

# Departmental Seminars

Seminars are held on **Thursdays from 4.30 to 6.00pm in Seminar Room 2**, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Free School Lane, Cambridge. There is tea beforehand from 4pm in Seminar Room 1.

Organised by Lauren Kassell.

- 1 May **Andrew Barker (University of Birmingham)**  
Rolling up the history of a science: Greek musical theorists on their predecessors
- 8 May **John Dupré (University of Exeter)**  
What is an organism?
- 15 May **Sylvia Berryman (University of British Columbia)**  
The 'mechanical hypothesis' in Ancient Greek natural philosophy
- 22 May ***Thirteenth Annual Hans Rausing Lecture (Mill Lane Lecture Room 1)***  
**John Krige (Georgia Institute of Technology)**  
Shaping postwar Europe: science, technology and American soft power
- 29 May **James Delbourgo (McGill University and Visiting Fellow, CRASSH)**  
Slavery in the cabinet of curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic world
- 12 June **Serafina Cuomo (Birkbeck, University of London)**  
A Roman engineer's tales

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Seminar Programmes are sent out at the start of every term to the names on our mailing list. Please contact the Department if you would like to be added to or removed from the mailing list, or if you change your address.

Seminar information is also available at [www.hps.cam.ac.uk/seminars](http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/seminars)

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# Abstracts

1 May **Andrew Barker (University of Birmingham)**

Rolling up the history of a science: Greek musical theorists on their predecessors

Like other ancient scientists and philosophers, Greek musical theorists comment from time to time on the work of earlier writers. This paper is an attempt to explore some aspects of their treatment of them, and in particular the extent to which we can credit them with a recognisably ‘historical’ perspective. I shall first sketch in outline the approaches taken by a few individual theorists, treating them as representative of different schools of thought and different periods. I shall conclude that they show very little sign of interest in the ways in which the discipline has developed over time, in the relative chronology of the predecessors they mention, or in the ways in which their ideas and approaches differ; and they rarely quote directly from their writings. I shall suggest some broad-brush explanations of why they proceed as they do. Then I shall look in rather more detail at one exceptional case. There is one writer who mentions the work of earlier ‘authorities’ very much more frequently than most, and adorns his presentation with a lavish selection of quotations from them; the writer is Porphyry, in his commentary on Ptolemy’s *Harmonics*. Aside from his habit of frequent quotation, however, we shall find very similar symptoms even in Porphyry, and we shall find reasons for pressing the question *why* he incorporates such a rich harvest of quotations into his text, as others do not. The reasons he offers himself are thoroughly unconvincing.

8 May **John Dupré (University of Exeter)**

What is an organism?

Although philosophers of biology have spent considerable effort problematizing such key biological concepts as the gene and the species, they have generally treated the organism as fairly unproblematic. This talk aims to end this complacency. Recent work on symbiosis, especially with regard to the typical functioning of microbes in multispecies communities (biofilms) and in mutualistic relation with the more charismatic eukaryotes that have always attracted more than their fair share of attention, suggests that the lines we draw round cooperating groups of cells to demarcate organisms are, if not arbitrary, at least underdetermined. What we call an organism is a cooperative aggregation of diverse lineages, but there is no unequivocal criterion for which of these are part of the whole. Or so I shall argue.

15 May **Sylvia Berryman (University of British Columbia)**

The ‘mechanical hypothesis’ in Ancient Greek natural philosophy

I argue that the impact of the mechanics of the Hellenistic period on ancient natural philosophy has been underappreciated, and that the reasons for its rejection by the philosophical schools of late antiquity need to be re-examined. Traces of a ‘mechanical hypothesis’ can be found in late antiquity; attention to this helps us understand the role of the discipline of mechanics in the history of natural philosophy. The reason for the Neoplatonist rejection of the generality of mechanical theory stem from some unsolved problems and counter evidence, rather than a blanket rejection of mechanics as mere art, as marvellous, or as working ‘against nature’.

29 May **James Delbourgo (McGill University and Visiting Fellow, CRASSH)**  
Slavery in the cabinet of curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic world

The history of science has rarely if ever explored the links between making natural knowledge and the practice of African slavery in the early modern era. Science and slavery would seem to have represented opposite extremes of hierarchies of work and skill: the agency of rational ingenuity versus the regimented command of productive hands and bodies. By the eighteenth century, figurative chains of being contrasted the apex of Newtonian genius with the nadir of 'Hottentot savagery'. The varied career of the naturalist-collector Hans Sloane (1660-1753) provides a rich opportunity to explore how worlds of slavery and science were, however, connected rather than separate. Best known for assembling the collection of natural specimens and artificial curiosities that formed the basis of the British Museum, Sloane spent fifteen months in Jamaica during 1687-1689 and, in the aftermath of this voyage, appears to have become the first person in western Europe to collect, preserve and describe artefacts pertaining specifically to slavery: nooses and whips to discipline and execute Africans; their musical instruments and culinary utensils; clothing and weaponry used by Maroon rebels in Jamaica; and also African human remains, including skin, foetal and genital material. Sloane thus anticipated abolitionist campaigners later in the century, who collected and displayed the instruments of enslavement. His career invites exploration of how slavery was made public through objects of curiosity well before abolitionist debates made such artefacts triggers of political concern. The paper aims to raise several related questions: how slavery both supported the practice of natural science and stimulated thinking about 'race'; how natural history's regimes of collection, description and preservation enabled invisible instruments of economic utility to become visible objects of curiosity and, ultimately, politics; and how enslaved African agency both made and contested knowledge in the Atlantic world.

12 June **Serafina Cuomo (Birkbeck, University of London)**  
A Roman engineer's tales

I will look at one object, a broken column found in Algeria and dating from the second century AD, from three different points of view, with the aim of exploring the various ways in which we can write the history of ancient technology today. The column is inscribed on its three sides, and tells the story of Nonius Datus, a military engineer who designed and, over the years, guided the completion of an aqueduct in the ancient Roman town of Saldae, on the Algerian coast. Firstly, I will look at how the column can be, and has been, used to derive 'straightforward' information about aqueducts, tunnels and water supply administration in Roman times. Next, I will explore the ways in which technology can be considered an instrument of empire, and reveal the afterlife of Nonius Datus' column in the nineteenth century, when the French army engineers decided to provide Saldae (by then Bougie) with a new aqueduct. Finally, I will focus on Nonius Datus as an individual, and on what he (emphasize he) may have thought he was doing by leaving a 'technological' monument behind.

# Cabinet of Natural History

Seminars are held on **Mondays at 1pm in Seminar Room 1**. You are welcome to bring your lunch with you.

Organised by Salim Al-Gailani.

28 April **Neil Rennie (University College London)**

Mary Read and Anne Bonny: two eighteenth-century pirates

12 May **Stéphane Schmitt (Université Paris Diderot)**

Buffon and Martinet's *Natural History of Birds* (1765-1783): text, images and collections

Wednesday 14 May: Trip to Stowe landscape gardens

19 May **Ralph Kingston (Auburn University)**

Spaces of geography in early nineteenth-century Paris

26 May **Patricia Fara (Clare College and HPS, Cambridge)**

Triangulations: poetry, plants and politics in the late eighteenth century

2 June **Michael Stevens (University of Otago)**

Knowledge-making in southern New Zealand

9 June **Garden Party:** 12noon in Gonville and Caius Fellows' Garden

Featuring an informal talk by **David Allan Feller (HPS, Cambridge):** 'The Memoirs and Natural History Observations of Ox, an English Dogge and Traveler'

# Psy Studies

## History of Psychiatry, Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Allied Sciences

Seminars are held on **Wednesdays at 5pm** – but note the early start for Barbara Wurm's talk – in Seminar Room 2. Tea is available from 4.40pm. All welcome.

Organised by John Forrester and Deborah Thom.

30 April **Barbara Wurm (Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, Vienna)**

The psycho-reflexology of film: Soviet non-fiction cinema of the 1920s

At 4.30, prior to the talk, Barbara Wurm will show an edited version of *Mekhanika golovnogo mozga (The Mechanics of the Brain)* by Vsevolod Pudovkin, USSR 1925/26. Her paper will follow on directly.

14 May **Gavin Miller (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

Scottish psychotherapy: communion, community and communication

# Relativism Group

Meetings take place fortnightly on **Tuesdays, 3.00-4.30pm in Seminar Room 1.**

In some weeks the focus will be a talk, in other weeks we will discuss a key text. (Copies of these texts will be available in the Whipple Library.) Everyone welcome!

For further information contact Martin Kusch.

- 6 May **Hazim Shah (University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur)** will give a talk entitled 'Science, Modernity and Universalism: The Janus Face of Modern Science'.
- 20 May Discussion of Edmund Husserl, 'Psychologism as Sceptical Relativism', in Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, v. 1, ch. 7; and Karl Popper, 'The Myth of the Framework', in Popper, *The Myth of the Framework*, Routledge, London, 1994.
- 3 June Discussion of David Bloor, 'Relativism at 30,000 Feet', in Massimo Mazzotti (ed.), *Knowledge as Social Order*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008; and David Bloor, 'Epistemic Grace: Antirelativism as Theology in Disguise', in *Common Knowledge* 13 (2007).
- 17 June Discussion of Bernard Williams, 'The Truth in Relativism', in Williams, *Moral Luck*, Cambridge University Press, 1981; and Bernard Williams, 'Relativism and Reflection', in Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Fontana, London, 1985.

# Science and Literature Reading Group

We meet on **Mondays from 7.30 to 9pm in the upstairs seminar room of Darwin College.** All are welcome! Organised by Daniel Friesner (Science Museum) and Melanie Keene (HPS). For further information, visit our weblog: <http://sci-lit-reading-group.blogspot.com>

This term we will be exploring science and poetry. In the first three meetings, we will look at Robert Crawford (ed.), *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science* (OUP, 2006). A copy of the book is available on reserve in the Whipple Library. We will explore the whole book, but in particular the following. Please feel free to bring along other poems that you would like to discuss.

- 28 April Miroslav Holub, 'Rampage, or Science in Poetry' (pp. 11-24)  
Robert Crawford, 'Biology', with introduction by Rona R. Ramsay (pp. 69-71)
- 12 May Jocelyn Bell Burnell, 'Astronomy and Poetry' (pp. 125-140)  
John Burnside, 'Steinar Undir Steinahlithium', with introduction by R.M.M. Crawford (pp. 107-109)
- 26 May Kay Redfield Jamison, 'Contemporary Psychology and Contemporary Poetry: Perspectives on Mood Disorders' (pp. 191-203)  
Paul Muldoon, 'Once I looked into your eyes', with introduction by Warren S. Warren (pp. 167-169)
- 9 June The final meeting will be a creative writing workshop. Please bring along your own poems and writings! We hope to have a creative writing tutor present, to facilitate the discussion.

# History of Science Workshop

The History of Science Workshop is a seminar group devoted to peer discussion of work in progress on the history and historiography of science, for example PhD chapters, dissertations, articles intended for publication or conference papers. The seminar aims to provide an informal arena for the exchange of ideas among students of the history of science in HPS and elsewhere.

We meet on **alternate Wednesdays at 1pm in Seminar Room 1.**

Please contact Iris Montero if you are interested in giving a paper.

30 April **Katie Taylor (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Thomas Digges' astronomy

Thu 15 May **Patrick Boner (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften)**  
Finding favour in the heavens and earth: Georg Stadius, Johannes Kepler and the composition of astrological calendars in early modern Graz

28 May **Lydia Wilson (HPS, Cambridge)**  
The natural and the divine in Al-Farabi's classification of knowledge

11 June **Valentina Pugliano (University of Oxford)**  
'In shape vnparfett that nature hath not drest': vision, experience and incongruous anatomies in early modern England

# Philosophy Workshop

The PW is a fortnightly peer group seminar devoted to the discussion of on-going work by researchers in philosophy. Short papers will normally be circulated by e-mail one week in advance of each meeting, where the author will give a brief synopsis. The aim of the seminar is to provide a forum for informal, constructive interaction amongst those currently engaged in philosophical research.

Meetings take place **every other Wednesday at 1pm in Seminar Room 1**, and are open to all researchers.

For more information, or to add your name to the list of e-mail recipients, contact Mark Sprevak.

7 May **Elly Kingma (HPS, Cambridge)**  
A social construction of health

21 May **Paul Dicken (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Constructive empiricism as an epistemological thesis

4 June **Sasha Mudd (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Reason in action: a Kantian view of norms

# Metaphysics of Science Reading Group

The group will meet four times fortnightly this term, **Mondays 1.00-2.30pm in the HPS Lodge**. We will be reading from *Cause and Chance: Causation in an Indeterministic World*, edited by Paul Noordhof and Phil Dowe. The book is on reserve in the Whipple Library and photocopies are also available for easy copying (since the book is only available in hardback). All welcome.

Organised by Alex Broadbent.

- 28 April 'Counterfactuals and the benefit of hindsight' by Dorothy Edgington
- 12 May 'Chance-lowering causes' by Phil Dowe
- 26 May 'Routes, process and chance-lowering causes' by Christopher Hitchcock
- 9 June 'Prospects for a counterfactual theory of causation' by Paul Noordhof

## Latin Therapy

The Latin Therapy Group meets on **Fridays at 4pm in the HPS Lodge** to practise the art of translation, improve our Latin grammar, and determine who deserves more sympathy on account of the difficulty of their sources – all in a mutually supportive environment!

Each week we study a classical, medieval or early modern text related to the history of science, often selected by members of the group as part of their research. We warm up with a short introductory piece before moving onto the main text – aiming to produce a working translation each week. Latin texts are circulated in advance, and further support is provided by our language tutor, Debby Banham. All are welcome to attend, however rusty your Latin.

From time to time the group also organises social events and field trips. Details of past events and publications, together with a host of Latin-related links and resources, can be found on the group's website at [www.hps.cam.ac.uk/latintherapy](http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/latintherapy).

For more information, and to be added to the mailing list, please contact Jenny Rampling.

## German Therapy

German Therapy is open to anyone who would like to learn how to read and understand original German sources and discuss possibilities of translating them to English. Last term we read and translated Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and some short texts by Kant and Heidegger. Members are very welcome to bring a text which is currently part of their research. We also do exercises to improve or brush up our grammar and reading skills. The course does not require an advanced level of German. All are welcome to attend.

Meetings will take place on **Thursdays, 9.00-10.30am in Seminar Room 1**, starting on 24 April. The texts can be found in the German Therapy box in the Whipple Library. We will translate a short extract of Nietzsche's *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* on 24 April (please prepare).

For further information please contact Mirjam Brusius.

# History and Theory Reading Group

The group will discuss articles (their own, and those of others) relating to problems of historical research, interpretation, explanation and narration. Articles will be placed well in advance in a History and Theory box in the Whipple.

We meet on **Fridays, 2.30pm to 4pm in the HPS Lodge.**

Organised by Signe Nipper Nielsen.

2 May **John Forrester:** Metaphors in history and science: history of memory, history as memory

Douwe Draaisma (1995/2000): *Metaphors of Memory. A History of Ideas about the Mind*, trans. Paul Vincent, Cambridge: C.U.P., pp. 1-23 and pp. 230-3. [The first twenty pages of this can be read online at Google Books.]

Sigmund Freud (1925): 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"'. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX (1923-1925): *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, pp. 225-232 [Available within the cam domain at [www.pep-web.org](http://www.pep-web.org)]

16 May **Iris Montero Sobrevilla:** The peripheral/postcolonial standpoint

Agustí Nieto-Galán (1999), 'The Images of Science in Modern Spain. Rethinking the "Polémica"', in *The Sciences in the European Periphery During the Enlightenment*, ed. Kostas Gavroglu, Kluwer Academic, pp. 73-94.

Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (2003): 'Postcolonialism avant la lettre? Travellers and Clerics in Eighteenth-century Colonial Spanish America', in *After Spanish Rule. Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas*, eds. M. Thurner and A. Guerrero, Duke U. P., pp. 90-110.

30 May **Paul White:** Emotional economies

Adela Pinch (1995): 'Emotion and History: A Review Article', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37:1, pp. 100-109.  
[www.jstor.org/stable/view/179379](http://www.jstor.org/stable/view/179379)

Nicola Bown (2007): 'Introduction: Crying over Little Nell', in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4, pp. 1-13.  
[www.19.bbk.ac.uk/issue4/BownIntroduction.pdf](http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/issue4/BownIntroduction.pdf)



# Scientific Images Discussion Group

This seminar aims to discuss the relationship between history and philosophy of science and the visual image. Almost all of us come across scientific images in our research; there is, however, no clear consensus of how best to incorporate visualisation into fields of studies. If we do not want to consider scientific images merely as illustrations of a text, how can we use appropriate methods and concepts in order to get results beyond the pure text? The group aims to face these challenges and deal with the methods, treatment and interpretation of scientific images, that will include images as a constitutional part of knowledge and evidence as well as images of the fine arts reflecting science. All welcome.

Meetings will take place four times each term, **Thursdays, 11am-1pm in Seminar Room 1**. Each presenter will choose a text to be prepared by the group for their topic. You will find these texts a week in advance in the group's box in the Whipple Library.

If you want to give a talk, join the group, or be put on the mailing list, please contact Mirjam Brusius.

- 24 April 1. 'Editing early-modern astronomical diagrams' (Boris Jardine)  
2. 'Jan Vermeer's images of scientists and Pascal's "esprit de finesse": art, philosophy and science in the Dutch Golden Age' (Mirjam Brusius)
- 8 May 1. 'Portrait of a spark: William Armstrong's photographs of electricity (1897)' (Chitra Ramalingam)  
2. 'The problem with periodicals in the 19th century' (Geoff Belknap)
- 22 May 'Guide dogs for the sighted: the role of *canis familiaris* in constructing images of Victorian town and country' (Allison Ksiazkiewicz, David Allan Feller)
- 12 June 1. 'Topographical anatomy and the visual culture of Edinburgh obstetrics' (Salim Al-Gailani)  
2. 'Modernist aesthetics, Marxist science' (Boris Jardine)

# Kant Reading Group

The Kant Reading Group will be meeting on **Tuesdays, 1.00–2.30pm in the HPS Lodge**. Everyone welcome!

For more information, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Angela Breitenbach.