

Natalie H. Hannan

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RESEARCH FOCUS

Area of Specialization (AOS): Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy

Areas of Competence (AOC): Ethics, Epistemology, Classical East Asian and South Asian Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion

EMPLOYMENT

Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke University

Postdoctoral Fellow 2022-present

University of Rochester

Postdoctoral Associate 2021-2022

Doctoral Fellow 2020-2021

EDUCATION

Columbia University

Ph.D. in Philosophy 2016-2021

Dissertation: *The Socratic Paradoxes and Plato's Epistemology*

Examining Committee: Katja Vogt (sponsor), Dhananjay Jagannathan, John Morrison, Iakovos Vasiliou, Whitney Schwab

Abstract: Plato's "Socratic paradoxes" include the surprising claims that no one does wrong voluntarily and that virtue is knowledge. Typically ignored outside of moral psychology, they are, in my view, a major motivation for the *Republic's* view that *epistēmē* (knowledge or understanding) concerns a class of objects distinct from the objects of belief. Understanding this relationship solves a classic problem about how *epistēmē* can improve one's beliefs, by clarifying the roles of truth and measurement. I focus on the *Hippias Minor*, *Protagoras*, and *Republic*, and I also analyze Aristotle's treatment of *epistēmē* in the *Eudemian Ethics* to highlight the continued influence of the paradoxes.

M.Phil. in Philosophy 2018-2019

M.A. in Philosophy 2016-2018

Princeton University

B.A. in Philosophy; Certificate in Pipe Organ Performance 2012-2016

PUBLICATIONS

“Ancient Epistemology” (with Katja Vogt). In *Third Edition of the Blackwell Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Kurt Sylvan (forthcoming).

“Knowledge and Voluntary Injustice in the *Hippias Minor*.” *Apeiron* 54, no. 4 (2021): 545-569.

TALKS

“How Socratic Is the Socratic Paradox?”

SOCRATICA V Conference of the International Society for Socratic Studies, Rice University (Houston, July 2022)

“Truth, Lies, and *Doxa* in Plato’s *Republic*”

West Coast Plato Workshop, Stanford University (Palo Alto, May 2022)

“*Eudemian Ethics* VIII.1 on Why the Virtues Are Not *Epistēmai*”

APA Eastern Division Meeting (Baltimore, January 2022)

“Truth and Knowledge in Plato’s *Republic*”

Colloquium to the Peucinian Society, Bowdoin College (Brunswick, ME, October 2021)

“*Epistēmē* and the Good Life in Plato’s *Protagoras*”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (video conference, February 2021)

“Knowledge and Voluntary Injustice in the *Hippias Minor*”

-43rd Ancient Philosophy Workshop, The University of Texas at Austin (Austin, March 2020)

-Ancient Philosophy Workshop, New York University (New York, November 2019)

-Research Group in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (video conference, July 2019)

-Ancient Philosophy Workshop for Female Graduate Students and Early Career Researchers, Humboldt University (Berlin, December 2018)

“Truth and Lying in Plato’s *Republic*”

Early Career Workshop, Maimonides Center for Advanced Studies (Hamburg, January 2020)

COMMENTARIES

Catherine Rowett, “*Platonic Method*”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (October 2022)

Dhananjay Jagannathan, “Justice and the Passions: Integrity and Rectitude from Plato to Augustine”

Fall Lecture Series, Center for the Ancient Mediterranean, Columbia University (November 2021)

Christopher Buckels, “Recognizing Form Images in Republic V-VII”

APA Eastern Division Meeting, online (January 2021)

Sukaina Hirji, “How Virtue is a Means to Contemplation”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (October 2019)

Sosseh Assaturian, “What the Forms Are Not: Plato on Conceptualism in Parmenides 132b-c”

Columbia-NYU Graduate Student Conference, New York University (April 2019)

Simon Shogry, “Vicious Character Traits as Rational Mistakes: The Early Stoic Explanation of the Diversity of Moral Error”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (March 2019)

Ricardo Salles, “The Early Stoic Proofs of the Intelligence of the Cosmos and Philebus 29a9-30a8”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (October 2017)

Kendall Fisher, “Thomas Aquinas on the Subsistence of the Rational Soul”

Workshop in Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy for Early Career Women, Fordham University (April 2017)

Sam McVane, “Paradox and the Fool in Seneca”

Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy, Columbia University (October 2016)

TEACHING

Primary Instructor (Duke University)

How to Live and How to Die: Death, Dying, and the Afterlife from Confucius to Cryonics
(Spring 2023)

Primary Instructor (University of Rochester)

Philosophy of Religion (Spring 2022)

Aristotle on Human Nature (Fall 2021)

History of Ancient Philosophy (Fall 2021)

Classical Buddhist Philosophy (independent study course, Fall 2021)

History of Ancient Philosophy (Fall 2020)

Philosophy of Religion (Fall 2020)

Teaching Assistant (Columbia University)

Epistemology, Spring 2020 (Jessica Collins)

Aristotle, Fall 2019 (Katja Vogt)

Introduction to Philosophy, Spring 2019 (Naomi Dershowitz)

History of Philosophy I: Pre-Socratics through Augustine, Fall 2018 (Dhananjay Jagannathan)

History of Philosophy II: Aquinas through Kant, Spring 2018 (John Morrison)

History of Philosophy I: Pre-Socratics through Augustine, Fall 2017 (Katja Vogt)

COURSEWORK

Ancient Philosophy:

Plato's *Timaeus*: Katja Vogt*

Plato's *Theaetetus*: David Charles and Verity Harte (Yale)*

Theophrastus: Wolfgang Mann*

Aristotelian Naturalisms: Dhananjay Jagannathan*

Plato's *Philebus*: Katja Vogt

History of Epistemology: Elliot Paul*

Epictetus and Stoic Philosophy: Wolfgang Mann

Aristotle and Aristotelian Ethics: Jessica Moss and David Velleman (NYU)

Other Courses:

Scientific Pluralism: Ann-Sophie Barwich and Stuart Firestein

Symbolic Logic: Tamar Lando

Anne Conway's *Principles* (independent study): John Morrison

Early Modern Epistemology: Christia Mercer

Phenomenology: Taylor Carman*

Nominalism: Achille Varzi*

Descartes' *Meditations*: Elliot Paul

Decision Theory: Robert Stalnaker*

Modern Aesthetics: Lydia Goehr

Perception: John Morrison

*indicates audit

LANGUAGES

Ancient: Greek and Latin (advanced reading proficiency)

Modern: French and German (intermediate reading, writing, and speaking proficiency)

MEMBERSHIPS AND SERVICE

Referee for *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, *Noûs*

Organizing Committee, New Narratives in Philosophy (2018-2021)

Graduate Student Representative to the Philosophy Department (2018-2019)

Women in Philosophy (WIP), Columbia Chapter (2016-2021)

REFERENCES

Katja Vogt, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University
kv2101@columbia.edu

Dhananjay Jagannathan, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University
dj2493@columbia.edu

John Morrison, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Barnard-Columbia University
jmorriso@columbia.edu

Iakovos Vasiliou, Professor of Philosophy, Graduate Center, City University of New York
ivasiliou@gc.cuny.edu

Whitney Schwab, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
wschwab@umbc.edu

Last updated October 11, 2022

Dissertation Abstract: The Socratic Paradoxes and Plato's Epistemology

Plato's "Socratic paradoxes" state that no one does wrong voluntarily and that virtue is knowledge. Outside of moral psychology, the Socratic paradoxes have been neglected. My dissertation defends two related proposals that showcase their importance in ancient epistemology. The first proposal is that they are a major motivation for the *Republic's* view that *epistēmē* (knowledge or understanding) concerns a class of objects separate from the objects of *doxa* (belief or opinion). This view of *epistēmē* faces a serious problem: how can *epistēmē* improve one's *doxai*, as Plato indicates it does, if *epistēmē* and *doxa* are completely distinct? My second proposal is that understanding the influence of the Socratic paradoxes can solve this problem, by clarifying the roles of truth and measurement in Plato's epistemology.

I begin with a new interpretation of the *Hippias Minor* that shows why Plato commits to the Socratic paradoxes and how this commitment motivates his epistemology. The *Hippias Minor* is a troubling dialogue. It appears to argue for the superiority of the voluntary wrongdoer over the involuntary wrongdoer. Contrary to widespread views, I argue that Socrates is serious about his argument and that it prompts him to accept the "paradox" that no one does injustice voluntarily. This Socratic paradox, however, can only be accepted by developing a new understanding of what it means for justice to be an *epistēmē*. *Epistēmē* must be so powerful that whoever has it would never misuse it. We should expect other dialogues to develop a clearer account of this *epistēmē*.

This is precisely what we see at the end of the *Protagoras*, which explores the proposal that the virtues are *epistēmai*. Notably, *epistēmē* is the strongest force in human affairs—it cannot be overcome by pleasure or anything else—and involves measurement. Here Plato makes progress towards explaining how no one would do wrong voluntarily. The dialogue's arguments, however, are plagued by an apparent reliance on hedonism, which Plato explicitly disavows in many other places. I present a reading on which I trace the role of the good life in Socrates' arguments, revealing that he is not committed to hedonism but is nonetheless serious about his proposal for *epistēmē*. As a result, we can still take him as promoting *epistēmē's* power and connection to measurement. But what is this *epistēmē* supposed to measure?

We find an answer in the *Republic*, where the Socratic paradoxes now focus on truth. Socrates distinguishes between two types of truths: those about which one would never voluntarily lie and those which sometimes merit lying. The first type of truth concerns what brings our souls closer to the most real things and develops our souls so that we live well. These most real things are the proper objects of *epistēmē*, but the truths derived from them are *doxai*, or opinions. The other type of truth concerns how a statement corresponds to particulars in the sense-perceptible world. In order to figure out what *doxai* are worth accepting, we must determine how to weigh their different truths and falsities. This is the true role of the measuring *epistēmē*, a role that has previously been ignored. A person with the measuring *epistēmē* will be able to use her *epistēmē* to have better *doxai*. Furthermore, such a person will be a better ruler, able to determine what *doxai* would be best for her citizens.

I close by providing an interpretation of *Eudemian Ethics* VIII.1, in which Aristotle argues explicitly against Plato's conception of the virtues as *epistēmai*. Aristotle moves away from Plato's account by showing that *epistēmai* can be misused in precisely the way that the Socratic paradoxes would prevent. Elsewhere, however, he proposes that *epistēmē* is a virtue. These two notions of *epistēmē* show how questions about the Socratic paradoxes' relation to *epistēmē* have continued to have relevance in epistemology after Plato.