



**Celtic Conference in Classics, Cardiff University, 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July**

***On whose behalf does a ruler decide?***

Panel Convenors: **Ana Alexandra Alves de Sousa, Lisbon University (Portugal) and Marina Solis de Ovando, Alcalá University (Spain)**

Cognitive science studies people's decision-making by analysing different levels of mental organisation. Some scholars have applied cognitive theories to learn more about ancient minds and antiquity, given that the human intellect works "both on and in its culture and environment" (Meineck, 2019). Peter Meineck, David Konstan, Douglas Cairns, William Short, Esther Eidinow, Garrett Fagan, William Devereaux and Jacob Mackey are some of the scholars using this kind of methodology. A conference entitled 'Classics and Cognitive Theory', organised by Peter Meineck, was held at New York University in October 2016. The papers were published in the *Routledge Handbook of Classics and Cognitive Theory* (2019).

*On Whose Behalf Does a Ruler Decide?* is a panel that seeks to look at the decision-making process in ancient texts by analysing the mental processes involved, in order to understand the reasons that guide a leader in making one decision over another. Levels such as learning, planning, evaluating, and feeling need to be studied. George Lakoff, in his book *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to your Brain and its Politics* (2008), demonstrates the role of emotions in political decision-making in the modern world. David Konstan (2006) and Douglas Cairns (2015) have also highlighted the role of emotions in the study of ancient Greek culture.

It is possible to analyse transtemporal questions of authority, justice and individual conscience through Sophocles' *Antigone*, as George Steiner did (1984), or to read Aeschylus' *Persians* as embodying the struggle between Islam and Western freedom

(Edith Hall, 2007), because the physical functioning of the human brain is the same in modern and ancient cultures.

On these premises, this panel will analyse the ruler's decision-making in ancient texts in order to understand the dominant causes of the process. Does he always act in the interests of the people for whom he is responsible? Rulers often emphasise a conflict between external pressures and what appear to be their feelings, trying to use discourse to convince others of their points of view. This testifies to the presence of the function of language in shaping thought, an element also studied by cognitive science.

In fact, Greek literature has dealt with this issue in many different ways. Jason in the *Argonautica* says that he cannot decide alone, but that he needs to hear all the Argonauts' opinions, and if one of them remains silent he is jeopardizing the entire group. This could be understood as an unanimous choice, indicating a democratic way to lead the crew, but it could also reflect Jason's doubts in leading those that never elected them, even though the elected one, Herakles, had chosen him.

Tragedians also explore the intricacies of power and the dangers involved in the decisions made by the rulers. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon, although he thought that he could rule without anyone's interference, ends up being defeated by his own edict. Power appears as a challenge for mortals, who can commit the most terrible mistakes through an unavoidable decision. Sometimes it seems that leaders are not entirely free, although strong in power, to decide by themselves. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the mob's strength forces the leader of the Greek expedition, Agamemnon, to sacrifice Iphigenia, his youngest daughter, against his will, while the oracle in the *Orestes* imposes upon Agamemnon's son the matricide, not allowing him to think it over.

In each period Greek authors offer different approaches on the topic, but they always show that the decision-making process is wicked and tricky. During the Peloponnesian war, death and privation affected people from both sides, even though Athenians could feel admiration for Pericles' ideals. The way that the dead combatants are praised in Pericles' funeral oration shows how important they are in public opinion. In the context of war, the decisions made by the rulers are especially delicate because of their impact on the people. Should the greatest interests of war trump the importance of individual lives? Through antiquity we propose to see what these guidelines could mean to humankind.

Often one who decides does so on behalf of his ideals, but sometimes he is like a string-puppet. In this case, who holds the strings? Individuals frequently seem to be a victim of themselves by letting power inflate them and become the top of their priorities;

power is valued for power's sake, rather than for the power to benefit someone and make the world better. It is possible to think that the great rulers of the world are making similar decisions nowadays. In fact, humanity still acts in a way that jeopardizes humanity and fails to include the planet. What seems to be beneficial turns out to be a disadvantage to all, including the one who makes the decision.

Through a survey of epic, tragedy, comedy, historiography, and rhetoric, ranging from the archaic period to the Roman era, this panel challenges scholars to prove that humanity can profit from antiquity in understanding the motives of men's actions.

The panel *On whose behalf does a ruler decide?* Invites papers which reflects on the decision-making process across a wide spectrum from Homer onwards.

Format:

Papers should be approximately 20 minutes long. We invite papers focused on political decision in Antiquity. Those interested should send an abstract in English, between 300 and 400 words, 5 keywords and a short CV (about 150 words). Deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Send the documents to [ccc.alexandrasousa.marinasis@gmail.com](mailto:ccc.alexandrasousa.marinasis@gmail.com).

Notice of acceptance will be given by mid-March.

The conference will be held in a face-to-face format.

### **Panel Convenors**

**Ana Alexandra Alves de Sousa, Lisbon University (Portugal)**

Ana Alexandra Alves de Sousa has a PhD in Classics (2001). She teaches ancient Greek, Greek culture, and Greek literature at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. Her main areas of research are Hellenistic poetry, namely Apollonius of Rhodes, the Hippocratic *corpus*, and the Attic tragedy. She translated into Portuguese books I and II of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, followed by a literary study (Imprensa de Coimbra, 2021). She sees in Antiquity a meaning aggregator to explain contemporary world as a continuum. Her papers develop political approaches and cultural syncretism (*Revista Ágora*, 2021; Aracne Editrice, 2022; Imprensa de Coimbra, 2022, 2024; *Forma Breve*, 2024, *Karanos*, 2024). She has presented papers in several countries (Brazil, Chek Republic, Spain, Portugal), and she has been invited to give courses to master and PhD students by several Universities in Brazil (UFS, UFF, UFRJ, UFMG), in Portugal (FLUC, FLUP), in Spain (UAB, UAH, UAM). She is a member of the Centre of Classical Studies of the School of Arts and Humanities of the Lisbon University (CEC)

and a member of the Centre for Classical and Humanistic Studies of Coimbra University (CECH). She has presented a paper entitled “What news do the shy doves bring?”, at the 14th Celtic Conference in Classics (Panel: Animal Culture and Animal Behaviour in the Ancient World), 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Coimbra University (Portugal).

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### **Marina Solis de Ovando, Alcalá University (Spain)**

Marina Solís de Ovando Donoso has a PhD on Euripides. She teaches ancient Greek, elementary Latin, and Classic Literature at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Alcalá de Henares. Her main researching interests are Greek Tragedy, Euripidean poetics (Myrtia, 2015; De Gruyter, 2017), relationships between Ancient Literature and social ideology, ancient utopian, and dystopian narratives (2021) and Classical reception (with studies about Noir narratives and tragedy, 2023, and Spanish poets like M. Hernández, 2017, and F. García Lorca, [press] 2020). In 2020 she published *Apolis. Un paseo feminista por la tragedia griega*, a monography about women's discourse in Euripidean tragedy. She is a member of the Institute of Gender Studies in Ancient and Medieval Ages (EGEAM, Alcalá de Henares). She has presented papers on international conferences (2013, Szeged, Hungary; 2015, Rome, Italy; 2021, Coimbra, Portugal). She's also interested in divulgation for the open and great public, giving lectures about ancient concept of leadership linked to modern politics and our contemporary ways of understanding power or war.

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### **Invited speakers:**

Delfim Leão (University of Coimbra).

Edmund Cueva (University of Houston-Downtown).

Jessica Romney (MacEwan University).

Patricia Verona Codeso (University Autónoma of Madrid).

William Dominik (University of Lisbon / University of Otago).

### **Invited speakers' Curriculum**

**Delfim F. Leão** is Full Professor at the Institute of Classical Studies and researcher at the Centre for Classical and Humanistic Studies at the University of Coimbra. His main areas of scientific interest are Ancient History, Law and Political Theory of the Greeks, Theatrical Pragmatics, and the Ancient Novel. He also has a deep interest in Open Science and Scholarly Communication.

He has published around 200 works in international journals, books and book chapters. Among his main recent works are D. F. Leão and P. J. Rhodes, *The Laws of Solon. A New Edition, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (I.B. Tauris, London, 2015); D. F. Leão and G. Thür (Hrsg.) *Symposion 2015. Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016); D. F. Leão, R. Morais, D. Rodríguez Pérez, with D. Ferreira (eds.), *Greek Art in Motion: Studies in honour of Sir John Boardman on the occasion of his 90th Birthday* (Oxford, Archaeopress, 2018); D. F. Leão & O. Guerrier (eds.), *Figures de sages, figures de philosophes dans l'oeuvre de Plutarque* (Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2019); D. F. Leão & L. R. Lanzillotta, *A Man of Many Interests: Plutarch on Religion, Myth, and Magic* (eds.) (Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2019); D. F. Leão, D. Ferreira, N. S. Rodrigues & R. Morais (eds.), *Our beloved Polites: Studies presented to P.J. Rhodes* (Oxford, Archaeopress, 2022); D. F. Leão & B. Sebastiani (eds.), *Crises (Staseis) and Changes (Metabolai): Athenian Democracy in the Making* (Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2022).

Together with Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, he is the Editor of “Brill’s Plutarch Studies” (<http://www.brill.com/products/series/brills-plutarch-studies>) (2016-).

**Edmund Cueva** is Distinguished Professor of Classics and Humanities at the University of Houston-Downtown. His research interests include the ancient Graeco-Roman novel, ancient literature/the occult, and myth and film. He is currently focused on the intersection of horror and ancient Graeco-Roman literature, e.g., “Classical Myth, Stephen King, and René Girard,” *GIF* 73, 2021, 291–322; and “Cannibalism and the Ancient Novel Revisited,” *Interdisciplinary Essays on Cannibalism: Bites Here and There*, Routledge, 2021, 67–82. He has two forthcoming books: *Horror in Antiquity*, UWP, Spring 2024; *The Hunger*, ULP, Winter 2024 (a monograph on Tony Scott’s 1983 film in the *Devil’s Advocate Series*).

**Jessica M. Romney** is an Associate Professor of Classics in the department of Humanities at MacEwan University (Edmonton, AB). Her research focuses on the construction and presentation of social identities in Archaic and Classical Greek literature; her book *Lyric Poetry and Social Identity in Archaic Greece* (UMP, 2020) examined social identities in sympotic lyric poetry, and her current project looks at the use of food as a way of identifying groups and locating them within the space of the Mediterranean.

**Patricia Varona Codeso** teaches ancient Greek language and culture at the University Autónoma of Madrid. Her main field of research is Greek historiographical genres, both ancient and medieval. She has written about the literary representation of monarchy (Madrid, CSIC, 2009), about the ideological function of Byzantine historical breviaries (*The Medieval Chronicle*, 2019), about Byzantine narrative canons (*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 2015), about the reception of late-antique chroniclers and the construction of historical periodisation (*Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2023), and about the intersection between religious and political discourses (*Eranos*, 2017). She has translated Thucydides and Xenophon into Spanish.

**William J. Dominik** is presently Integrated Researcher in the Centre for Classical Studies at the University of Lisbon and Professor Emeritus of Classics at the University of Otago. His main areas of research have been Latin literature, especially Flavian epic; Roman rhetoric, the classical tradition and reception; and lexicography.

### **Proposals for individual papers**

#### **Panel Convenors:**

**Nosology in Euripides: Illness in the Core of Political Thought in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Ana Alexandra Alves de Sousa, FLUL)**

#### **Abstract:**

Following in the footsteps of Aeschylus, who introduced the image of illness into Persian tragedy, Euripides uses about a hundred lemmata with the radical νόσος. But it is not just the literary background that explains the metaphor. Euripides lived in an age that, like ours, experienced epidemics (the deleterious plague described by Thucydides). Moreover, through this radical Greek polis is approached in a transtemporal critical vision.

**From *oiktos* to *arkhé*: Violence and Compassion during Peloponnesian War's Theatre (Marina Solís de Ovando, UAH)**

#### **Abstract:**

From a political perspective, it is possible to admit that during the 5th century Athens was fighting to become an empire (*arkhé*) over the rest of Greek territories. As far as we know, Theatre institution -specially Tragedy- was one of the multiple mechanisms of propaganda that Athenian state put into action to achieve that goal. Ironically, the extremely original features of the theatrical invention itself (the social event, the contest, the *parrhesia*, the symbol and the myth as a convention in the plays) made Tragic representations also one of the greatest spaces of criticism and expression of doubts about the way that the leaders were making decisions on war and peace. Specifically, tragic plays confronted the audience with the increasing violence that leaders embraced during the conflict. As long as the ideal of Athenian Empire was also linked to the ideal of Athenian cultural greatness, it would be at least disturbing to notice that some of their more defended values, like compassion (*oiktos*) and equality, were progressively forgotten. How large was the range of violence that Athens, the championship of democracy, could afford to show covering in the “warfare reasons”, without forgetting its own identity? Was the Imperialistic dream, deeply, incompatible with the proper Athenian dream?

### **Invited Speakers**

**Ruling on behalf of the people, in spite of the people: Solon and the challenge of keeping balance in government (Delfim Leão, University of Coimbra - Centre for Classical and Humanistic Studies)**

#### **Abstract:**

Throughout his poetry, Solon repeatedly seeks to defend and justify his legislative and political activity, against real or supposed criticism from his political opponents — or simply from those who had been frustrated by his intervention, believing that the legislator had gone too far or, on the contrary, had fallen short of the expectations created. This is detectable from the performative theatricality visible in the poems linked to the conquest of the strategic island of Salamina (frgs. 1, 2 and 3 West), which would launch him as a political figure; to the veiled ‘political program’ expressed in the famous *Eunomia* (frg. 4 West), in which Solon argues that the ideal of the *polis* depends on an axiological universe that the author takes pains to describe, either by diagnosing the city’s ills or by foreseeing the benefits of change; or to the poem in which he defends his legislative work as a whole (frg. 36 West). In yet other poems, such as the so-called ‘tetrameters to Phocus’ (frgs. 32, 33 and 34 West), the general theme is once again the legislator’s endorsement of his measures in the face of critics. In frg. 32 W, Solon places his political activity within a strategy of defending the homeland, which led him to resist the temptation of tyranny and the abuse of force. In frg. 33, the statesman gives voice to his political enemies, revealing a remarkable skill in the use of the *persona loquens*, since, with the same rhetorical device, he verbalizes the reproaches directed at him and also strips them of any legitimacy. And in frg. 34, the poet describes the general picture of the futile expectations of those who thought that he would bring about a radical change in society. The purpose of this study is therefore to analyze how Solon’s poetry constitutes a particularly rich guide for following and interpreting the different states of mind to which a statesman is usually subjected when making his ruling choices.

### **Timeō Danaōs...: Fear, Politics, Decision-Making, and Cognitive Science (Edmund Cueva, University of Houston-Downtown)**

#### **Abstract:**

In the chapter titled “What Men Fear” of his book *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity in the Attic Orators* (University of California Press, 2005), Joseph Roisman notes that Athenians used a man’s reactions to fear to assess his character, masculinity, and conduct. They recognized fear as natural to human beings and hence not always reprehensible (Aes. 3.175). In fact, fears for one’s reputation, or of the laws, were commendable and deemed beneficial to the state, because they deterred people from wrongdoing. Fear also resulted in prudential action or fostered healthy distrust. Aeschines asserts that democracy was toppled when the people trusted, instead of fearing, politicians who flattered them. Lysias called upon the Greeks . . . to fear for their future . . . certain fears had a utilitarian function, useful for the proactive men who served as protectors of the state and its regime (186-187).

“Timeō Danaōs...: Fear, Politics, Decision-Making, and Cognitive Science” examines Roisman’s commendable examination of fear and the Attic orators to see if it can be applied to other Greek and Roman genres that focus on leaders of states and the people they rule or want to rule. This presentation is tripartite in form: an examination/report on recent developments in cognitive science of the interconnectedness of fear, politics, and decision-making; Graeco-Roman examples of this interconnectedness; modern Ibero-American literary echoes of the Graeco-Roman examples.

### **'Good Witnesses I shall have': Solon's justification of good decisions and bad leaders (Jessica Romney, MacEwan University)**

**Abstract:**

When compared to the political verses of his contemporaries, Solon's poetry presents a dramatic reimagining of political group behaviour: where for Alcaeus and others the individual is "bad" and the group "good," for Solon the group cannot make good decisions and so is "bad" opposite the individual, who can make good decisions—so long that that individual identifies as/ with the poet's speaking-I. To the political orthodoxy of the Archaic world, namely that group political behaviour, however factional it may be, is "good" because individual behaviour lands in tyranny (and so is "bad"), Solon's political verses offer an alternative. Namely, that the plural leaders of the people are "bad" because they make decisions that damage the polis and its citizens and that, at the same time, Solon's individual decisions are "good" because they benefit the polis, as witnessed by Earth, the great mother of all, herself.

This paper examines Solon's justification of his decisions and the political vision espoused in his poetry. It looks in particular at the poet's manipulation of pronouns and group membership in that justification, as the poet subsumes the "we" of fr. 4.1 into the speaking-I of fr. 4.30 and the iambic verses and as that plural-yet-singular I adopts a stance of a beleaguered middleman, holding off all those who collectively and consistently make bad decisions. In examining the cognitive processes around group membership and identification that help justify Solon's vision for Athens, this paper ends with the issue of how, if Solon's reforms were as ill-equipped for resolving Athenian *stasis* as Aristotle's account suggests (*Ath. Pol.* 13), how is it that posterity agreed that his reforms were the correct decisions to make? The answer, I suggest, is that "we"—of whatever time period, group, or with whatever purpose of reading Solon's poetry—become, in the act of hearing and reading the verses, the poet's "I" and, as a result, become equally implicated in his decisions, their rationale, and the ongoing justification of Solon's political decisions.

**In the mind of the leader: individual decision-making in Thucydides and Xenophon (Patricia Varona, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)****Abstract:**

Thucydides' work is an ideal terrain for exploring decision-making, especially in political and military matters. This paper aims to systematically analyse the factors involved in decision-making by specific individuals in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* and the *Hellenica*, contrasting them with the author's assessment in ethical and political terms. Unlike some previous studies, we will not deal with collective decisions, nor with the factors involved in human behaviour in general, but only with individual decision-making by the ruler, as part of a comparative study of the conception of leadership in Thucydides and Xenophon and also as a contribution to the study of the relationship between historiography and contemporary philosophical thought.

**Navigating Power in the *Panegyricus*: Pliny's Guide on How to Advise an Autocrat (William Dominik, University of Lisbon / University of Otago)****Abstract:**

The *Panegyricus* of the younger Pliny has been derided by numerous modern critics for what has been deemed is its excessive, even nauseating, flattery of Trajan. Scholars in various ages, however, especially those of the Renaissance and early modern era, were sensitive to the possibilities of the use of panegyric as a tool for advising an autocrat or



leader, including on the issue of ruling for the welfare and benefit of the citizens and with an eye toward the overall stability and prosperity of a nation or empire. This presentation examines how Pliny advised Trajan on his role and expressed the expectations of the Senate through the panegyric genre, which served as a guide for writers in subsequent periods who were in similar positions of advising a powerful ruler on the importance of ruling for the benefit of its citizenry. While there are significant political differences between ancient Rome and the modern world, the themes of Pliny's panegyric treatise can still serve today as sound principles for national leadership and governance.