roposal: Spring School (as Blended Intensive Program, BIP)

Paderborn University (Germany), March 15-19, 2027

"Anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene: Descriptive and Critical Perspectives on Humans, Earth, and Nature"

Speakers (confirmed):

Agostino Cera (Ferrara, Italy)

Annabelle Dufurcq (Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

Marjorlein Oele (Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

Maria Robaskiewicz (Paderborn)

Svenja Schmitz (Paderborn)

The planned Spring School (as a Blended Intensive Program or BIP) examines the relationship between Humans, Nature, and the Earth from a philosophical-anthropological perspective and aims to explore this triad descriptively as well as critically. The discussion takes as its starting point the concepts of Anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene. The term "Anthropocene" has been widely known since the speech by Nobel Prize laureate and atmospheric chemist Paul Jozef Crutzen and his subsequent publication, co-authored with biologist Eugene Stoermer. It refers to a new geological epoch characterized by humanity's having become an independent global geological force in its own right. Even though the concept of the Anthropocene is a subject of critical debate and the question of whether this "Age of the Human" truly constitutes a new geological epoch remains unresolved, it proves particularly fruitful for a philosophical discourse that reflects on the relationship between Humankind, Earth, and Nature.

The concept of Anthropocentrism, too, though far older, has repeatedly become a point of contention in contemporary debates in philosophy and other disciplines and can be interpreted historically as a precursor to the Anthropocene through its focus on human superiority over nature.

During the Spring School, both concepts will be examined in detail concerning their significance, usage, and history. They are particularly well-suited as starting points for a reflection on humanity's relationship to Earth and to Nature, as well as on our ecological thinking.

We have invited authors who have recently published in this up-and-coming area of research, and these scholars will both discuss their work with us as well as writings of other authors they have selected (a course portfolio will be distributed beforehand). Furthermore, we plan an interactive workshop on the topic of humans and nature for one morning or afternoon.

Within the framework of this event, students will gain theoretical knowledge regarding the concepts of the Anthropocene and Anthropocentrism, as well as their significance in philosophy and related disciplines, and will be invited to critically discuss contemporary theories of the respective subject with a view to developing a critical perspective toward the theories in question. In this context, participants are encouraged to develop their own positions and arguments regarding the relationship between humans and nature.

Organizational Details of the Spring School as a BIP:

- The Spring School/BIP will offer the opportunity for students to earn (at least) 3 ECTS points. These credit points can be earned through participation (before and during the event) and a final exam/paper, to be submitted within a period to be determined. There will be a sign-in and sign-out each day to ensure student attendance.
- The Spring School/BIP will take place during one normal working week (Monday-Friday; travel days: Sunday and Saturday) and will feature a different speaker each day. Material will be distributed (digitally) prior to the event, which students will be expected to have read by the time of the in-person meeting in March. We will also have an online meeting (mandatory virtual component of the BIP) in the week prior to the Spring School to discuss some issues and to meet and greet. All students will be integrated within a digital learning platform that we facilitate. All material will be uploaded there.
    - Monday morning will be spent by a tour of the city of Paderborn and the university campus, where all participants can meet and mingle. All days (except for Friday) will be spent on campus; Friday will be an excursion to the Heinz Nixdorf Museum Forum, the world's largest computer museum located right here in Paderborn.
    - Each day will consist of a morning lecture by one of the keynoters and afternoon discussions of texts provided by the speakers.
    - On Thursday evening, we will have a dinner in town.
    - There will be optional social events organized for the students (self-funded)

- As it is a BIP, we will have some administrative things to organize as well:

- Participating partners will have to officially be part of the BIP and we will have to hand in some paperwork to our International Relations Office (IRO)
- We will have to have at least in total 10 incoming students from 3 partners.
- All partners will have to self-fund their students and staff through their BIP funds (it is covered by Erasmus+ and your IRO will know all details)
- Nomination deadline for all participating students: January 15, 2027.
- All participating partners can nominate 5-10 students and 2 staff members
- All students need to have a digital Erasmus+ learning agreement handed in by February 15, 2027 (handled by our IRO through EWP).
- All staff members will have to hand in staff mobility documents to their own IRO.