

International Conference: *The Pre-Socratics in the European Modernism and Avant-Garde: 1900-1950*, FU Berlin, 14-15 January, 2016

The European avant-garde is marked by an intriguing paradox: on the one hand, it defines itself in terms of an unequivocal polemic against time-honored cultural traditions and a complete break with the past; on the other hand, as has recently shown systematically and from a cross-disciplinary perspective, its programmatic iconoclastic rupture with tradition is often informed or even shaped by a close, complex dialogue with important paradigms of the European cultural and intellectual ancient heritage. Pre-Socratic thinkers (broadly defined) were such an influential paradigm (e.g. in the works of Surrealists), which, however, has by and large been neglected in discussions of the European avant-garde and, more broadly, modernism.

Our conference aims at a systematic, interdisciplinary, and comparative exploration of the complex impact of the figures and thought of the pre-Socratic thinkers (early Greek philosophers and cosmologists such as Anaximander, Herakleitos, Parmenides, and Empedokles, including the intricate 'movements' of Orphism and Pythagoreanism for which our sources are most often late) on modernism and the avant-garde in Europe. The main focus of the papers will be on the period between 1900 and 1950, although discussions of significant predecessors and successors (e.g. Nietzsche or deconstructionists) are not excluded either.