

Foreword

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When the theme for the next special issue of *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* was set to be Ancient Epistemology, we decided to approach a number of scholars, junior as well as senior, whom we knew to be working on papers related to this theme; at the same time there was a call for papers. To both the response was beyond expectation: quite a few of those whom we approached submitted the paper they were working on for the special issue, and we received a number of excellent submissions through the call for papers. All submissions went through the ordinary review and revision process. We should like to thank all those who, by writing their comments, improved the quality of the articles and the quality of the volume.

At the end of this process we are proud to be able to present in total eleven articles on the theme of Ancient Epistemology, ranging from the presocratic philosopher Xenophanes to Plotinus and Sextus Empiricus, both by established colleagues and by younger scholars at the beginning of their career.

Alexander Mourelatos and Patricia Curd present here novel interpretations on knowledge in the presocratic philosophers Xenophanes and Empedocles. Alexander Mourelatos argues against the sceptical interpretation of Xenophanes, but also against the interpretation that Xenophanes' apparent pessimism with regard to our ability to acquire knowledge stems from the traditional pietistic contrast between gods and human beings in terms of cognitive achievements. Taking his clue from Xenophanes' heavy use of comparative forms, Mourelatos ascribes to him the insight that in many domains we cannot reach the limit of total knowledge. The best we can do is to set a temporary limit in the sense of a well-argued judgement, but we should, in the spirit of modern 'fallibilism', also keep on searching for a better one.

Patricia Curd canvasses the evidence from Empedocles' fragments concerning the distinctions and interrelations between sensations (the events occurring in the sense-organs), perceptions (the corresponding awarenesses) and thought or judgement. Against Aristotle's and Theophrastus' claims that Empedocles did not properly distinguish between thought and perception, and that he conceived both of them as purely material – claims which have influenced many scholars –, she shows that there is enough evidence against it, and that the apparent evidence in favour should be interpreted differently. Empedocles seems to have conceived of perception and thought as influenced by material processes (like sensations), without being identical to them.

We are glad to be able to include a fair number of contributions on knowledge in Socrates and Plato. Andrew Payne and Audrey Anton concern themselves with Socrates' views on knowledge. Andrew Payne goes against the current which portrays Socrates as sceptical and economical with what he believes, knowing as he does that he does not know anything. Payne argues that Socrates is deeply committed to quite a few beliefs on matters of wisdom. Socrates can hold these firm beliefs, according to Payne, because they form a very tight circle of mutually agreeing and harmonious beliefs; thus these beliefs allow

him to be in an epistemic state which resembles knowledge, namely one of having stable beliefs, without being torn in all kinds of directions by inconsistent and unstable beliefs. In this sense, Payne concludes, Socrates can be said to be wise by always saying the same.

Audrey Anton explains how Socrates got into this state of wisdom by connecting his epistemology of “regular purification of one’s beliefs” to his religious beliefs. It may seem that, pious though Socrates obviously was, he went at crucial stages against the gods, by questioning the oracle that he was the wisest man in Athens as well as by not trying to escape death, and thus the end of his divinely commanded philosophical mission. Anton claims that this appearance is misleading, because in fact Socrates’ pious attitude made him a better philosopher. His *daimonion* only speaks in a negative way, without giving any reason, thus forcing Socrates to change his beliefs himself. The apparent falsity of the oracle equally led Socrates to change his beliefs, and with them, those of his fellow-citizens.

Lee Franklin defends Plato against the charge that in the *Meno*’s account of dialectic as the enterprise which brings one from ordinary beliefs to philosophical knowledge, he just assumes that the concepts of ordinary discourse correspond to the reality known in philosophical knowledge. Franklin does so by arguing that in the *Meno* Plato maintains that the fallibility of ordinary discourse can be overcome by appealing to standards already implicit in that same ordinary discourse – in particular, the standard that there must be some one thing being present in many things. These standards enable the dialectical enterprise to come off the ground.

Matthew Duncombe investigates in his contribution the nature of thought in Plato and Aristotle. Both, he argues, agree that discursive thought is a kind of internal speech – a view which Plato so vividly introduces in the *Theaetetus*. This internal speech goes from judgement to judgement, and if correctly, in a consistent way, avoiding contradiction. However, Duncombe also claims that there is a crucial difference between the ways in which Plato and Aristotle conceive of this internal speech. Plato thinks in terms of a dialogue and persuasion, and avoids contradiction because an argument which features both sides of a contradiction will not be persuasive. Aristotle, on the other hand, has a monologue conception of internal speech which does not aim at persuasion, but at correct inference. Contradiction is ruled out because holding two contradictory judgements amounts to not having a judgement at all, according to the argument in *Metaphysics* Γ.

Aristotle is also represented with two further articles. David Bronstein argues, in the first article-length publication on the subject, for a new interpretation of Aristotle’s dismissive remarks against Plato’s innatism in *Posterior Analytics* 2.19 that we would have noticed it if we had had such innate knowledge. Bronstein rejects the interpretation that, according to Aristotle, innate knowledge would have been inevitably active in us, and thus would have come to our notice. Instead, he claims, Aristotle relies on the phenomenology of the learning experience: we do not notice that this innate knowledge becomes active, when, according to Plato, it becomes active, namely when we discover something new.

Lucas Angioni presents his view on what *epistēmē*, which he understands as scientific knowledge, amounts to in the *Posterior Analytics*. He does so by giving a careful analysis of Aristotle’s definition of *epistēmē* in chapter 2 of book 1, and reading it in the context of other passages from the *Posterior Analytics*. Perhaps his most novel claim is that the necessity requirement mentioned in that definition refers to the *need* for an appropriate explanation of a fact, and not to the modality of bits of scientific knowledge.