**Conference Report for the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies**

Event:Medical Knowledge and Practices Facing Plato. New Perspectives on the Role of Medical Expertise in the Platonic Corpus

Organizers: Giulia Bernardini (Durham University) and Giovanni Trovato (Università di Pisa / Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici)

The international workshop ‘*Medical Knowledge and Practices Facing Plato. New Perspectives on the Role of Medical Expertise in the Platonic Corpus*’ was held at the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University, Durham (UK), from the 21st to the 22rd of March 2025. The workshop comprised four sessions, with a total of fourteen talks (30 minutes presentation + 15 minutes Q&A session). The eventwas free and hybrid (through MS Teams), with both in-person and online participants, and was the result of the first official collaboration between the Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere of the University of Pisa and the Department of Classics and Ancient History of Durham University.

In order to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the interaction between Plato and medicine, the workshop saw the participation of both domestic and international experts in ancient Greek literature, ancient Greek medicine and ancient Greek philosophy at different stages of their careers (PhD Candidates, Early Career Researchers, Established Scholars).

The aim of the workshop was to explore the intersection of Plato's philosophical and literary works with medicine - both as a form of expertise and as a body of doctrine found in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* and other medical texts. The workshop focused on two main themes: 1) representations of medicine and physicians in Plato's works, with a particular emphasis on the affinities with comedic depiction of doctors; 2) Plato's contributions to medical thought, including his own vision of the medical expertise and his contribution to physiology and psychology.

We fostered conversations that broadened our understanding of Plato and his engagement with Ancient Medicine, in line or in contrast with his contemporary literary and medical traditions. We dedicated particular attention to creating occasions for informal discussion: long lunch, coffee breaks, and a formal dinner. The MS Teams livestream allowed to involve a wide audience in the discussion, with as many as 50 people attending online during the busiest session.

The high intellectual value of the papers presented and their substantial contribution to the discipline persuaded the organisers to pursue forward the publication of a special issue or edited volume in order to collect all the contributions. The volume will strive toward an innovative and multidisciplinary approach to the topic.

Organising the Workshop has provided invaluable training in our academic, organisational, communicative, and social skills. The research required to fully developed a coherent program combining different disciplines surely led to an increase in the academic skills of the organisers, who had to delve into a new field they hadn’t explored before. At the same time, dealing with all the applications and requirements certainly improved our organisational skills, while the protracted interaction with the speakers before the conference also taught us how to communicate effectively. The ambitious program and the unforeseen technical issues caused by the web conferencing software also greatly helped us in improving our time management. In this sense, the funds awarded by the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (SPHS) have been invaluable, as it allowed us to involve more speakers, and for this we acknowledge our gratitude to the SPHS.

Program of the conference

**Friday, March 21**

**10.00-10.15.** Welcome

Giulia Bernardini (Durham University) and Giovanni Trovato (Università di Pisa / Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici di Napoli)

Morning Session (chair: Giulia Bonasio)

**10.15-11.00.** Anna Novokhatko (Università di Trento / University of Thessaloniki) “Philosophers, physicians and spectators in Middle Greek comedy”

**11.00-11.45.** Giulia Bernardini (Durham University) “Eryximachus and the other Comedic Doctors”

Tea break

**12.15-13.00.** Matilde Berti (Durham University) “Plato’s Timaeus and the Hippocratic De Victu: A Medical Approach towards Virtue?”

**13.00-14:30.** Lunch break

Afternoon sessions (chair: Phillip Sidney Horky)

**14.30-15.15.** Francesco Pelosi (Università di Pisa) "Embryology and music in Plato" online

**15.15-16.00.** Caterina Pellò (University of Geneva) “Alcmaeon according to Plato: Physician and physikos”

Tea break

(Chair: Maria Cristina Mennuti)

**16.30-17.15.** Jill Gordon (Colby College) “Disease and Sex Difference in Plato's Timaeus” online

**17.15-18.00.** Sonja Tanner (UCCS) “Beautiful Words for Terrible Maladies: Socratic Logotherapy in Plato’s 'Charmides'” online

**Saturday, March 22**

Morning Session (chair: Chiara Blanco)

**10.00-10.45.** Philip van der Eijk (HU Berlin) “What does the doctor’s "knowledge of the overall nature of bodies" (*Laws* 857d2) consist in?"

**10.45-11.30.** Sophia Connell (Birbeck, University of London) “Seeds, fruits and eggs: The biomedical basis to agricultural metaphors in Plato”

Tea break

(Chair: Matilde Berti)

**12.00-12.45.** Francesco Ferro (Pontificia Università Lateranense) “Philosophical rhetoric as medicine for the soul: Zeno of Elea as bad pedagogue in the *Parmenides*”

**12.45-13.30.** Giovanni Trovato (Università di Pisa / Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici di Napoli) “Trees won't teach me anything”. Nonanimal psychology in Plato’s Timaeus.

**13:30-14:30.** Lunch Break

Afternoon session (chair: George Alexander Gazis)

**14.30-15.15.** Jurgen Gatt (University of Malta) “A Hippocratic Look at the Platonic Physiology of Hearing in *Timaeus*”

**15.15-16.00.** Hermann Crüwell (University of Oxford) “*Archaia physis*: on the Platonic adaptation of a Hippocratic concept” online

Tea break

**16.30-17.15.** Giulia De Cesaris (Università di Torino) "How does the kosmos stay in good health?"

**17.15-17.30.** Final remarks

Giulia Bernardini (Durham University) and Giovanni Trovato (Università di Pisa / Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici di Napoli)