

CALL FOR PAPERS

Forms and Transformations of Pythagorean Knowledge: *Askēsis* – Religion – Science

Freie Universitaet Berlin, October 23-25, 2013

There are two dominant understandings of Pythagoras in the Pythagorean tradition (and research about it): Pythagoras as a “shaman” and “religious leader” on the one hand, as a “philosopher” and “scientific genius” on the other. Since F.M. Cornford’s seminal article “Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition” (1922/1923) various attempts have been made to reconcile these understandings (e.g. Dodds, Burkert) as well as to analyze them separately (e.g. Huffman). Most recently, scholarship has tended to compartmentalize different facets of Pythagorean knowledge and in doing so has failed to provide a context in which to explore questions of their origins, development, and interdependency.

This conference aims to reverse the trend by addressing the connections between the different forms (practical, technical, procedural, propositional, conscious, tacit knowledge, etc.) and fields within the body of Pythagorean knowledge (including ethics, metempsychosis, astronomy, medicine, arithmology, harmony, politics, and Pythagorean women). In particular, we intend to discuss how *askēsis*, practical training and/or exercise concerning the Pythagorean way of life, was related to more doctrinal fields of knowledge such as Pythagorean religion and science. It is, for example, a well-known fact that the doctrine of the migration of the soul exerted great influence on both the Pythagorean “rules of life” and more abstract theories about the nature of the cosmos.

Papers should explore the effects of such interdependencies of knowledge both within the Pythagorean corpus and on its later reception. The rich body of biographical evidence related to Pythagoras makes clear that the practices and teachings attributed to him were subject to a variety of interpretations from an early date. This led to significant divisions amongst Pythagorean groups already in Classical Age (e.g. between *akousmatikoi* and *mathēmatikoi*). These divisions and the many interpretations make it difficult to reconstruct the transfer and transformation of knowledge within Pythagorean tradition. Therefore, we also welcome discussion of certain aspects of these lost connections. This includes both the impact of various aspects of Pythagorean knowledge on each other and how the Pythagorean tradition was changed over time. Accordingly, we encourage submissions concerning different historical periods, from the Archaic Period (6th century BC) to the Middle Ages (including the Medieval Arabic tradition) through early Modernity (17th century AD).

To be considered, please submit a proposal of no more than 300 words and a biography of no more than 50 words to the below email address by March 1, 2013. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but no identifying information.

We are looking forward to an inspiring conference and lively discussion!

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