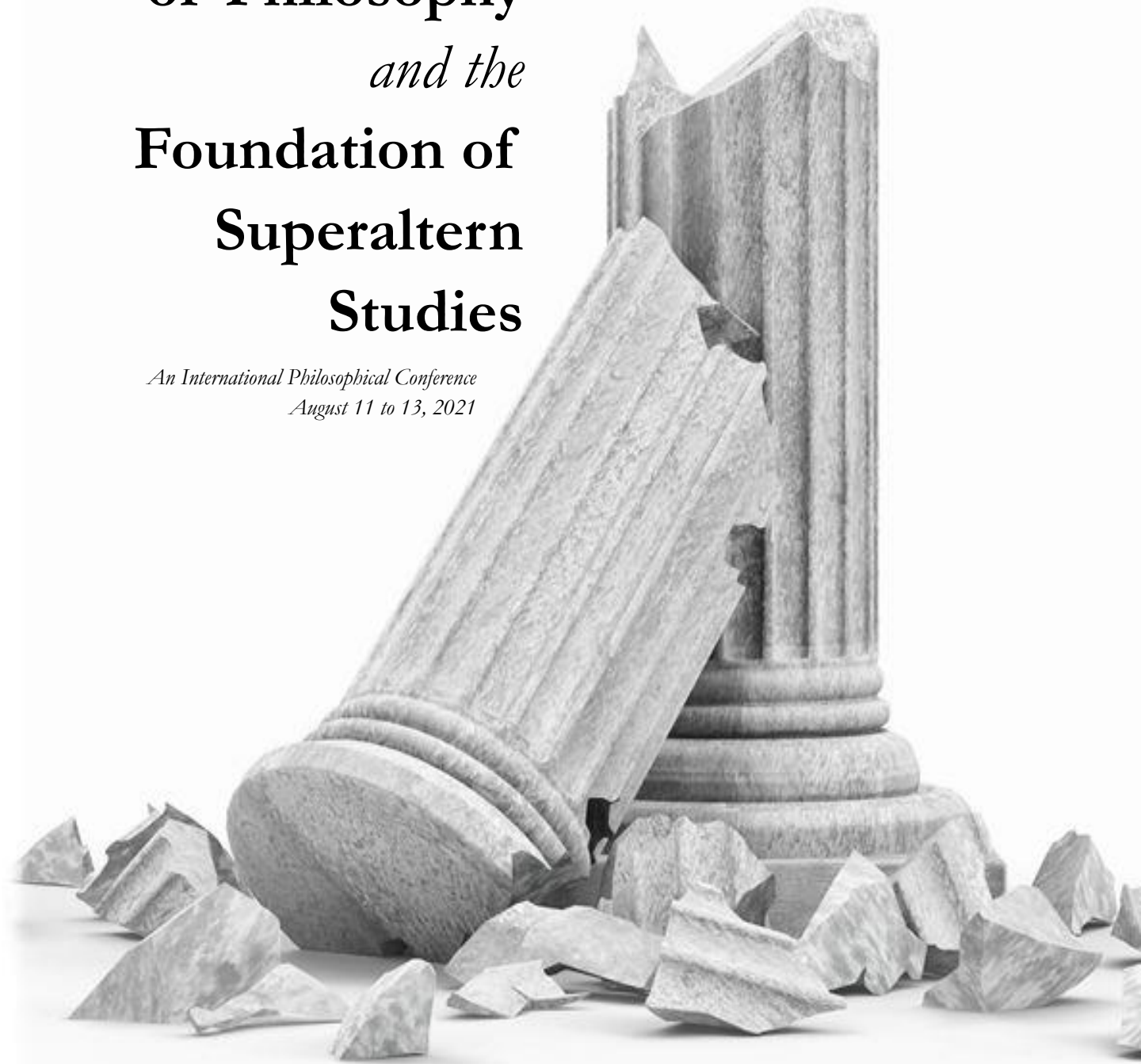


A Call for the
**Desuperiorization
of Philosophy
and the
Foundation of
Superaltern
Studies**

*An International Philosophical Conference
August 11 to 13, 2021*

**PROGRAM
OVERVIEW**



ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Björn Freter, Independent
Researcher, Knoxville, TN, USA
Aribiah Attoe, Conversational
Society of Philosophy, South Africa

Welcome

DEAR SPEAKERS AND GUESTS!

Welcome to this conference on Desuperiorization of Philosophy and the Foundation of Superaltern Studies!

We hope to create an open and secure space where we can discuss and share our ideas and thoughts.

We are blessed with an amazing panel of speakers. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our speakers for their willingness to share their ideas with us all.

We also want to remember all those who have fallen victim to the violence we are trying to understand in this conference.

Please find below a schedule overview, a detailed schedule including the abstracts, as well as the contact details of speakers and organizers.

Should you have any questions or concerns, before, during or after the conference, academic or non-academic, please feel free to share with us by writing to:

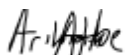
desuperiorization@gmail.com

Together we will certainly find a solution.

Please note that there will be only this one zoom link used for the whole conference. Please register here

<https://tinyurl.com/registeratdesuperiorization> and we will provide you with the link in time before the conference via email.

We wish you all the best and we look forward to meeting you!



Björn Freter and Aribiah Attoe

Knoxville, TN, USA and Alice, South Africa – August, 2021

About the Conference

It seems Western thought, to this day, has not sufficiently recognized its superioristic danger as the danger that it is! When considering contemporary contexts, this danger remains real. The foreign, the other, is stigmatized or re-stigmatized. Western thought remains dangerous. The West must finally take this seriously and critically evaluate its value as a normative authority. It would hardly be surprising if we indeed find that a lot of contemporary problems have grown forth from the pseudo-self-evident superiority of the white, heterosexual, male human being many of the Enlightenment thinkers tried so vigorously to defend by manipulating philosophy. The West needs to understand itself, needs to understand all the intricacies of its superiorism, its superaltnity and finally start working on the desuperiorization of its thought. We want to stimulate a discussion that Western thought must understand that its central task must be its Desuperiorization. We need to establish Superaltern Studies. We need to understand the superiorism of Western thought. We need to understand it deeply to be able to identify and avoid it. We need to understand why Western thought and Western action so often brought exploitation and humiliation with it. The Enlightenment did not only introduce a new understanding of the value of the human being, it also introduced a new level of dehumanization. Philosophy did not only argue to treat all human beings humanely, it – implicitly and explicitly – worked at the same time on reducing the numbers of those who were human enough to be treated humanely. This seems to have been one the most important intellectual self-deception moves that enabled so many philosophers to be humanist and anti-humanist at the same time: to simply disregard the humanness of those mistreated. We want to understand how superiorism has, and continues to play out, in terms of the colonialism and neocolonialism that has continued to affect much of the global south. We need to see how decoloniality expresses itself, and should express itself, as a necessary response to superiorization and inferiorization, as well as the psychological baggage that comes with it. We need to also examine the epistemological effects of superiorization, which has presented itself in what scholars have termed "epistemic injustice", "epistemic harm", and/or "epistemic violence". How has this affected scholarship and knowledge production and must it be resisted? How do we balance identity and pride with the devastating effects of superiorization and othering?

	Wednesday August 11, 2021	Thursday August 12, 2021	Friday August 13, 2021
US EST			
7.50-8am	SA		
8-9am	1.50-2pm <i>Introductory Remarks</i> ABRAHAM TOBI How not to decolonize: a cautionary argument	BENDA HOFMEYR Whence the European Supremacy Complex? Revisiting “the Other Question”	DIMPHO TAKANE MAPONYA Gender, sexuality and the acculturation of African philosophy
9-10am	3-4pm NATSU TAYLOR SAITO The Colonial Foundations of Western Conceptions of Superiority	VELI MITOVA Desuperiorising epistemic justice in the service of knowledge-decolonisation	BOAVENTURA DES SANTOS SOUSA The Epistemologies of the South and the Quest for Global Cognitive Justice
10-10.30am	4.30pm <i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
10.30-11.30am	4.30-5.30pm JANINE JONES tba	MPHO TSHIVHASE Desuperiorizing personhood through Ubuntu?	ROBERT BERNASCONI Is academic Philosophy in the West institutionally racist?
11.30-12.30am	5.30-6.30pm SISEKO KUMALO Outlining a Decolonial Methodology using the Black Archive	ELVIS IMAFIDON Differentia-politics in the formation of Academic Philosophy	ANA PAULA COELHO RODRIGUES Do women philosophers make a desuperiorising difference?
12.30-1pm	6.30-7pm <i>Optional Q&A</i>	<i>Optional Q&A</i>	<i>Optional Q&A</i>



☞ Wednesday
August 11, 2021 – Program

US EST	SA	
7.50-8am	1.50-2pm	<i>Introductory Remarks</i>
8-9am	2-3pm	ABRAHAM TOBI: How not to decolonize: a cautionary argument
9-10am	3-4pm	NATSU TAYLOR SAITO: The Colonial Foundations of Western Conceptions of Superiority
10-10.30am	4.30pm	<i>Break</i>
10.30-11.30am	4.30-5.30pm	JANINE JONES: tba
11.30-12.30am	5.30-6.30pm	SISEKO KUMALO: Outlining a Decolonial Methodology using the Black Archive
12.30-1pm	6.30-7pm	<i>Optional Q&A</i>

☞ Wednesday

August 11, 2021 – Abstracts

ABRAHAM TOBI (US EST 8-9am = SA 2-3pm):

How not to decolonize: a cautionary argument

What exactly does epistemic decolonization entail? On the one hand, there are popular arguments that epistemic decolonization should involve an acknowledgement of African perspectives as valid, followed by a voluntary and haphazard acceptance of these perspectives. On the other hand, there are arguments that epistemic decolonization should involve the acceptance of African perspectives as valid, followed by a total stripping away of all non-African perspectives. Between these extremes are varying rationales for why epistemic decolonization should happen ranging from ethical to epistemically relativist rationales. While these positions vary and hold various degrees of merit, their core motivation remains the same – there is a need to even out the unjust epistemic terrain brought about by differing power relations in society. Focusing on this uniform core motivation for epistemic decolonization, I argue in this paper for the need to be cautious in our formulation of decolonial perspectives. Specifically, while we strive to create a just epistemic terrain, it is important that we do not fall into the trap of creating an epistemic terrain that is itself exclusionary to sub-groups within the larger excluded group.

☾ Wednesday

August 11, 2021 – Abstracts

NATSU TAYLOR SAITO (US EST 9-10am = SA 3-4pm):

The Colonial Foundations of Western Conceptions of Superiority

Western civilization has long envisioned itself as the culmination of human social and political achievement, portraying its philosophical and scientific developments as representative of universal truths. Our world currently consists of some 200 states, a majority of which are former European colonial powers, formerly colonized territories, or settler colonial states. As a result, the core presumptions of the Western worldview play a powerful role in how we understand contemporary global problems and their resolution.

This talk identifies some critical presumptions of Western civilization; considers how they have been used to justify and facilitate occupation, annihilation, and exploitation; and looks at the role they have played, and continue to play, in the construction and entrenchment of racialized heteropatriarchy. International law has condemned colonialism, racism, and gender-based discrimination for some 75 years, but the right to self-determination has been subverted by powerful state interests. It concludes that genuine decolonization will require the debunking of Western “superiority” and the envisioning of genuine alternatives and that, to be effective, “superaltern studies” will need to confront ongoing forms of colonization.



☾ Wednesday

August 11, 2021 – Abstracts

JANINE JONES (US EST 10.30-11.30am = SA 4.30-5.30pm):
tba



 Wednesday

August 11, 2021 – Abstracts

SISEKO KUMALO (US EST 11.30-12.30am = SA 5.30-6.30pm):

Outlining a Decolonial Methodology using the Black Archive


Decolonial theory is defined by a critique that responds to the power relations that characterise knowledge making. Resultantly, I pose two questions. First, whose knowledge should be counted as having more epistemic merit. Second, and as a derivative of the first, how does said knowledge acquire its epistemic authority, that subsequently compels us to regard this knowledge as superior?

These considerations lead me to the desire to transcend the critique methodology, in lieu of generative theses that are derived from this outlined methodology. Using the framework of political obligation to answer these questions suggests a decolonial methodology that is rooted in the Black Archive. My aims thus are twofold. In the first respect, I showcase the usefulness of the critique, which—in itself—puts forward theoretical propositions. In the second sense, I demonstrate how these give us theses that are only defensible when using the outlined methodology.




🌀 Thursday
August 12, 2021 – Program

US EST	SA	
8-9am	2-3pm	BENDA HOFMEYR: Whence the European Superiority Complex? Revisiting “the Other Question”
9-10am	3-4pm	VELI MITOVA: Desuperiorising epistemic justice in the service of knowledge-decolonisation
10-10.30am	4.30pm	<i>Break</i>
10.30-11.30am	4.30-5.30pm	MPHO TSHIVHASE : Desuperiorizing personhood through Ubuntu?
11.30-12.30am	5.30-6.30pm	ELVIS IMAFIDON: Differentia-politics in the formation of Academic Philosophy: Preliminary Remarks on the role of a Hermeneutic Ethic of Difference
12.30-1pm	6.30-7pm	<i>Optional Q&A</i>

 Thursday

August 12, 2021 – Abstracts

BENDA HOFMEYR (US EST 8-9am = SA 2-3pm):

Whence the European Superiority Complex? Revisiting “the Other Question”

In thinking about desuperiorization, we might start by thinking through the recalcitrant persistence of racial superiority - indeed a structural superiority complex of sorts that has proven to be incredibly difficult to dismantle long after the so-called noble Enlightenment ideals of progress have proven to be a farce and well into the postcolonial present. Wherein lies the power of this racially based superiority complex that has relegated the racial Other to the ranks of supposed inherent inferiority and irredeemable lowliness? What accounts for the intransigence of racism?

In this paper, I seek to probe these questions by revisiting Homi Bhabha’s seminar essay, “The Other Question” in *The Location of Culture* (1994) with the help of Derek Hook (2005) incisive analyses. This leads me to a critical interrogation of Rudi Visker’s (1999) claim that what we are now witnessing is a Europe that has come to hate itself.

Here Europe should be read as a general denominator of the Enlightenment values of self-righteous progress that have been appropriated by the global North.

☾ Thursday

August 12, 2021 – Abstracts

VELI MITOVA (US EST 9-10am = SA 3-4pm):

Desuperiorising epistemic justice in the service of knowledge-decolonisation

According to some philosophers, the debate on epistemic injustice is (to put it very crudely) ‘white-people stuff’: it reinforces the very structures of oppression and marginalisation that it supposedly aims to unravel. In this talk, I agree that some areas of the epistemic-injustice debate are indeed prone to this charge. But, I argue, other areas have good precision tools for diagnosing and combatting deep challenges for the oppressed. I take the decolonisation of knowledge as a point in case. I first sharpen the white-people-stuff objection. I then foreground three notions from the epistemic injustice literature – epistemic oppression, white ignorance, and epistemic exploitation – and argue that these notions are both useful for the decolonisation of knowledge and invulnerable to the white-people-stuff objection.



☾ Thursday

August 12, 2021 – Abstracts

MPHO TSHIVHASE (US EST 10.30-11.30am = SA 4.30-5.30pm):

Desuperiorizing personhood through Ubuntu?




☾ Thursday

August 12, 2021 – Abstracts

ELVIS IMAFIDON (US EST 11.30-12.30am = SA 5.30-6.30pm):

Differentia-politics in the formation of Academic Philosophy: Preliminary Remarks on the role of a Hermeneutic Ethic of Difference

The development of academic philosophy, particularly as we have it in HE and in research and publications has rarely emerged from the robust understanding of philosophy as a human activity and experience. Rather it has emerged essentially as a narrative of power and control of ‘the one’ (the West) over ‘the many’, founded on politically motivated narratives and theories of alterity and difference, which I term here a differentia-politics. Interestingly, the critique of the Western narrative in postcolonial academic philosophy reinforces more than it dismantles this long-standing differentia-politics as evident in the (de)coloniality of academic African philosophy today. In this talk therefore, I will begin by instantiating how differentia-politics has shaped the unfolding of academic philosophy particularly in the last two centuries. I will show how this differentia politics may yield the unintended effect of re-empowering the one (the West), affirming its politically motivated narrative of philosophy. I will then highlight a hermeneutic ethic of difference as an essential meta-philosophical theory needed to enrich and broaden how philosophy is taught, understood, researched and approached in HE. The goal is to theorize a shift from a differentia-politics of philosophy to a differentia-ethic of philosophy.

 Friday

August 13, 2021 – Program



US EST	SA	
8-9am	2-3pm	DIMPHO TAKANE MAPONYA: Gender, sexuality and the acculturation of African philosophy
9-10am	3-4pm	BOAVENTURA DES SANTOS SOUSA: The Epistemologies of the South and the Quest for Global Cognitive Justice
10-10.30am	4.30pm	<i>Break</i>
10.30-11.30am	4.30-5.30pm	ROBERT BERNASCONI: Is academic Philosophy in the West institutionally racist?
11.30-12.30am	5.30-6.30pm	ANA PAULA COELHO RODRIGUES Do women philosophers make a desuperiorising difference? A case study: Emilie Du Châtelet and Mary Wollstonecraft
12.30-1pm	6.30-7pm	<i>Optional Q&A</i>

☾ Friday

August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

DIMPHO TAKANE MAPONYA (US EST 8-9AM = SA 2-3PM):

Gender, sexuality and the acculturation of African philosophy

tba



☞ Friday


August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

BOAVENTURA DES SANTOS SOUSA (US EST 9-10AM = SA 3-4PM):

The Epistemologies of the South and the Quest for Global Cognitive Justice

tba



 Friday

August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

ROBERT BERNASCONI (US EST 10.30-11.30AM = SA 4.30-5.30PM):

Is academic Philosophy in the West institutionally racist?

Even though terms like institutional racism are familiar, the focus still tends to fall on individual racists and their prevalence within institutions rather than on the institutions themselves. One notable exception is the way many universities and colleges in the United States and elsewhere are beginning to examine their histories to see how they benefited from racialized slavery and the wealth it created. However, within the United States, there were many universities and colleges where philosophy as a discipline often operated both to legitimate slavery and colonialism and to promote the racializing stereotypes that supported those practices. So far philosophy's self-examination has not gone beyond documenting the racism of some of the most treasured canonical figures of the Western philosophical tradition. This needs to be done, but their racism must be placed in the context of the almost universal failure of academic philosophers to offer a sustained critique of slavery. The discipline was for the most part missing in action during eighteenth and nineteenth century debates about slavery and this failure remains largely undiscussed today. The question is whether that constitutes evidence of what amounts to an institutional racism within academic philosophy that survives into the present. To address that question it is necessary to extend the interrogation of the canon into




☞ Friday

August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

the practices deployed within academic philosophy and the means used to blunt critiques of canonical philosophers for their racism. Is academic philosophy so invested in the idea of the superiority of Western philosophy and the culture that it represents to the point where it is unwilling to interrogate its self-image? Why did academic philosophy in the United States in the nineteenth century not use its resources to present a radical challenge to the system of slavery that was supporting the universities and colleges and what implications, if any, follow from that for the practice of academic philosophy today?



 Friday


August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

ANA PAULA COELHO RODRIGUES (US EST 11.30-12.30am = SA 5.30-6.30pm):

Do women philosophers make a desuperiorising difference? A case study: Emilie Du Châtelet and Mary Wollstonecraft

One of the early and powerful movements towards a renewal of the canon of western philosophy is the rediscovery and inclusion of the works of women philosophers. It's been nearly half a century of work now on that field which, meanwhile, has been established institutionally in various forms from little research groups to globally renowned centres. Though a lot of work is still to be done, women philosophers are now an integrative part of many courses and even curricula worldwide.

Considering that women were (except non-human animals) the first object of superiorist exclusion the rediscovery of their works not only meant a contribution to combat - at least women-related - superiorist practices but also gave reason to hope their thinking would contribute to overcoming superiorist thinking in general. In this respect, European Enlightenment was a decisive and ambiguous epoque. For the first time a change of the fundamental premises of our (western) thinking seemed possible and has been realized to some extent. On the other hand, new justifications for even crueller practices

 Friday


August 13, 2021 – Abstracts

of exclusion, degradation and, even, dehumanisation, have been established.

As it was also a time when a (historically) relatively large number of women participated in the European philosophical discourse, the *république des lettres*, I take two (then and now) very influential women philosophers of that decisive period to show what difference women philosophers made concerning superiorist thinking.

My case study on Emilie Du Châtelet and Mary Wollstonecraft will show the ambivalence of women's contributions and in doing so open up some fundamental questions on the problem of the subaltern.





Contact Details

Speakers

Robert Bernasconi, Pennsylvania State University, USA

robertbernasconi43@gmail.com

Benda Hofmeyr, University of Pretoria, South Africa

benda.hofmeyr@up.ac.za

Elvis Imafidon, University of London, England

elvismafi@yahoo.com

Janine Jones, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

jcjones2@uncg.edu

Siseko Kumalo, University of Pretoria, South Africa

s.kumalo@icloud.com

Dimpho Takane Maponya, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

dimphot@uj.ac.za

Veli Mitova, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

vmitova@uj.ac.za

Ana Paula Coelho Rodrigues, University of Paderborn, Germany

ana.rodrigues@uni-paderborn.de

Boaventura des Santos Sousa, University of Coimbra,
Portugal/University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

bsantos@ces.uc.pt

Natsu Taylor Saito, Georgia State University, USA

nsaito@gsu.edu

Abraham Tobi, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

tobitejiri@yahoo.com

Mpho Tshivhase, University of Pretoria, South Africa

mpho.tshivhase@up.ac.za

Organizers

Bjoern Freter, Independent Scholar, Knoxville, TN, USA

bfreterb@gmail.com

Aribiah Attoe, The Conversational School of Philosophy, South Africa

aribiahdavidattoe@gmail.com



Björn Freter © 2021

www.desuperiorization.com

Contact

desuperiorization@gmail.com

or

bfreterb@gmail.com.