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**Perception: Episteme, Aesthetics, Politics**

CORE RESEARCH AREA of the Faculty of Humanities



## LECTURE SERIES

Perceiving Nature(s): Epistemic,  
Artistic, and Political Practices as  
Contested Fields

06.02.2025, Beethovenstraße 8,  
HS 111.21, 9.a.m.

# **Sensory Medical Anthropology, and how it analyses embodied Chinese Medical Perceptions**

**Elisabeth Hsu, University of Oxford:** This presentation presents three different Chinese medical terms of perceptual processes: (1) with regard to colour term qing in the name of the Chinese medical drug qinghao, foregrounding its phono-aesthetics, (2) with regard to sound and vibration, when it comes to correspondences with the seasons, foregrounding Chinese medical ideas of resonance (ganying), and (3) with regard to feelings, foregrounding an instance of listening to qi (ting qi) as a perceptual process that educates one's attention. The argument is that – beyond sense perception – there are subtle modes of perception that Chinese medical scholars recognised and worked with. The means by which I recognised these processes were anthropological: combining insights of textual scholarship with ethnographies on bodily technologies, in Chinese and other cultural contexts.

**Elisabeth Hsu** is a Professor of Anthropology at University of Oxford. Her research contributes to the fields of medical anthropology and ethnobotany; language and text critical studies; and the history of science, technology and medicine in China and beyond.

## **Perceiving Nature as Noetic Experience. Some "Plotinian" Suggestions**

**Salvatore Lavecchia, University of Udine:** Plotinus associates nature with a particular modality of contemplation, characterising it as a preconscious manifestation of noetic/rational activity and production of visible forms: in contrast to the activity of an artist, which requires a

material substrate, the activity of nature is immobile, yet relational form without matter (III 8, 2-3) - which gives life to matter (III 8, 2, 6-19) -; because of the aforesaid immateriality, the contemplation of nature occurs as a silent activity, as it were in sleep consciousness (III 8, 4, 22-28), in which nature is preconsciously both the subject and the object of contemplation, and as such a directly productive activity (III 8, 3, 16-24 and 4, 15-28). As a consequence, perceiving nature means experiencing a living, although preconscious image of the selfconscious, eminently productive contemplation with which Plotinus identifies the supreme goal of human life. Consciously transcending any separation between subjectivity and objectivity, through the attainment of this goal human beings are not only manifesting in the highest form their true self, but are equally able to harmoniously and consciously cooperate in shaping the life of the whole universe (V 8.7).

**Salvatore Lavecchia** is Associate Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the University of Udine. His main research interests are: the Socratic dialogue; the philosophy of self in Plato and in Platonism; the metaphysics of light; ancient aesthetics.

## **Programme**

- 09.00 Lecture Elisabeth Hsu
- 10.30 Coffee break
- 11.00 Lecture Salvatore Lavecchia
- 13.00 Lunch