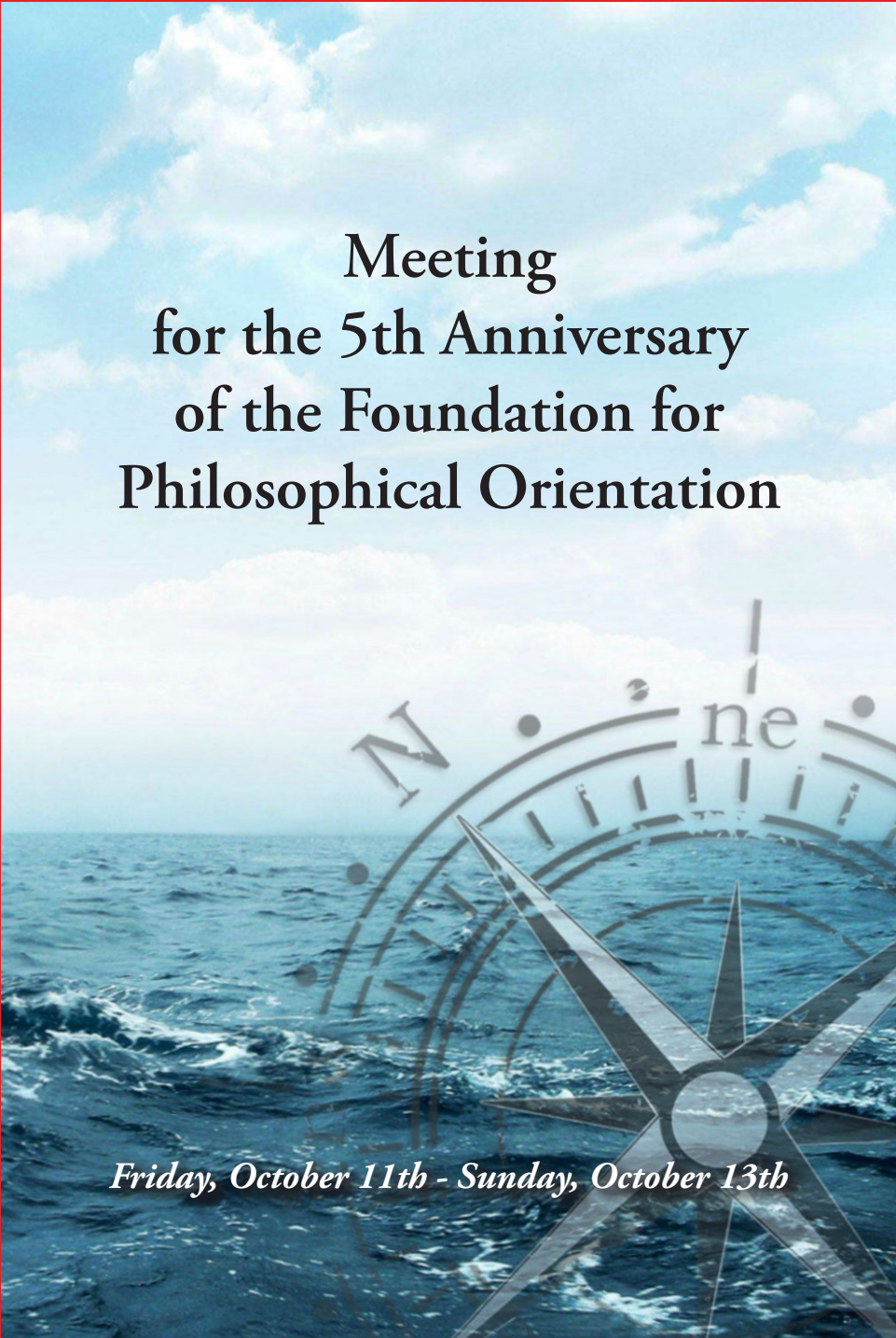


The background of the poster features a large, semi-transparent compass rose overlaid on a photograph of a blue ocean with white-capped waves. Above the horizon, a bright blue sky is filled with fluffy white clouds. The compass rose has a central circular hub and several radiating points. The letters 'N' and 'ne' are visible on the upper arc of the compass, indicating North and Northeast. The overall composition suggests themes of navigation, direction, and exploration.

Meeting for the 5th Anniversary of the Foundation for Philosophical Orientation

Friday, October 11th - Sunday, October 13th



**Meeting
for the 5th Anniversary
of the Foundation for
Philosophical Orientation**

Friday, Oct 11th – Sunday, Oct 13th

Scarritt Bennett Center,
Nashville, Tennessee, 1027 18th Ave S

Our Meeting Room: “The International Room”
Breakfast and Lunch at “Susie Gray Dining Hall”

reinhard.mueller@hfpo.com

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AGENDA

Friday, Oct 11th

Breakfast at the Scarritt Bennett Center 7:30–8:30 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions: 8:30–9:00 a.m.

I. How Can the Philosophy of Orientation Be Further Developed? Reports and Insights from Our Seminars

9:00–11:30 a.m., Coffee Break 10:00–10:30 a.m.

(each 15 min with 1-page position papers + 15 min debate)

A. Historical Views:

(9:00 – 10:00 a.m.)

1. In View of Greek Philosophy
(Olga Faccani, Enrico Müller, Angelo Tonelli)
2. In View of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Heidegger
(Timon Boehm, Enes Sütütemiz)

B. Contemporary Topics:

(10:30 – 11:30 a.m.)

3. Artificial Intelligence
(Chris Durt, Jesse Goodman)
4. Orientation in Leadership and Innovation
(Natalia Hartinger, Reinhard G. Mueller, George Ogata, Bettina Stumpp)

Lunch at the Scarritt Bennett Center 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

II. How Can the Philosophy of Orientation Be Applied Today?

2:00–3:00 p.m.

A. The Philosophy of Orientation as a Key Work for the Art of Living
(Reinhard G. Mueller)

B. Hedonistic Orientation: Pleasure and Pain as
Natural Sources of Orientation
for a Good Life (Manuel Knoll)

III. Philosophical Short Film Competition on the Theme of Orientation and Disorientation

3:30–6:00 p.m.

Presentation of the three winning films; ranking of the winners:

1. Alessandro Amico: “A Portrait of the Artist as an Old Woman”
2. Pauline Bricout: “Roots”
3. Alexandre Silveira: “From the Weight of the Earth to the
Lightness of the Body”

7:00 p.m.: Dinner at “Chef and I” (1922 Adelia St.)



Saturday, Oct 12th

Breakfast at the Scarritt Bennett Center 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

IV. Prize Essay Competition of the FPO:

8.30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

“How to Orient Oneself in Times of Multiple Crises?”

A. Presentation of the 5 contributions through
1-page position papers (each 10 min)

1. Natalia Hartinger: “Navigating Crises: How Human Needs Shape Our Orientation”
2. Tomáš Korda: “In the World We Trust: Crisis and Its Rationality”
3. Yuri Di Liberto: “From Disorientation to Co-Oriented in the Age of Multiple Crises”
4. Nataliia Reva: “The Multiple Crises of Orientation”
5. Dirk Stemper: “Resisting the Cassandra Complex: Integrating Unpredictability and Human Agency”

B. Debate among the Authors and later with the Audience

C. Debate without the Authors to Rank Their Contributions

Lunch at the Scarritt Bennett Center 11:30–12:30 a.m.

2:00–6:00 p.m.

Walk around Radnor Lake

Transfer via Shared Ubers

Personal Meetings, Free Discussions

7:00 p.m. Dinner at “Giovanni’s Ristorante” (909 20th Ave S.)



Sunday, Oct 13th

Breakfast at the Scarritt Bennett Center 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

V. Results and Plans of Our FPO Fellows in View of the Philosophy of Orientation

9:00–10:30 a.m.

1. Olga Faccani (2021-2022)
2. Nicolás Wiggensauser (2023-24)
3. Jes Heppler (2024-25)

(each 20 min with handouts, 10 min debate)

VI. Results and Plans of Our Guests in View of the Philosophy of Orientation

10:45–11:15 a.m.

Orientation Worlds in Politics (Douglas Giles)
(20 min with handouts, 10 min debate)

Lunch at the Scarritt Bennett Center 11:30–12:30 AM

VII. Presentations by Members of Our Advisory Council

2:30–5:30 PM

1. Grief and Aesthetic Means of Reorientation (Kathleen Higgins)
2. Over There: The Internationalization of American Pragmatism (Carlin Romano)
3. Plato's Dialogues and the Problem of Orientation (Enrico Müller)
4. TOPTEXT: The Function of Orientation in a Mathematical Language Model for Exploring Topics in Texts (Timon Boehm)

(each 20 min with handouts, 10 min debate)

**VIII. Book Launch of the *Courageous Beginnings*'
Revised and Augmented Edition**

6:00 p.m.

Courageous Beginnings:
Past and Present Insights and Some Proposals for Our Future Philosophical
Orientation
(Werner Stegmaier)

8:00 pm: Dinner at Ruth's Chris Steak House



Position Papers

I. How Can the Philosophy of Orientation Be Further Developed? Reports and Insights from Our Seminars

A) Historical Views

1. In View of Greek Philosophy

Olga Faccani, Enrico Müller, and Angelo Tonelli

In our seminar on “Orientations to and Beyond the Logos,” we explored the evolution of Logos from its origins in ancient Greek thought to its enduring influence on philosophical orientation, rationality, and ethics. While often reduced to rational thinking in modern interpretations, ancient Greek texts reveal a far more complex and fluid concept. Initially tied to storytelling in the works of Hesiod and Homer, Logos served as a way to make sense of the world through narrative. Parmenides elevated it as the source of all wisdom, while Heraclitus emphasized its plurality and flexibility, demonstrating that Logos could be understood in multiple, sometimes contradictory ways. Plato refined the concept further, presenting it as an autonomous activity of the soul, an inner dialogue, and a source of inspiration. Although later formalized by Aristotle within the framework of logic and scientific reasoning, Logos retained its deeper, enigmatic roots—remaining central to human orientation in an ever-changing world.

Our three brief presentations focus on the enduring importance of Logos, both in antiquity and today. We will examine how the concept of Logos was essential to ancient Greek thought and how it continues to shape modern philosophical, ethical, and rational inquiry. Firstly, we will discuss the broader concept of Logos as a foundational principle of order, narrative, and rationality. Secondly, we will explore how Parmenides and Heraclitus offered contrasting views of Logos. Finally, we will delve into Plato's interpretation of Logos, focusing on its role in dialectic, intellectual inquiry, and the pursuit of truth and the Good.

Seminar Results and Claims

1. In the course of our seminar, we discussed how *Logos*, throughout time and different authors, has provided the conceptual framework necessary for orienting oneself in a complex and often contradictory reality, offering a means of navigating philosophical inquiry.
2. In our discussions, we touched on how both *Logos* and *Orientation* serve as foundational principles within philosophy, where *Logos* provides the rational structure—the “why”—that guides our understanding of phenomena, while *Orientation* applies these structures in navigating the “how” of acting and deciding in uncertain, singular, and temporal situations.
3. *Logos* initiates a self-referential process of thought, allowing philosophy to develop rational truths beyond mere perception, as Parmenides' use of *nous* indicates.
4. In Heraclitus, *Logos* is not a static principle but an ongoing event that unifies opposing forces, portraying reality as a process of constant becoming and reconciliation. Heraclitus' *Logos*

illustrates how order arises not from static principles but from an ongoing process of gathering, interpreting, and unifying the flux of reality.

5. Socrates describes his paradoxical task in life in the *Apology* as the search for knowledge that he can never acquire. The name for this lifelong quest is Philosophy, its medium is the *Logos*.
6. Plato introduces *Logos* not only as a rational principle but also as a dialogical one, where knowledge emerges through situational and inter-individual conditions, as seen in the Socratic method.
7. The capacity for *Logos* is foundational for democratic participation, where rational dialogue enables collective decision-making and justice, reinforcing the link between reason and governance.

2. In View of Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Heidegger

Timon Boehm and Enes Sütütemiz¹

Nietzsche

The seminar series explored Nietzsche's works *The Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Antichrist*, emphasizing his notion of the will to power as a framework for revaluing all values and distinguishing between life-affirming and life-denying moralities. While Nietzsche's critique is deeply personal and laden with his own aesthetic preferences and judgments, it finds resonance with Werner Stegmaier's descriptive philosophy of orientation, which stresses the need for orientation to constantly re-evaluate itself in response to changing conditions. This convergence opens up an intriguing possibility: by integrating Nietzsche's critical and normative insights, Stegmaier's philosophy could evolve into an active force that increases self-awareness and fosters the reorientation of systems toward vitality, creativity, and growth.

1. Nietzsche's will to power serves as a methodological tool to expose and critique the prevailing values that shape modern practices, thereby distinguishing between life-affirming and life-denying moralities. This shows that the supposed validity of morals is not as self-evident as it seems (as in the case of ideologies). It also shows that every morality is paradoxical.
2. Integrating Nietzsche's critique with Stegmaier's philosophy of orientation enriches its analytical framework, enabling the transformation of ingrained systems and values into dynamic, life-enhancing ones through self-referential critique.

¹ The FPO was offering two seminars on Nietzsche covering the *Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Antichrist*, two seminars on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and a seminar on Spinoza's *Ethics*. We acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Reinhard G. Müller for co-teaching the first seminars on Nietzsche and Heidegger as well as Christopher Hill MA, MA, for co-teaching the second seminar on Heidegger and the seminar on Spinoza.

3. The alignment of Nietzsche's critical notion of the will to power and Stegmaier's self-referential philosophy of orientation creates a powerful critical tool that interprets, challenges, and reshapes values to promote vitality and self-overcoming.

Heidegger

Whereas there are many commonalities between the PO and the first part of *BT* (phenomenology and everydayness), there are conceptually interesting deviations in the second part, in particular concerning the notions of authenticity and time.

1. The question whether a life is authentic or inauthentic is deeper than whether an orientation is successful or unsuccessful, for it concerns the wholeness, unity, and uniqueness of that life. It provides a basic compass for all other orientations.
2. Heidegger shows that the basic striving in life need not be for calmness and reassurance, but to respond to any outstanding demand.
3. Finally, concern (*Sorge*) can only be understood through time which in *BT* is a more enveloping and fundamental concept than the lack or pressure of time (WIO 31).

Since time is implicit in all guiding concepts of the PO (e.g., decision; WIO 60), it would be a fruitful investigation to make this implicitness explicit.

Spinoza

1. Spinoza's *Ethics* is a radical reorientation of metaphysics gaining its power from the abstractness of concepts on the one hand, and the concreteness of the analysis of affects and relations on

the other. Without this process of self-enlightenment, all ethical virtues, and so orientation virtues, are in vain.

2. These processes are largely subconscious (in later psychoanalytical terms). The only clues and footholds we have are symptoms of causes, never causes themselves. Terms such as “decision” turn out to be mere rationalizations of what has already been “decided upon” subconsciously.
3. The Ethics, read against the grain, shows that any philosophical system is in itself circular and paradoxical, just as much as the PO. Also, it shows that systems pretending to be descriptive are in fact to a high degree normative.

B) Contemporary Topics

3. Artificial Intelligence

Chris Durt and Jesse Goodman

a) Chris Durt

Although AI is a rather new technology, it has already become apparent that it can profoundly change human orientation. Beyond earlier technologies, it is often made with the purpose of directly changing human orientation and other meaningful experience. We can expect the impact of AI to be bigger than that of, e.g., the printing press, which does contribute to the spread of writing but does not by itself generate new text, audio, pictures, or video, and does not autonomously operate behind the scenes.

A more meaningful comparison that was discussed by Chris Durt, Lucy Osler, and a large number of very engaged participants of the first *AI and Human Orientation* seminar is the technology of writing. The now often-overlooked changes writing brought to memory, thinking, communicating, and philosophical understanding have already been problematized by Plato in his – writing. These changes are also embedded in AI, which always operates with text regardless of whether the text represents human writing or videos or is used in other ways.

Starting from here, we have discussed topical contributions by renowned contemporary philosophers, most of whom have participated in the discussion of their texts. We continued doing so after the successful completion of the first seminar in a second seminar in which we extended the focus to creativity, music and art, chatbots, virtual healthcare, and digital communication. Fundamental theses we discussed in the popular seminars include:

1. When humans orient themselves, they experience themselves in a meaningful relation to a meaningful world and other living beings who themselves meaningfully relate to their environment. AI and other digital technologies, in contrast, process enormous amounts of data to produce output that is frequently compared to human-written text or human behavior. Like other digital technology, AI does not orient itself. However, it makes use of human orientation in so far as orientation shows in training data, and it can change human orientation in manifold areas and ways.
2. AI is trained with data derived from human language use and other behavior. These are embedded in a context of meaningful orientation, which guides human language use and other behavior. The contours and traces of meaningful orientation can be modelled by AI and recombined in ways that make sense to humans. Humans orient themselves when they give a prompt to an AI model, and they orient themselves with regard to its output.
3. AI intelligently modifies orientation in the world, e.g., with orientation technology that may guide us, or manipulate us. AI. Already a search engine is, unlike a compass, not neutral regarding its results and rather adjusts them according to the user's profile and computed likelihoods of profit-generating behavior. User orientation, for instance, communicative, educational, judicial, religious, and political orientation is changed in increasingly "intelligent," useful, complex, and obscure ways.
4. An even more comprehensive means of changing human orientation via modification of the situation is the creation of an augmented reality, or even a completely virtual reality.

The real-time measurement of a vast number of bodily states enables intimate surveillance, and the digital production of user experience (via interfaces) allows for tight control of the conditions of orientation. An always-changing reality is created that tightly controls not only a given situation but also all possible situations, which together constitute a whole reality computed specifically for each user.

5. Because AI is intertwined with the human mind, and because of the frequent comparisons of AI to humans, it may change and disturb the concept humans have of themselves, which may also change their orientation. For instance, when one's conception of AI suggests that humans are a kind of machine, this may profoundly impact how we orient ourselves toward ourselves and toward each other.

Because digital technology can process patterns in data in ways that make sense to humans, and because it is very different from humans, it can be very useful. It is important to distinguish when AI is genuinely helpful and when it may guide, nudge, persuade, or manipulate humans to believe or do things they may not really want. Since AI is intertwined with orientation and increasingly targets orientation, the concept of orientation is key for understanding the digitization of our world. The philosophy of orientation provides the conceptual means to clarify the philosophical issues at the heart of AI and to find orientation in the confusing manifold of developments.

b) Jesse Goodman

1. We must additionally consider the way humans are engaging in real time with new, “augmented” realities created by AI.

This will include especially the use of AI in advertising, in education, on social media, and for political/(dis)informational purposes. As AI is simultaneously a tool and a Language Model, the wide range of attempted practical applications are worthy of philosophical study.

2. Similarly, we must approach AI from a philosophy of mind standpoint, and ask whether it is meaningfully “intelligent” as its name claims.
3. Depending upon one’s philosophy of mind regarding AI, we may say it is meaningfully intelligent or not. But as human beings reorient themselves to the use of AI tools, this raises the question of to *what*, exactly, human beings are re-orienting themselves to. We see this actively in social media, where bot use has proliferated, and in what journalist Max Read has called “the Slop economy” of cheaply produced, AI written or generated products, especially mass-produced books of low quality.
4. AI in the classroom also remains an active question, as this is the gateway to concerns regarding AI’s impact on knowledge production and the originality of its means of parsing data, as well as the impact Chat-GPT’s use has on classrooms. Is it as alarmists say, that AI use gets in the way of real learning? Or should it be harnessed to augment learning and knowledge production?
5. Finally, taking in the evidence of economic and educational impacts, we can ask—what is it AI produces? Not only for us as orienting human beings, but what does it produce for itself, from its own perspective? Does it have a perspective? Does it orient itself? Is AI truly creative, and can it make art in the same way as humans, as a site of orientation?

4. Orientation in Leadership and Innovation

*Natalia Hartinger, Reinhard G. Mueller, George Ogata,
and Bettina Stumpp*

Leadership appears not only in human orientation, but also in that of animals and perhaps even all biological life. It has become a topic of great interest and innumerable publications, but it is still difficult to grasp. In everyday orientation, we orient ourselves to each other and follow those who promise advantageous orientation and thus leadership. Leadership appears when there are needs of orientation as well as differences of superior and inferior orientations. Every orientation takes place under the conditions of uncertainty and the pressure of time. Leadership is especially needed when people are in crisis or in an emergency (i.e., great time pressure). In such cases, people tend to follow those who orient themselves successfully. People with superior orientation skills, if they succeed at orienting themselves and others, gain influence and power and become leaders. If a group of hikers gets lost in the mountains and someone can read maps, estimate the points of the compass, and better than others distinguish between accessible and inaccessible paths, the rest of the group will follow him or her; if someone comes to a clear judgment while everyone else lacks orientation, the others will focus on him or her. In such cases, someone offers an orientation and the others 'place' or 'put' their trust in him or her.

Theses:

1. Just as orientation itself, leadership cannot be fully grasped in theoretical or scientific terms. All situations of leadership are singular; they cannot simply be objectified, nor can its principles be universalized. And yet, in reality leaders develop orientation routines in leadership situations that recur in similar patterns

whose structures can be grasped in orientation-philosophical terms.

2. Leaders orient themselves successfully, mastering difficult *situations of leadership*. Situations of leadership typically involve superior and inferior orientation abilities. Leadership is not limited to business or politics, but affects all parts of human orientation.
3. Leadership is part of our everyday orientation; it involves leaders and follows. Typically, a leader's orientation influences those of others and, as far as they follow him or her, he or she has power over them. Leaders may seek influence or not, be aware of their influence or not, and accept responsibility for others and their actions, or not.
4. Beyond having a superior orientation, successful leaders usually orient and inspire others, e.g., by means of a vision, communication, setting an appropriate mood, and taking responsibility.
5. Leadership likewise develops in routines of orientation, which in turn may create long-lasting power structures and mutual expectations. Power structures can fossilize and then impede new orientations when they may be required.
6. The 'entrepreneur' is a specific type of a leader who orchestrates innovation on a grand scale through "creative destruction" (Schumpeter). Different from other leaders, entrepreneurs tend to face greater risks and must show greater courage; more than others do they seek opportunities in uncertainties.

7. Today, under the conditions of global competition, innovation has become a “fundamental value” across all spheres of orientation (Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, p. 264). Leaders must navigate innovations. All innovators are leaders. The systematic stimulation of innovation has developed into its own industry.
8. There is no objective measure for assessing what makes a novelty an innovation. Such assessments are always perspectival, contextual, and retrospective. Most innovations remain controversial.
9. Over the past decades, a widespread paradigm shift in leadership has occurred from strict hierarchies to dynamic heterarchies and shared leadership. In business, key words for current trends are, e.g., agile, lean, collaborative, cognitive, holacratic.

II. How Can the Philosophy of Orientation Be Applied Today?

A) The Philosophy of Orientation as Key Work of the Art of Living

Reinhard G. Mueller

The concept of the art of living is as old as philosophy itself; it's about the question of how we live well. It has taken a multitude of shapes in the history of philosophy and has gained a lot of attention recently. And yet it has always remained problematic for philosophy. But since the art of living is less a theoretical question and rather a pragmatic one about how one lives well and successfully, the philosophy of orientation may be particularly suitable to approach it: just like art of living, orientation is about finding one's way in life. Doing so involves orientation virtues, orientation skills, and the ideal of a 'sovereign' orientation. In addition, the metaphor of the *art* of living also raises the question of the extent to which we are able to 'design' our orientation. To address this question, I focus on two fundamental structures of orientation: a) the self-arranging "orders" of horizon, standpoint, and perspective and b) "routines" as an orientation's "main foothold." Both structures create the leeways of freedom for any art of living. I argue that we can expand them by means of a) the art of perspectivizing and b) the art of habit design.

Theses:

1. The "art of living" is problematic in at least two ways: first, we're not completely free to create our lives like a sculpturer; life is not an object for a subject, but we're always already part of it. Second, we cannot provide a universal scientific answer to the question of what art of living means.

2. Since 'art of living' is not so much a theoretical question, but rather a pragmatic one of how one can live well and successfully, the philosophy of orientation may be particularly well-suited to approach it. Both orientation and art of living are about 'finding one's way in life.'
3. The art of living is not conceivable without the art of orientation; it may not only be its precondition, but also its core: because "the art of living cannot be more than the art of 'mastering' life, of 'making the best' out of the conditions of life." (W. Stegmaier) "Long-term art of living" means becoming "sovereign": "Sovereign is he or she who masters even surprising situations, pragmatic and moral ones as well, with an ease and certainty that wins even aesthetic admiration." (W. Stegmaier)
4. *Art of living* involves the aspect of artistic creation or of designing one's life, which raises the question of their leeways and how they can be expanded
5. The leeways for designing one's life can be found, for instance, in the structures of orientation: a) orientation's self-arranging "order" of horizon, standpoint, and perspective, and b) "routines" as the main foothold of orientation.
6. We can become artists of our lives by means of a) the art of perspectivizing and b) the art of habit design.
7. However, having wider leeways is not always 'better'; they may also lead us astray. Eventually we must again 'find our way' as artists of life.

**B. Hedonistic Orientation:
Pleasure and Pain as Natural Sources of Orientation
for a Good Life**

Manuel Knoll

Hedonism holds that pleasure is good and that pain and suffering are bad. As a philosophy of life, hedonism aims at both maximizing pleasure and at reducing pain and suffering as much as possible. In my ongoing project to develop a *hedonistic ethics* and a *transhumanist hedonism*, I argue in line with the tradition of hedonistic philosophers (Aristippus of Kyrene, Eudoxus of Cnidos, Theodorus, Epicurus, etc.) that hedonism can and should be based on human nature. Hedonism claims that it is natural and good to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain. Like other versions of transhumanism, a transhumanist hedonism aims at the fullest realization of all possibilities of the human being. This version of transhumanism argues that a good life requires a lot of leisure and free time to experience a substantial amount of pleasure and to explore new sources of pleasure. It aims at finding ways to continuously increase and actualize the human being's bodily and mental potential for pleasure.

My new project is geared towards exploring what hedonism has to offer to the philosophy of orientation. This project is based on the thesis that pleasure and displeasure are natural sources of orientation for a good life. The search for pleasure guides us in many directions and leads us toward many paths that we should pursue. The desire to avoid pain makes us see many routes that we would do better to refrain from. However, our search for pleasure could also lead us in directions detrimental to a good and happy life. The striving for pleasure is only a valuable source of orientation if it is guided or oriented by reason which, e.g., anticipates undesired consequences such as pain, illness, and suffering. To a certain extent, reason is able to analyze the consequences of various pleasures

and displeasures and to calculate whether the pleasure-pain balance of our lives is positive overall. Pleasures that lead to more pain than pleasure on the whole should usually be avoided. Some displeasures, such as those associated with regular physical activity, should be aimed at, as they are outweighed by the pleasures that can be experienced as a healthy individual.

Both the research of my old and new project faces several difficult questions: Is it true that all pleasure is good as most hedonists claim? Are all other goods such as knowledge, friendship, and beauty only good and valuable because they bring us pleasure or satisfaction? Are these other goods only derived from pleasure as the highest value? Are all pleasures just subjective and relativistic experiences or is it possible to establish *a rank order of pleasures* that could be based on human nature? My project not only aims at answering these questions but also explores the potential that a form of orientation based on pleasure and pain can offer for a rapidly changing world.

Thesis 1 (the basic claim of hedonism): Pleasure is good, pain and suffering are bad. Pleasure is a superior good because it is an end in itself. It is a final goal that is not used as a means to other ends.

Thesis 2 (the philosophical foundation): Hedonism can and should be based on human nature. Hedonism claims that it is natural and good to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain. Hedonism is based on the physiological, biological, and psychological basic constitution of the human being.

Thesis 3 (philosophy of orientation): Pleasure and displeasure are natural sources of orientation for a good life.

Thesis 4 (the role of reason): The striving for pleasure and the avoidance of pain are only valuable sources of orientation if they are guided or oriented by reason.

Thesis 5 (a pleasure-pain balance): To a certain extent, reason is able to analyze the consequences of various pleasures and displeasures and calculate whether the pleasure-pain balance of our lives is positive overall.

Thesis 6 (transhumanism and the relation of work and leisure): My version of hedonism claims that in Western societies work and its value are overrated and that we should rather aim at reducing the amount of work done by humans as much as possible and at increasing our amount of leisure and pleasure.

Thesis 7 (politics and the state): Hedonism is linked to individualism and is usually opposed to collectivism and the needs of the state or the government.

III. Philosophical Short Film Competition on the Theme of ‘Orientation and Disorientation’

The Finalists:

1. **Alessandro Amico: “A Portrait of the Artist as an Old Woman”**

After losing her husband, late actress and director Pia Morra opens up about her intimate journey through grief, pain, and isolation. She explores how disorientation, after such a loss, affects her life both personally and artistically. Her path toward healing becomes a spiritual one, where past, present, and future begin to merge. As she navigates this complex emotional terrain, Pia searches for a renewed sense of self, discovering a new strength. Her story is one of transformation, where suffering leads to growth, and confusion paves the way for a deeper understanding of life and purpose.

2. **Pauline Bricout: “Roots”**

Since 2020, I’ve been making music videos in motion design and traditional animation, and it was with this passion that I began collaborating with Jaffna on their track “Oslo.” Their initial, seemingly simple request – “draw me a man” – immediately evoked, for me, a resonance with the work of Saint-Exupéry, and that famous line from *The Little Prince*: “Draw me a sheep.”

With this philosophical reflection in mind, I imagined illustrated representations of Bravin and Stan, the two members of the duo. The clip for “Roots” presents them as two complementary souls, embarking on a dreamlike journey, each in their own universe, while bringing a touch of poetry to the world around them. Their fusion, in a luminous apotheosis, symbolizes the profound union of two entities which, together, create a new force, Jaffna.

Beyond this visual journey, it is a metaphor for the human experience. Like human beings, these two characters evolve through the challenges and encounters that mark their journey. This journey is an allegory of the human condition: we are shaped by our trials, but above all by our interactions with others, by openness, culture and learning. It is this profoundly human dimension, this need to build oneself through others, that lies at the heart of my creations, a theme that transcends every project I undertake.

3. Alexandre Silveira: “From the Weight of the Earth to the Lightness of the Body”

A certain orientation is essential to escape the false mental heritage imposed by Christian moral culture, capitalism and the family institution. In this haptic desert, where the hierarchy of the empire of the gaze no longer claims to know reality, the wanderer - a man of consciousness - finds himself disoriented after a moment of clarity regarding his own condition. The white man, the anchorite, burns his guilty heresy and engages in a final reading of the sacred texts that have served as the foundations for his own false edifices, perpetually under renovation, for it has sown only war and destruction.

From the priest in flames to Zarathustra awakening from the greatest of nightmares. The terrible clarity of recognizing that his will to power has always been constrained and shaped by external forces. We must navigate the disorientation of the desert within ourselves, transforming the weight of the testament into the flame that burns and illuminates becoming, when the madman returns from his journey, in the guise of a hermit. Adrift of feet over this yellow sea resembles the broken hull of a moored ship. Do the winds echo the voices of the ancestors? Flat vectors of varied choices. Infinite aridity of hostile smoothness. The

immanent paradox of being: external, extensive and natural; internal, intense and virtual.

To create is to exile. ?

Nothing remains under the aegis of knowledge. The erosive writing of memory of unheard prophets, prisoners of time. Whom will this God serve? Except for these dictators seated on hemorrhoids, on their stolen gold thrones! The temptation in the ears of the priests in the desert was, and still is, their own thoughts pointing to other becomings. The creation for the Beyond-man echoed his ears like fallen angels, yet it was the breath of singularities rising from these power games. Push the external forces of the world to re-exist as body.

Enough with resentment! We are indeed the masters within our own house and our guidance is the event itself; it is the second foot of a dancer as she leaps off the ground; it is the sand slipping through our fingers; it is the thought and the ongoing creation of life in perpetual motion. Enough of the static intoxication of passions! What defines us now manifests as active nature, free from the shackles of servitude.

IV. Prize Essay Competition

“How to Orient in Times of Multiple Crises?”

The Finalists:

Natalia Hartinger, Tomáš Korda, Yuri Di Liberto, Nataliia Reva, and
Dirk Stemper

1. Natalia Hartinger:

“Guiding through Crises: How Human Needs Shape Our Orientation”

This paper delves into the interaction between Werner Stegmaier’s *Philosophy of Orientation* and Maslow’s *Theory of Human Motivation* in the context of crises. Crises destabilize familiar routines and compel individuals to develop new orientation strategies. The paper posits that human needs are the driving force behind orientation processes, with deficiency-oriented needs focused on immediate survival and protection, while growth-oriented needs encourage exploration and innovation.

Crises challenge the effectiveness of existing orientation mechanisms, often requiring adaptation. Furthermore, the paper contends that “orientation innovation” is often accelerated in times of crisis, as growth needs push individuals to create new ways of navigating these turbulent situations.

Key Theses

1. **Needs direct orientation processes:** Human needs fundamentally drive orientation, setting the focus and guiding actions.
2. **Context plays a crucial role in orientation:** Orientation is shaped by internal needs and the external environment.
3. **Crises necessitate reorientation:** In times of crisis, previously effective routines fail, requiring individuals and societies to establish new mechanisms to regain stability and direction.

4. **Relying on familiar routines and interpretation:** In uncertain situations, individuals often rely on previous successful orientation mechanisms, but changing contexts can render these mechanisms ineffective, requiring adaptive strategies.
5. **Deficiency- vs growth-oriented needs:** Needs can be deficiency-oriented (focused on immediate survival) or growth-oriented (seeking exploration and innovation). This vector determines whether a person seeks external support or internal solutions when seeking new orientation in crises.
6. **Orientation innovation arises from growth needs:** Growth-oriented needs encourage the development of new problem-solving approaches, leading to “orientation innovation,” where novel strategies emerge during crises.
7. **Reorientation fosters new morals:** Crises can lead to the creation of new moral and societal guiding principles, as individuals and groups innovate to adapt to the challenges they face.

2. Tomáš Korda: “In the World We Trust: Crisis and Its Rationality”

Introduction: A crisis is a crisis because it threatens our worldview by challenging our intellect and undermining our interpretation of the world. To retain the original meaning of “crisis,” we must recognize that it represents a moment of division—a critical decision where we must choose whether to challenge our understanding of the world as part of the problem or to continue within existing ways of thinking, thereby suppressing the crisis.

A Difference between Past and Contemporary Crises: Historically, crises have often revealed the limitations of dominant worldviews. For example, the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression were not just economic disruptions; they represented a crisis of the liberal economic paradigm. The rise of neoliberal hegemony in the seventies can be seen as a response to the crisis of the Keynesian inflationary model. Russia’s war against Ukraine challenges Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis, which posited liberal democracy as the ultimate model for other nations to follow. However, when we confront contemporary crises, we often lack clarity about which worldview is being challenged. It is this uncertainty that constitutes a crisis. If we could easily identify the worldview in question in advance, the crisis would lose its seriousness and we would know what to do.

The Ecological Crisis: Questioning Anthropocentrism? Contrary to popular belief, it is uncertain whether the ecological crisis is fundamentally rooted in the worldview that accepts the inherent value of humans or anthropocentrism. It may, in fact, persist because we assume we already know it is a crisis of human domination over nature. This anticipatory “knowing in advance” reflects our intellectual arrogance—the belief that we *already* fully understand the crisis and its nature.

A Call for Intellectual Humility: To effectively navigate a crisis, I suggest we adopt an attitude of intellectual humility. This means a willingness to abandon our own lens through which we interpret the world around us. Dominant interpretative frameworks distance us from the crisis, so when they fail, we experience a profound collapse—a personal disintegration of our deepest convictions and dogmas. In Hegelian terms, this collapse is an “experience”—a counter-punch that shatters our current shape of consciousness and the world that corresponds with it. The crisis compels us to undergo a transformative experience of this kind, yet because it is painful, we instinctively attempt to evade it.

Overcoming Fear Through Trust in Objective Rationality: Given our inclination to repress crises, I suggest that we overcome our fear by trusting in the world’s inherent rationality. This trust assumes that the world has an inherent “progressive” tendency to resolve its crises, but our subjective rationality obstructs this process. In order to identify this objective rationality, I propose to analyzing multiple crises simultaneously, overlapping them to show how solutions in one area of social life affect other areas. This overlap forces us to choose solutions that address several crises at once, roughly in line with Kant’s categorical imperative. Can the solution to one crisis be universalized and applied to other crises? If a particular solution meets this criterion, it is free from subjective bias and based on objective rationality. But this approach is based on a trust in the rationality of the world that there is a solution that solves several crises at once.

Example: The Case for Nuclear Energy: In my essay, I present nuclear energy as an example of a ‘solution’ universalizable to several crises. Unlike other energy sources, nuclear energy not only avoids producing greenhouse gases but also enhances a country’s energy self-sufficiency—an increasingly important factor in times of international upheaval and

unreliable trading partners. This example also demonstrates that the environmental crisis does not necessarily challenge our anthropocentric view of nature. Instead, it shows that our instrumentalization of nature for human purposes needs to be much more efficient and enhanced to tackle ecological disasters.

Conclusion: Approaching crises with intellectual humility allows the objective rationality of the world to speak for itself. This approach abandons preconceived notions and seeks solutions that address multiple challenges simultaneously: integrative solutions in a complex world.

Claims/Theses:

1. A benign assumption of the world's inherent rationality is essential for navigating crises, as it allows us to challenge subjective worldviews and provides an objective foundation for action.
2. The world's purposive tendency to resolve crises becomes clear when we overlap different crises and identify solutions that address them simultaneously.
3. A crisis is a challenge to a particular worldview, so we must be prepared to relinquish our own subjective perspective, despite the discomfort it may cause, because we cannot know in advance which worldview the crisis is targeting—and it could very well be ours.
4. This is the intellectual humility embodied in Kafka's aphorism: "In the fight between you and the world, back the world." However, this stance holds meaning only if we presuppose the world's inherent rationality; otherwise, backing the world would simply reinforce another subjective worldview.

3. Yuri Di Liberto: “From Disorientation to Co-Orientation in the Age of Multiple Crises”

Our essay starts by putting together Stegmaier’s concept of orientation with insights from the field of psychoanalysis. By doing so, we show how the disorienting effect of the ongoing crises evokes mechanisms and operations which are crucial for orientation. Disavowal, for example, is a way to maintain the appearance of stable orientation. Moving on from the microscale of individual orientation to the macroscale of collective and social orientation, we provide a relational and interconnected picture of Stegmaier’s *functional systems* to demonstrate how different crises affect different people and areas in a *differentiated* (rather than *absolute* or *uniform*) way. Moreover, the “fast” abbreviations allowed by society’s systems might represent a double-edged solution to face slow or chronic critical conditions. In other words, the technocratic dream of “automating orientation” might overlook fundamental ethical and moral considerations, which are crucial in the long run and for a future-oriented orientation. Our essay nonetheless proposes an alternative way. Drawing on Stegmaier’s account of scientific orientation, we argue that scientific procedures are the quintessential model of co-orientation: scientific practice is the only field in which one’s orientation is dependent on the orientation of others. This intrinsic relational property of the scientific enterprise makes it a viable alternative form of orientation in an age of ongoing global crises.

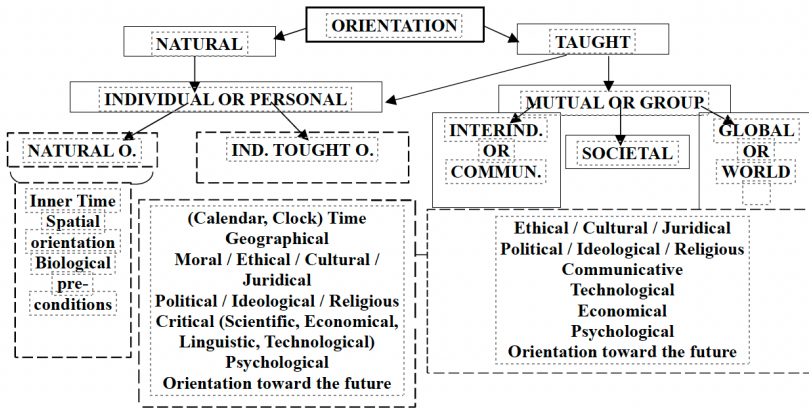
- Orientation is a multi-modal process involving the body, the psyche and also external apparatuses and reference points. Therefore, it also serves the purpose of maintaining an internal feeling of stability, what in psychoanalysis can be called *homeostasis*.

- Embedded within Stegmaier's philosophy of orientation there's a complementary theory of disorientation.
- When facing disorienting events, the default response is *not* to re-orient oneself, but rather to stave off disorientation as much as possible through heterogeneous mechanisms.
- Faced with the loss of orientation, we re-orient ourselves or attempt to impose *normality* on an abnormal situation
- Disorientation, like vulnerability, is not evenly distributed. Although empirical data and surveys show the psychological impact of both slow crises (pandemics, economic recessions, etc.) and fast ones (wars, heat waves, etc.), different groups or regions of the world are disoriented in different ways to different degrees.
- In the age of multiple crises, all the various crises are interconnected and influence one another. The *polycrisis* that emerges implies a reshaping of the interactions between different orientation systems (economy, politics, bureaucratic bodies, health systems, etc.).
- Today's procedural democracies might be ill-equipped to address a state of chronic polycrisis. The framework of quick "Yes or No" decisions, while efficient, leaves the broader issue of re-orienting ethics and longterm goals unaddressed.

4. Nataliia Reva: “The Multiple Crises of Orientation”

The paper’s main aim is to respond to three questions: “*What is orientation?*”, “*What is crisis?*” and “*How are they related?*”

According to Werner Stegmaier, orientation involves human ability to finding paths both in the terrain and through all the circumstances of human life, especially in the situations of uncertainty. I propose to extend the understanding of the concept of orientation even further and *see it not only as a skill of any type of navigation, but also a natural ability, without which one cannot survive.* Therefore, we can divide the orientation into two kinds – *Natural* and *Thought Orientation*, where each have its different types.



I argue that for the philosophy of orientation, the concept of crisis is important in both: broad sense, as a difficulty corresponding to some type (or types) of orientation, and narrow, as a specific event or situation in which one should orient him/herself (it could be a huge World Crisis or a minuscule choice of a drink).

Each type of orientation has its own related crises. Natural orientation crises are strictly embodied, while Taught – not always. One should remember that they are all interconnected and interchangeable. For instance, today, geographical orientation is closely bonded to the use of new technologies, and if something happens to the gear, and our memory fails us, that is when our communicational orientation comes on stage.

Some crises can be temporal and have a natural origin, like growing up or ageing; others impact from outside. For example, bad relationships with the people who surrender you daily can worsen mutual psychological orientation and result in other types of crises, like maladaptive coping, recovery difficulties, interpersonal problems, crises of autonomy and self-reliance, attachment crises that affect one's ability to form healthy bonds, and in the worst-case scenario, even suicidal and self-harm inclinations.

Moreover, some types of orientations can have a negative impact on other types. For example, the cognitive biases strengthened by political, ideological, or religious orientation can unfavourably affect people's critical orientation. Therefore, to understand an event clearly, individual overall orientation (as a complex of different types of orientation) should also be stable and transparent.

5. Dirk Stemper: “Resisting the Cassandra Complex: The Power of Tentative Thinking in Times of Uncertainty”

The essay “Resisting the Cassandra Complex” provides an innovative framework for understanding and responding to the challenges of polycrisis—concurrent and interrelated breakdowns in numerous global systems showing complex, non-linear behavior creating systemic risks spreading across the biophysical, socio-metabolic, and cultural-institutional domains. It critically addresses the limitations of deterministic and Neo-Gnostic alarmist thinking, elements of the Cassandra Complex, ignoring different levels of orientation creating mainly a sense of inevitability or overwhelming complexity.

Theses

1. **Challenging Determinism with Tentative Thinking:** The essay introduces tentative thinking as a counterpoint to exclusively deterministic narratives. This approach emphasizes the range of possible outcomes and encourages strategic interventions, thus fostering adaptability and resilience.
2. **Promoting Human Agency in Crisis Response:** A key thesis of the essay is its focus on human intentionality and agency. It argues that individuals and societies possess the capacity to influence outcomes, even in highly complex systems, countering fatalistic attitudes and underscores the importance of open engagement, self-aware of its limitations.
3. **Integrating Historical and Tentative Thinking:** The essay draws on historical analysis with tentative thinking, advocating for a flexible and open-ended approach to understanding crises. This methodology helps in navigating uncertainty and complexity by valuing diverse perspectives and adaptive strategies.

4. **Embracing Complexity and Uncertainty:** A polycrisis is characterized by sensitivity to initial conditions and unpredictable behavior, thereby challenging traditional deterministic models of natural and human-made phenomena. Rather than viewing uncertainty as a barrier, the essay sees it as a core element of crisis navigation, as does philosophy of orientation. It encourages moving beyond simplistic or reductive solutions.
5. **Resisting the Cassandra Complex:** It confounds two levels of orientation, paralleling Arendt's distinction between reason and thinking. Both have been around in Western thinking about orientation since Antiquity. Overcoming a Neo-Gnostic desire for instant delivery from crises avoids futile fortune-telling and historical narcissism, and instead harnessing past practices, providing meaningful footholds for orientation in uncertainty.

Conclusion

This paper argues for resisting rigid, deterministic thinking and unsound, a-historical actionism, and relying on 'open questions', suspended conceptualization and hermeneutic recursivity instead, as endorsed by Cues' tentative thinking and *docta ignorantia*. "Resisting the Cassandra Complex" advocates a robust framework compounding probabilistic thinking and human agency, challenging prevailing fatalistic narratives and empowering more effective crisis management strategies.

V. Results and Plans of Our FPO Fellows in View of the Philosophy of Orientation

1. Olga Faccani (FPO Fellow 2021-2022)

Dissertation Title: *Tragic Bonds: Death, Disorientation,
and Trauma in Euripides*

In my dissertation I explored how characters re-orient themselves in the aftermath of death and trauma in three of Euripides' tragedies: Heracles, Alcestis, and Trojan Women. My research investigated the significance of uncertainty and loss in Euripides and, more broadly, how the theater as an art form enacts the process of disorientation and uniquely exposes its spectators to change.

Ancient Greek tragedies often dramatize spaces of ethical uncertainty, over which human beings have little control. These works expose spectators to a loss of footholds, disrupted routines, and fragmentary memories. Through the safety of the theater, Greek tragedies prompt audiences to contemplate how they might act in the face of unexpected trauma, the meaning of suffering, and the limits of human understanding. Euripides' works prominently feature existential questions, casting characters into situations of profound uncertainty and the breakdown of familiar routines.

My dissertation problematized the idea that characters on the ancient Greek stage are strictly bound by rituals and rules. Instead, I showcased how Euripides presents a rich case study of the connections between disorientation, change, and reorientation. By focusing on characters' interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations in the wake of unexpected, life-changing events, I demonstrated how ancient Greek tragedy provides a powerful framework for exploring existential questions through performance. Just as theater constitutes a privileged medium for

enacting trauma, loss, and grief, it also becomes a space for investigating the disorientations that accompany these experiences.

Since the completion of my dissertation project as the first FPO Fellow in 2022, I have continued to collaborate with the Foundation for Philosophical Orientation as a member of the advisory council. I have co-facilitated seminars, including “Orientation/Disorientation in Ancient Greek Philosophy & Literature” and, most recently, “Orientations to and beyond the Logos.” Additionally, I have participated in the ACLA conference as a seminar organizer, most recently with Reinhard Mueller in a seminar on “Orientation to Texts and Knowledge: From Antiquity to AI.” Currently, I am publishing a chapter in the MLA volume *Approaches to Teaching Homer’s Odyssey*, publishing date in 2025, titled “The Odyssey Project: Teaching the Odyssey to Incarcerated Students,” co-authored with Dr. Michael Morgan.

Project Claims

- My project centers on characters’ interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations in the wake of unexpected and life-changing events, that force characters to re-orient themselves
- In analyzing the ways in which characters re-orient themselves in the aftermath of change and trauma in Greek tragedy, I turn to the medium of theater, rather than the philosophical medium, to research how the theater art form enacts the process of disorientation and uniquely exposes its spectators to change
- I am interested in how Greek tragedies show their audiences the process of disorientation within the protected space of the theater: from their theoretical seats, spectators can think about how to act in the face of unexpected change, about the meaning of suffering, and about the horizons that limit the view of their human orientations

- I analyze how Euripides dramatizes the process of disorientation encompassing the characters' loss of footholds and routines, and spans across local, communicative, and existential disorientations
- My project shows how ancient Greek tragedy represents an important framework for the exploration of existential questions through performance, just as theater constitutes a privileged medium for the enactment of trauma, loss, and grief
- My project investigates the significance of uncertainty and change in Euripides
- My project problematizes the notion that characters' actions on the ancient Greek stage are bound by a strict set of rituals and rules, and instead showcases instances of character interactions in situations of uncertainty and traumatic change.

2. Nicolás Wíghenhauser (FPO Fellow 2023-24)

Dissertation Title: *The Evolution of the Cortico-Striatal System: Understanding Learning, Behavioral Control, and Decision-Making in Mammals and Primates*

Orientation is the most realistic philosophical approach for our current time, helping us navigate through our bewildering world. Nevertheless, until now, no research has connected orientation with the neuroscience behind it and its evolutionary history. As a result of this gap in our knowledge, this doctoral project offers a unique opportunity and novel contribution to the philosophy of orientation. This research provides a scientific explanation of the evolutionary reasons why orientation is crucial for human existence and adaptation. The cortico-striatal system (CSS), a primordial neural network, generates the behavioral repertoires that define human intelligence, particularly human orientation. This approach is an attempt to explain the evolution of decision-making, routines, and spatial navigation in different mammalian and primate lineages by quantifying the morphological variation in their neural substrate. I measured and analyzed the brain volumes of 547 extant species of mammals and the striatal subregions of 55 primates, accounting for the most extensive datasets ever examined for a study of these characteristics in Evolutionary Biology. Quantifying the precise neuroanatomy of the CSS across the phylogeny of mammals and primates is crucial to answering why orientation, as the cognitive outcome of human brain evolution towards optimal adaptation, must be embraced by everyone.

Theses:

1. My work describes the neuroscience behind orientation.
2. This research contributes to understanding the deep evolution of orientation.

3. The CSS mediates orientation in the brain.
4. Decision-making is fundamental to understanding orientation.
5. Orientation is the result of the critical adaptive role of routines.
6. Orientation as spatial navigation is a crucial evolutionary success.
7. The neural adaptations of orientation evolved multiple times in mammals.
8. Orientation is essential for the highly specialized Primate cognition.
9. The uniqueness of human intelligence gives rise to a distinctive orientation.
10. Orientation is a crucial adaptation for human evolutionary success.

3. Jes Heppler (FPO Fellow 2024-25)

Dissertation Title: *Gut Feelings and Embodied Epistemology*

Goals: Philosophers have focused extensively on the role of rationality, reason, and decision-making in our lives. Yet, many of us report making some of our most important life decisions on our gut feelings—an embodied appraisal of a situation that is given to us through our bodily feelings and whose line of reasoning we cannot trace. My dissertation is the first philosophical exploration of gut feelings and considers the affective, epistemic, and ethical role of gut feelings. This framework provides a foundation for further research in philosophy, cognitive science, psychology, and business. I offer justification as well as caution for the intuitive idea that we ought to listen to our guts, arguing that we can adopt a reliabilist attitude towards our gut feelings so long as we critically hypothesize about the learnings, life experiences, influences, and instincts that inform our gut feelings. I argue that gut feelings play a crucial epistemic role in our lives while offering pragmatic arguments for how we ought to orient to our gut feelings to gain the self-knowledge needed for us to live as responsible and self-aware moral, epistemic, and social beings.

1. I argue that our bodies play a crucial and underrated role in how we pre-reflectively orient to the world. I note that intuitions have modes of presentation and argue for the existence of intuitions with a bodily mode of presentation, or gut feelings.
2. I propose that gut feelings are an embodied, valenced, revelatory appraisal of an intentional object. Although embodied appraisals might occur without awareness, a gut feeling must be in one's conscious purview in order to be a gut feeling. Typically, it is detected through interoception (i.e., perception of sensation

inside of one's body) and can be as indeterminate as a "bad feeling" or as specific as a drop in one's stomach.

3. Gut feelings play a distinct epistemic role because they are revelatory. Gut feelings reveal an incongruity between what our body seems to be responding to and appraising versus what we consciously apprehend in our environment (e.g., someone may seem to be perfectly polite, and yet, you have a really bad feeling about this person's intentions).
4. I propose that we have an embodied epistemology which plays an important explanatory role for our moral, social, and practical orientation towards the world. Our embodied epistemology includes a suite of prior learning, instincts, heuristics, and social cognition that make up the predictive processes that shape our embodied response to the world. Consider the effect of looking down the Grand Canyon Skywalk—despite having a glass floor between you and the Grand Canyon and believing you are safe, it is a fearsome sight. Likewise, social conditioning that we may not rationally agree with also shapes our reactions.
5. We do not have direct access to our embodied epistemology; however, we can gain inferential and speculative self-knowledge by taking a behaviorist and spectatorial perspective towards ourselves. When we are courageous enough to take the spectatorial stance towards ourselves, we can take note of our affective and interoceptive patterns (e.g., what am I drawn towards, what makes me feel anxious, what do I shy away from?). The inferential self-knowledge we get from our embodied epistemology is messy, imperfect, playful, hypothetical, and necessary when we attempt to reorient our automatic reactions.

6. Understanding our habits of affect, thought, and orientation allows us to move through the world as more responsible agents. When we are aware of our own horizons—which can include common fallacies, biases, and personal dispositions—we can work towards acting and responding in value-aligned ways.
7. We can improve our gut feelings and shift our embodied epistemology. Experimenting with new patterns, acting differently than one might usually, seeking external evidence about particular inquiries and even therapy can shift our embodied epistemology by shifting our predictive processes. Novel experiences introduce new possibilities for orienting to our emotions, our world, and our relationships.
8. I argue that we can be domain-specific reliabilists about our gut feelings when we have a history of our gut being a reliable guide for prediction and action in particular contexts. If I have a good feeling about a job and know that my best jobs have historically been gut feeling decisions, I am justified in making that decision based on my gut feeling. In other cases, justification for following one's gut depends on other evidence, context, stakes, morality, and the potential for harm.
9. There will always be a place for rational reflection because we don't always get answers about our gut feelings. We can hypothesize about why we fear squirrels or seek adventure without ever getting certainty. Similarly, our inquiries into our embodied epistemology will not always yield answers. Similarly, we don't always get external confirmation about whether our gut feelings are correct.

10. Mystery is an important part of our epistemic and moral lives, and it creates room for new ways to orient to the world around us. Many of the ambiguities that plague gut feelings also plague more ordinary cases of perceiving, acting, and making decisions. Letting life unfold might involve following a strange gut feeling to a new job in a new country, or ignoring a gut feeling when you suspect you need to be challenged. For this reason, we should seek perspectival strength and flexibility that allows us to shift between the hard-won wisdom of our guts while also reflecting, with openness and curiosity, about the source of our gut feelings.

VI. Results and Plans of Our Guests in View of the Philosophy of Orientation

Orientation Worlds in Politics

Douglas Giles

Politics is usually portrayed as a contest or battle between politicians. This is ironic because what the word “politics” really should mean is a sense of community. The word “politics” comes from the ancient Greek word “polis,” which simply means “the city.” Politics is the discussion or debate about how government and society should be structured, how decisions for society should be made, and how social institutions should function and to what ends. There are multiple forms of government and many ideas about how society should work, but all are subject to decision-making, and decision-making is subject to one’s position in society and one’s orientation to society.

I have been researching political ideologies, movements, and conflicts, applying recognition theory and a phenomenological approach to try to understand better the root causes of bigotry and injustice and their role in beliefs and political action. When I encountered the philosophy of orientation, I saw the connections between it and recognition theory and how a combination of the theories could help us understand political beliefs and actions, especially in the role that politics plays in the construction and maintenance of personal identities and social meanings. The conceptual resources of recognition and orientation give us tools for a broad and deep phenomenological study of political beliefs and actions. The findings of this study will help us understand political ideologies and their resulting conflicts, providing further conceptual resources for crafting constructive political engagement and dialogue.

Thesis Points

- Werner Stegmaier says that politics is one way in which people can manage their survival and their coexistence with others.
- Rules and identities allow for orders that you can more firmly rely on in your orientation as you try to find your way in new situations with varying degrees of success: you can reckon with them. - Werner Stegmaier
- Recognition is the set of actions and attitudes through which we affirm people and their conduct. Recognition norms provide us with the rules and identities that we use to navigate our social world.
- We cannot make sense of social conflicts, and the way our embeddedness in the social world gives rise to moral and ethical dilemmas, without understanding the way that our sensitivity to recognition orients us in the world. - Cillian McBride
- The political landscape and structures within a society set limits for freedom and interaction, with those limits being informed by orientations and recognition norms.
- There are specific recognition norms for all functional social systems: education, science, art, and so on, including politics.
- There are myriad interconnections among functional social systems, but my suspicion is that politics has a unique role in society and that the philosophy of orientation can help us understand how political orientations function within the larger set of functional social systems.

VII. Presentations by Members of Our Advisory Council

1. Grief and Aesthetic Means of Reorientation

Kathleen Higgins

As Werner Stegmaier observes, the death of a loved one can be extremely disorienting. Various features of grief contribute to disorientation. The basic presuppositions that have been implicit in one's prior orientation no longer seem secure. Physical symptoms make one's own body seem somewhat alien. Temporal disturbances, such as the often-reported atemporality of bereavement, undermine the forward-looking character of orientations. The challenges of double contingency are exacerbated. Living people are overly self-conscious in their behavior toward the bereaved, and faith in the health of the relationship one has had with the deceased hitherto is hindered by the floods of memories that are untethered to the present and the ambiguous feelings of the person's simultaneous presence and absence. The disruption of previous entwinement of the person's orientation and bodily behavior with one's own creates disorientation within the environment. The role that other people can play in stabilizing one's orientation is limited, for they continue to rely on footholds and patterns that no longer seem relevant, and their behavior is often stilted in the circumstances.

Aesthetic practices (creative, participatory, and reflective) can provide provisional holds and leeways, making disorientation less extreme and facilitating some degree of reorientation. I will suggest that:

1. Rituals restore a sense of social embeddedness and mitigate the challenges of double-contingency.
2. Aesthetic practices help cultivate the space of imaginative play, the *Spielraum*, that Jonathan Lear considers appropriate to mourning, and they give social validation to operating in it.

3. Prior aesthetic experience can offer reassuring awareness of one's ability to navigate in contexts that lack many familiar footholds, and specific artworks can provide clues and signs that offer guidance.
4. Shared aesthetic background experiences can provide a vocabulary for communicating (despite the difficulty of coordinating with others' orientations).
5. The aesthetic is a favored space for engaging with the dead.
6. Artworks offer perspectives for reflection that may help one to assimilate one's loss into an orientation.

2. Over There: The Internationalization of American Pragmatism

Carlin Romano

Philosophy scholars, especially in the U.S., traditionally see “pragmatism” as an American philosophy launched in the late 19th century by a familiar group of men--Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Weathered white guys with beards, except for smooth-faced, mustachioed Dewey. Americans in the sense of U.S. citizens. Giants of the “Golden Age” of American philosophy who gave us such foundational pragmatist principles as “Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts” (Peirce). Their arguable successors, such as Quine, Rorty and Putnam, have kept the nationalist notion of pragmatism alive. In the last 25 years, however, pragmatism exploded as a topic of interest and philosophical approach around the world, with Peirce, Dewey and James Centers everywhere from Germany to China to India. I’ll consider some of the philosophical claims and issues raised by this phenomenon:

- 1—Pragmatism should NOT be seen as essentially a U.S. philosophy or characteristic.
- 2—Pragmatism is just as well understood as intrinsic to Latin-American culture and philosophy.
- 3—A number of German philosophers, such as Apel, Habermas, and Honneth, have been instrumental in raising the profile and prestige of pragmatism internationally.
- 4—The continued use of the word “pragmatism” in ordinary language to indicate something between mere practicality and venal cynicism threatens pragmatism’s philosophical rise.

5—The post-1989 democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe partly account for the European rise of interest in pragmatism.

6—“International” pragmatism’s rise must change the field’s canon.

7—The rise of pragmatism unsettles the way we think of all philosophical schools along nationalist lines.

8—“International” pragmatism may make pragmatism too reverential a philosophical approach.

3. Plato's Dialogues and the Problem of Orientation

Enrico Müller

Platonic philosophy takes place in a triangle of orientation: it has its starting point in the lifeworld experience of talking to one another (*dialegesthai*). From this experience, it develops forms of cultivating and disciplining speech, the dialectical techniques (*dialektikai technai*). Dialogue (*dialogos*) as a genuine form of philosophy is the staging of such conversational situations in the medium of writing. In it, Plato is concerned with showing and shaping communication on topics as interactions between people. The philosophical nature of the dialogues thus takes its starting point from the unconditionality of inter-individual communication. The "matter" (*pragma*) as a topic of the dialogue is not a mere datum, not a given: rather, it appears as that which is questionable and problematic, which may do both: gain shape in conversation as well as easily lose contour again abruptly (*aporia*).

1.) The philosophical art of the Platonic dialogue establishes metaphysics and subverts it at the same time: it does this deliberately and purposefully. The dialogues show, stage and dramatize the inter-individual use of concepts with supra-individual intent.

2.) The Socratic *logon didonai* (giving reason) aims to make one's own self as transparent as possible and create unity between speaking, thinking and acting (*en heautou homologein*). The background to this intention is a therapeutic one: concern / care for the soul (*epimeleia psyches*), one's own and that of one's fellow human beings. Both moments refer to each other and are not the result of philosophy, but meant as a process that has to be repeated again and again.

3.) By offering the Logos, Socrates gives philosophy a common ground, he localizes it. But he himself is presented by Plato - for example in the roles of the eroticist, the mythopoeist, the demonic athlete, the ironist - as an *atopos*, as someone who cannot be located. In the dialogues themselves there is a Socratic reserve towards his own logos-nature and there is a Platonic reserve towards Socrates. As the dramatist of the dialectical master Socrates, Plato remains absent.

4.) Despite all of Plato's visible anti-democratic reservations, the dialogue as a form is nevertheless the most democratic medium in the history of philosophy. It conceives both thought and the objects of thought from face-to-face communication. This is why, in the highly politicized Athens of the democratic age, Socrates calls himself the only real politician.

5.) There is no Platonic theory or doctrine of ideas. What there is is a recurring orientation towards ideas in the dialogues. Ideas are heuristic hypotheses that are used in different ways in the various dialogues in the face of different questions. Plato is concerned with the respective usefulness (*ophelia*), the benefit (*chreia*) of the hypothesis of ideas.

6.) Phenomenologically and metaphorologically, Plato is the one who describes thinking as a movement of walking. He has thus created an absolute metaphor. In this way, he mediates the Heraclitean flow with the Parmenidean standstill. Thinking takes place as a movement in steps, it follows points of view, creates a new path (*hodos*) or follows an existing one. An established and recognized way of thinking is a method (*methodos*). Thinking goes up (*anabasis*) to the general or down (*katabasis*) to the individual. One understands if one can follow (*akolouthēin*) or loses oneself in pathlessness (*aporia*).

4. TOPTEXT: The Function of Orientation in a Mathematical Language Model for Exploring Topics in Texts

Timon Boehm

We present a new method for analyzing texts which allows, in particular, to disclose their thematic areas. Sentences and their relations are represented as closed paths (loops) and linked to form a semantic network. This network is a cyclically oriented graph, a so-called Ribbon-graph, which retains both the local (syntagmatic) and global structure of a text and is embedded in a two-dimensional surface as semantic spaces. The function of orientation is to provide an algorithm according to which the graph is traversed. Some cornerstones and theses to discuss are:

1. Most natural language processing (NLP) topic models are based on distributional semantics. No matter how sophisticated they are, they ultimately always rely on statistical observations which limits their scope.
2. Statistics as such is neither focused nor efficient and only possible with huge computing capacity. Instead, the TOPTEXT model is simple and economic.
3. LLMs are black boxes where the connection between input and output cannot be traced. Instead, the TOPTEXT model is fully transparent and interpretable.
4. The hypothesis that has so far proved successful is that the boundary cycles of this graph delimit the thematic areas of the text.

5. Texts can be characterized to some degree by topological invariants of the embedding surface such as genus, Betti numbers, and Homology groups.
6. From a cognitive point of view, cyclical graphs are more appropriate and realistic than blind statistics. At the same time, theses graphs model the flow of attention during reading and comprehension processes.
7. A further development of the TOPTEXT model should allow to find implicit statements needed for the coherence of texts.
8. Experimentally, the model could be tested by using eye trackers (work in progress at Ca' Foscari University Venice).

**VIII. Book Launch of the *Courageous Beginnings*'
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**Courageous Beginnings:
Past and Present Insights and Some Proposals for Our Future
Philosophical Orientation**

Werner Stegmaier

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