12 credits) can choose between the following options (1) write a term essay in the range of 5,000 to 6,000 (bibliography excluded), or (2) write two short essays in the range of 2,500 to 3,000 words (each worth 50% of the final grade). The term essay (or short essays) must be written in English. The student must engage in a close study of one or more aspects of Plato's *Timaeus*. The title and the topic of the term essay or the short essays must be discussed in advance with the instructor. Once a title and a topic are firmed up, they cannot be changed. There will be no exceptions to the rule. Please do not ask for one. *If a student chooses to write two short essays rather than a term essay, the first short essay is due no later than June 6* (that is, the first Tuesday after Spring Break)

Oral presentations (not for credit but mandatory): All students taking this class for credit must be ready to present in class at least once. Student presentations will begin in Week 4. The topic of the presentation must be discussed in advance with the instructor. It may consist in the presentation of a short primary text or in the discussion of the relevant secondary literature on

this text. Once a topic for an oral presentation is firmed up it cannot be changed. *Failure to present in class will result in a penalization (10%).*

Term essay (or short essays) and oral presentation should as far as possible be on different aspects.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1 (18.04.2023) *Kick off event* - Prof. Dr. Philip van der Eijk (Humboldt University, Berlin) will lecture on Aristotle and Theophrastus and the project of the *Parva naturalia*.

TIDA has organized a workshop on my forthcoming book for Monday, April 17, and Tuesday, April 18 (the full program of the event can be found here: <https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/einrichtungen/zentrale-einrichtungen/carl-friedrich-von-weizsaecker-zentrum/projekte/tida/events/conferences-and-workshops/>). As part of this event, Prof. Dr. Philip van der Eijk will give **a public lecture at 15:00** on the following topic: *Health and Disease as Attributes of Living Things in Aristotle's Zoology and Theophrastus' Botany*.

Week 2 (25.04.2023) *The Parva naturalia and the De anima*

In this second meeting we will approach the question of how the short essays transmitted as part of the so-called *Parva naturalia* fit into Aristotle's project of investigation of nature. To this end, we will reflect on how they relate to Aristotle's *De anima*. We will also discuss two recent contributions on this front: one by Thomas K. Johansen and another by Pierre-Marie Morel.

Required Reading: *De sensu* 1.

Additional Readings: Th. K. Johansen, "What is New in the *De sensu*? The Place of the *De sensu* in Aristotle's Psychology" P.-M. Morel, "Common to the Body and the Soul" in the *Parva naturalia*." Both essays are published in R. A. H. King (ed.), *Common to the Body and the Soul: Philosophical Approaches to Explaining Living Behavior in the Greco-Roman World*. W. de Gruyter, Berlin and New York 2016.

Week 3 (02.05.2023) *The internal structure of the Parva naturalia*

In this third meeting we will focus on the internal structure of the short essays collectively known as *Parva naturalia* on the assumption that they jointly contribute to a project that Aristotle describes as a study of what is common to the soul and the body. The question is how exactly this project is to be implemented. Among other things, we will see that they can be organized in two groups (*PN* 1 and *PN* 2).

Required Reading: Aristotle, *De sensu* 1, *De long.* 1

Additional Reading: M. Rashed, "Agrégat de parties ou vinculum substantiale? Sur une hesitation conceptuelle et textuelle du corpus aristotélicien." In A. Laks and M. Rashed, *Aristote et le mouvement des animaux. Dix études sur le De motu animalium*. Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq Cédex: 185–202.

Week 4 (09.05.2023) *Aristotle on memory as a case study*

With week 4 we will immerse ourselves in a set of in-depth studies of the explanatory strategy adopted in the *Parva naturalia*. We will begin with a close reading of Aristotle's explanation of memory.

Required Reading: Aristotle, *Mem.* 1.

Additional Reading: A. Falcon and K. Corcilius, Aristotle on Remembering and Memory: Toward an Interpretation of *Mem.* 1." In *Medicina nei secoli* 34: 5–30.

Student Presentations begin in Week 4 and continue until Week 15

Week 5 (16.05.2023) *Aristotle on sleep*

The second in-depth study is Aristotle's *De somno*, which we will read in full. A full study of this text may require two meetings. We will try to look for the explanatory strategy adopted by Aristotle.

Required Reading: *De somno*

Additional Readings: A. Falcon, "Definition, Explanation, and Scientific Method in Aristotle's *De somno*." In *Manuscripto* 42: 516–543 (open science); A. Code, "The 'matter' of Sleep." In D. Ebrey (ed.), *Theory and Practice in Aristotle's Natural Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 11–45. On Aristotle on establishing the *hoti*, see L. Angioni, "What really characterizes explananda: APr. I 30." In *Eirene: Studia graeca et latina* 2019 (55): 147-177.

Week 6 (23.05.2023) *Aristotle on sleep continued*

We will continue our reading and discussion of the *De somno*.

Required reading: *De somno*.

Additional Readings: see above, Week 6

Week 7 (30.06.2023) *Spring Break, no class*

Week 8 (06.06.2023) Guest Speaker: Dr. Justin Winsenrieth (Tübingen, TIDA), *Editing and translating the Parva naturalia*

Justin Winzenrieth is preparing a new critical edition with French translation of the first part of the *Parva naturalia* (*De sensu, de memoria, De somno, De insomniis, De divinatione per somnum*) for the prestigious Budé series. He will share with us the most important results reached in his study of the manuscript tradition and explain to us why we need a new critical edition of these essays.

Week 9 (13.06.2023) *Aristotle on dreams*

This week we will engage in a study of how Aristotle explain the occurrence of dreams. As will become clear in due course this account is especially important to understand how *phantasia* works in Aristotle's account of the mind.

Required reading: *De insomniis*.

Additional Suggested Reading: TBA

Week 10 (20.06.2023) *Aristotle on Longevity*

With the essay on length and shortness of life Aristotle touches a few topics that have a relevance that goes emphatically beyond the study of animals but extends to everything that has a share in perishable life. We will engage in a full reading of this short text with a concentration on how Aristotle fulfils his promise to account for longevity in this unrestricted way.

Required reading: *De long.*

Additional Reading: A. Falcon, "La longévité comparée des plantes et des animaux selon Aristote." In *Archives de philosophie* 84:13–28.

Week 11 (27.06.2023) *Aristotle on life and death*

The last instalment of the project of the *Parva naturalia* is concerned with the explanation of youth and old age, life and death (*De juventute et senectute, de vita et morte, de respiratione*). For Aristotle, every perishable living being, whether animal or plant, goes by nature through a cycle of growth, activity in its prime, decline, and death. In short, perishable life characteristically passes through a few phases, which are arranged in a definite order. We will see how Aristotle pursue the explanatory project of a study that is common to every perishable living being with a focus on the first six chapters of the treatise.

Required Reading: *De juv.* 1-6

Additional Reading: TBA

Week 12 (04.07.2023) *Aristotle on respiration*

Scholars tends to distinguish the account of youth and old age, life and death, (*Juv.* 1–6) from the subsequent account of respiration (*Juv.* 7–27 = *Resp.* 1–21). In fact, the latter is a natural and indeed inevitable continuation of former. Our task will be to develop a reading that preserves the integrity of the treatise as a whole.

Required Reading: *Resp* 1-28

Additional Reading: J. G. Lennox, "Why Animals Must Keep Their Cool: Aristotle on Respiration." In H. Bartoš, C. G. King (eds.), *Heat, Pneuma, and Soul in Ancient Philosophy and Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 217–242.

Week 13 (11.07.2023) *Aristotle on Animal Motion*

Today there is little doubt that Aristotle intended the *De motu animalium* to be a contribution to the study of what is common to the body and the soul. Our task in this class is to try to see what follows from this observation for our reading of Aristotle's *De motu animalium*.

Required reading: *De motu animalium*

Additional Required Reading: TBA

Week 14 (18.07.2023) Guest speaker: Prof. Dr. Klaus Corcilius (Tübingen, TIDA), *Translating the Parva naturalia*

Klaus Corcilius is preparing a new English translation on the *Parva naturalia*. He will discuss with us the most important choices that a translator has to make.

Week 15 (25.07.2023) *The Parva naturalia and the Science of Living Beings*

In this final meeting we will try to assess the contribution of the short essays collectively known as *Parva naturalia* to the Peripatetic project of a science of living beings.

Nota Bene: This schedule is tentative and may be subject to change. All changes will be made in class with ample time for adjustments.

Additional Bibliographical Information

In addition to the works cited in the tentative schedule the reader can find a useful introduction to the contents of the *Parva naturalia* in:

King 2021 R. H. A. King, "Parva naturalia." In Ch. Rapp and K. Corcilius (eds.), *Aristoteles Handbuch*. J. B. Metzler. Second augmented edition. 2021: 109-117.

A recent English translation of the *Parva naturalia* (augmented by the *De motu animalium*) can be found here:

Bolotin 2022 *Parva naturalia: with, On the Motion of Animals*. Translated by David Bolotin. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2021. (my book review of this translation can be read online here: <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2022/2022.05.17/>)

A French translation of the *Parva naturalia* can be found here:

Morel 2000 Aristote, *Petits traités d'histoire naturelle*. Traduciton et presentation par P.-M-Morel. Flammarion, Paris.

A collection of essays on the *Parva naturalia* can be found here:

Althoff 2015 J. Althoff (ed.), *Aristotle's Parva naturalia*. Akten der 18. Tagung der Karl und Gertrud Abel-Stiftung vom 30. September bis 2. Oktober 2015 in Mainz. W. de Gryter, Berlin and New York.

For an introduction to the reception of the *Parva naturalia* in antiquity and beyond, see

Grellard-Morel 2010 Ch. Grellard, P.-M.- Morel (eds.), *Les parva naturalia d'Aristoe*. Fortune antique et médiévale.