

Αγαπητές και αγαπητοί συνάδελφοι,

σας προσκαλούμε σε δύο διαλέξεις που θα γίνουν στο Τμήμα Ελληνικής Φιλολογίας στην Αίθουσα του Μεταπτυχιακού του Τ.Ε.Φ. (Νέο Προκάτ) από την κ. Otta Wenskus, Καθηγήτρια Κλασικής Φιλολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου του Innsbruck, στο πλαίσιο του προγράμματος Erasmus+ με θέματα:

1. «If Humans were Centaurs. Galen on Science versus Fiction.» την Δευτέρα, 26 Οκτωβρίου, και ώρα 18.00.

2. «Why some people still think that Thales predicted an eclipse of the sun and why we should not believe them.» την Τρίτη, 27 Οκτωβρίου, και ώρα 16.00

Σας επισυνάπτουμε τις περιλήψεις των δύο διαλέξεων.

Ζωή Γαβρηλίδου

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If humans were centaurs. Galen on science versus fiction.

One of the things Nature can't do, according to Galen's excursus at the beginning of Book Three of *De Usu Partium*, is create centaurs. Galen's arguments are actually very good, and he presents them in three neat steps in the rhetorical figure called *concessio* and/or, depending on your point of view, a perfect example of *apagogical* reasoning. This is what it boils down to: centaurs couldn't come in to being; if they could come into being, it wouldn't be possible to feed them, and even if all those obstacles could be overcome, the one advantage of increased speed on even ground would be dwarfed by a lot of disadvantages. So, aren't you glad you're not centaurs? Galen seems to have written some of this excursus tongue in cheek, but what makes this text really interesting is the fact that it seems to be the first extant Greek text which argues that all (not just some) myths are unreliable, complementing some passages of another famous treatise of Galen's, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*. But that is not all. Galen is just one step away from writing fantastic fiction – he does ask the „what if“ questions which are a prerequisite for good fantastic literature. He seems to be the first who tried to imagine how it would feel like to be a centaur. And, by the way, is Galen trying to be funny, or isn't he? He is certainly imagining a series of ludicrous situations, and he does occasionally show a certain talent for comedy, e.g. in ch. 8 of *De praecognitione*, and the fact that our chapter is placed at the beginning of Book Three must count for something.

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Why some people still think that Thales predicted an eclipse of the sun and why we should not believe them

The questions whether Thales predicted an eclipse of the sun and whether there actually was an eclipse he could have observed (if not predicted) are crucially important not only for historians of astronomy but even more so for astronomers who want to calculate long-term fluctuations in the Earth's rotation during the last millenia. Those calculations often involve circular reasoning (Thales predicted an eclipse for a given date and a given place – this fact, combined with other data allows us to calculate the positions of the sun and the moon for said date – we know an eclipse occurred which Thales could have predicted – Thales predicted an eclipse ecc. ecc.). While serious historians of astronomy are agreed he could not possibly have calculated a solar eclipse, some still think he predicted one anyway. This is highly unlikely; said scholars and those who believe them are the victims of a series of systematic errors, e.g. base rate neglect, the Chinese whispers effect, story bias, authority bias, loss aversion, cascade effect, and publication bias.