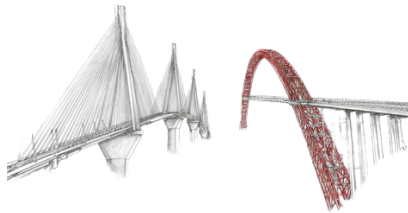


**Breath and Sight:
Exploring their Respective Nobility
in Chinese and Greek Philosophy**

**Workshop at the Department of Philosophy
University of Patras, Greece
*MA in Greek and Chinese Civilizations***

**Organized by
Pavlos KONTOS & Fabian HEUBEL**

April 10-12, 2025



MA in Greek and Chinese Civilizations



Centre of Greek & Chinese Ancient Civilizations

Program

Thursday, April 10, 5pm-8pm

Fabian Heubel

(Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica;
Institute of Philosophy, Free University of Berlin)
Breath (qì/氣) and Way (dào/道) in the Laozi

Charis Tabakis

(Department of Philosophy, University of Patras)
Aristotle's European Theory of Vision

Friday, April 11, 10pm-1am

Stavros Kouloumentas

(Department of Philosophy, University of Patras)
Fire and Air in the Derveni Papyrus

Anastasia Meimaridi

(PhD student at China Eastern Normal University in Shanghai)
Ming 明 in the Zhuangzi: Sight, Observation, Clarity

Friday, April 11, 5pm-7pm

Fabian Heubel

Workshop on selected Chinese texts (Laozi and Zhuangzi)

Saturday, April 12, 10am-12pm

Pavlos Kontos

Workshop on selected Ancient Greek texts (Plato and Aristotle)

Concept

In the 1950s, Hans Jonas published an article entitled “The Nobility of Sight” that begins as follows: “Since the days of Greek philosophy sight has been recognized as the most excellent of the senses. The noblest activity of the mind, *theoria*, is described in metaphors mostly taken from the visual field.” Does it make sense to speak of a *nobility of sight* in Chinese philosophy, or rather of a *nobility of breath*? Is it possible to discuss the difference between sight and breath not only between Greek and Chinese philosophy, but also within each of these traditions? These are the questions that will be addressed in our workshop on Greek and Chinese philosophy.

Of course, bringing breath and sight together is challenging. The idea is to focus on two concepts that have a similar status (the nobility of breath/qì/氣 in Chinese philosophy and the nobility of sight in Greek philosophy). We will address the question how and why these different paradigmatic choices emerged. We hope that this approach allows for a “civilizational dialogue”, or the so called “mutual mirroring of civilizations”, that is open for critical (self-)reflection and mutual learning.

In the Greek tradition, while references to the importance of sight and visuality are abundant, resources for discussing breath seem to be limited, though exceptions there are. In the Chinese context, it seems to be the other way around. In particular, the Daoist classics *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and even more so the hermeneutic tradition associated with them, are much less concerned with sight than with breath. What seems important to recognize and discuss in this context, however, is that breath in the

Chinese context, like sight in the Greek context, is deeply connected to the senses, but also transcends the senses and sense perception. Breath and sight both seem to have a material (or “physical”) and a spiritual (or “metaphysical”) dimension. How sight and breath both engage the relation between the physical and the metaphysical will be a guiding question for our discussion.

Moreover, the scope of this workshop will not be limited to ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy. We believe that the “mirroring” of Chinese and Greek civilizations should not be restricted to antiquity but should also include reflections on the relations between antiquity and modernity, the old and the new. Therefore, possible connections to modern Greek and Chinese philosophy, literature, and art will be also explored.