

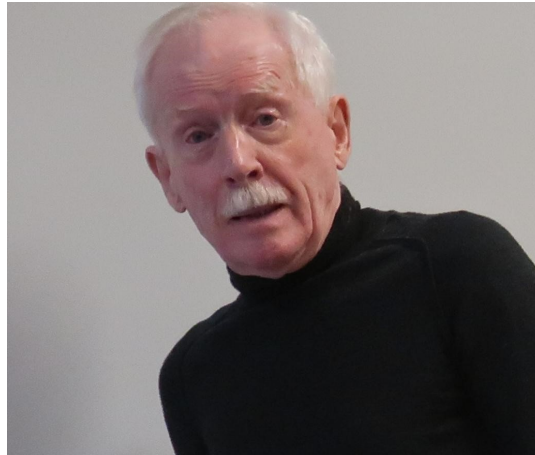
# Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series

**Thursday,  
January 26  
4p.m.**

**Watson Hall  
Room 517**



## **The Elements**



**Henry Laycock**  
Queen's University

In effect, the Classical and pre-Socratic notion of 'the elements' just is the modern conception of the elements and compounds. Furthermore, the pre-Socratics were at least 25% correct in situating water as one among the basic 'elements'. But what exactly are these things? They are, first and foremost, real – there (really) are such things as water, gold, silver, methane, carbon dioxide, and so on – and they are concrete – water for example is the stuff we not only drink but also swim in. However, the question of their nature has not been seriously addressed or even considered since the epoch of the Scientific Revolution.

Disconcertingly, the fact is that the elements violate the strict conditions imposed by our existing logico-epistemic orthodoxy. The much admired systems of modern logic, created by Gotlob Frege and the empiricist Bertrand Russell (Wittgenstein being somewhere in the background) preclude outright the possibility of answering the question. Both logically and ontologically, the elements are entia non grata. This seems to me an intellectually shocking situation. In this talk, with invaluable insights from both contemporary linguistics and pre-Socratic metaphysics, I make some initial moves to attempt to rectify this situation.

**Everyone Welcome!**

**For accessibility requirements, please contact [philosophy@queensu.ca](mailto:philosophy@queensu.ca)**

**Please note that all in-person attendees must conform to the Queen's vaccine policy:**

**<https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/administration-and-operations/covid-19-vaccination-requirements>**