

# Gnothi seauton – No Paper Conference

Institute of Philosophy – Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

In cooperation with

M-Body – artistic research in media, somatics, dance and philosophy, Freiburg

Soundcheck Philosophie, Halle

Philosophy on Stage, Vienna

Prague: October 24 -27, 2014

## *Conference Aim*

The conference will focus on: 1) Reflections on the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge in philosophy and performance; 2. A deconstruction of commonplace academic conference-based interactions in order to search for the relationship between performative and content components of philosophical expression.

We would like to open a free space for a variety of expression formats, and for an experimental dimension of the event.

## *The Main Topic of the Conference*

(1)

The imperative of “Gnothi seauton” has survived to this day as a possible trace of the transition from the world of myth to the world of philosophy. On one hand, this maxim does not offer any completed and unquestionable account of the world and of humans’ place in it, as we are accustomed to from mythological narratives; on the other, however, it is not yet a statement belonging to philosophical ethics as we understand it, such as Kant’s categorical imperative.

On closer inspection, the appeal to “Gnothi seauton” leads to a number of questions: Does self-knowledge belong to the field of *philosophy*, at all? How is philosophy, with its claim of universality, related to self-knowledge, which is performed as an entirely individual enterprise? Or is it precisely the other way round? Is it that only with self-knowledge does philosophy achieve its *value*? And why is it that the Delphic Oracle exhorts us to know ourselves, and not others? Or is it that the path to *real* understanding of others leads only through knowing ourselves first?

These questions have been subject to reflection before. In philosophical treatises from the most ancient Greek philosophy till now, we continually find variations of this original impulse. They appear in artistic research as well in the form of the fundamental self-reflection of the author and agent, in the need of distance from dramatic event and relationship among agents in the performative situation. What meaning do we still find in the thought of Socrates, Plutarch, Kierkegaard, Lévinas, Foucault, Brecht, Stanislavski, and many others? And what is the value of self-knowledge for the philosophy of today, and, in particular, for the newly emerging *performative* philosophy?

(2)

The conference will provide its participants space to avoid some of the typical behavior that can be observed so often in standard academic interactions. During their contributions the presenters will not simply read their fixed texts, but express their thought-out meditation without that support . As for the lectures' settings, they may choose not only a standard conference room, but also a theater stage or the cozy attic at the Theater On the Balustrade.

The organizers' rationale is that a speech delivered without the support of a fixed text and outside habitual settings will boost the performative dimension of a lecture. Stepping into the field of discourse without such support may stimulate us and turn into an intentional provocation towards new meaning. Rhetorical or esthetic brilliance is not expected, and neither is originality at all cost, or great entertainment ... what *is* sought after is openness of topics, concentration on the ideas being expressed, and attention to the immediate situation. We also hope that such settings will encourage and promote the sharing of ideas between a lecturer/performer and their listeners/spectators.

Such a conference format is also associated with the conference's theme itself. It is relevant to ask what the relationship is between self-knowledge and habit, and whether we are able to discover something in the communication itself when we are delivering an impromptu lecture, or what impact the presentation format has on the lucidity and intelligibility of the ideas for the others and for us as well.

#### *Submissions*

The conference will consist of two sections – one Czech and one English.

Please send your proposals for 20- to 60-minute-long presentations associated with the conference's theme to the following e-mail address: [alicekoubova@seznam.cz](mailto:alicekoubova@seznam.cz), no later than March 15, 2014. Diversity of submission formats is most welcome (lectures, speeches, dialogs, moderated discussions, performances), as is diversity of approaches (systematic philosophy, artistic research, theater studies, historic analysis, personal reflection). In your application, please, write your name, title, submission format, length of the contribution, the language in which you intend to deliver your presentation, and any requirements you may have concerning the venue.

We shall inform you on the submission's reception by March 30, 2014.

#### *On behalf of the organizing team:*

Alice Koubová (Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic)

Jan Puc (Department of philosophy and religious studies, Faculty of Arts, The Charles University in Prague)

For any other questions or queries, please, contact Alice Koubová ([alicekoubova@seznam.cz](mailto:alicekoubova@seznam.cz))

Website of the conference: <http://web.flu.cas.cz/filosofievexperimentu/nopaper/>

The conference is sponsored by Performance Philosophy, an international research network, and by the project Philosophy in Experiment (<http://web.flu.cas.cz/filosofievexperimentu/en/>) .