

4th Ancient Philosophy Workshop for Female Graduate Students and Early Career Researchers

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Abstracts

ELIZABETH HILL (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

Harmony and Discord: A Platonic Account of Moral Evil in Art

In this paper I will give what I take to be a Platonic response to claims made by Mary Devereaux in her 1998 essay, “Beauty and evil: the case of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*.” Devereaux argues that the title film is particularly disturbing today because it manages to present the viewer with morally evil content (a positive vision of the German Reich) in such a way that this content is rendered beautiful. By arguing that *Triumph of the Will* demonstrates that evil can be beautiful, Devereaux problematizes the Platonic account of the Beautiful and the Good as identical and/or inseparable. If Devereaux is correct that evil can be beautiful, scholars of Plato must reexamine not only the relation between the Beautiful and the Good in Plato, but also Plato’s erotic philosophy. Plato presents the Beautiful as a proper object of human eros, but if the beautiful might also be evil, our desire for it is not teleologically efficacious in directing the human soul toward the Good. In order to address these issues, I will explicate what is relevant in Plato regarding the Beautiful, the Good, and evil in order to show that Devereaux is correct to assert that the unification of beauty and evil is inadmissible for Plato. However, I will go on to argue that one can, nonetheless, give a Platonic account of the perception of beautiful evil in art. My alternative explanation will argue that evil can appear beautiful when evil content is artfully placed in an inappropriate, parasitic relationship to beautiful content in such a way that the evil is presented as beautiful through association. I thereby seek to maintain Plato’s inseparability of the Good and the Beautiful, while also addressing the problem of beautiful evil in art.

CECILIA WEZEL (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Stoic *gaudium*: The Joy of the Sage and the Joy of the *proficientes*

It is common belief that the Stoics promoted the suppression of all emotions, and that they claimed that the virtuous person was untouched by everything around them. The Stoics did speak against passions, but they in fact claimed that the Sage had some virtuous kind of emotions. This paper offers a discussion of what one of these, joy, may consist in. Joy in its proper sense is rational and substitutes pleasure in the Sage’s mind. The characterizations of passions and good emotions run in parallel: While pleasure consists in the mistaken judgement that something good is at hand, in joy something good is rightly taken as good. I argue that the occasions for joy are therefore virtue, virtuous actions and the perfection of the universe as a whole. Since the Sage is never deprived of them, it seems that joy is a stable and never ceasing pleasant feeling, which I think can be described as a state. This paper shows that there is another form of joy that can be felt by the *proficientes* too, i.e. by those who work on themselves towards virtue and wisdom. Its occasion is the moral progress

made. Accordingly, the joy and the pleasure we feel are an indicator of our moral improvement: someone feeling only pleasure is a fool, someone rejoicing at the progress made is progressing, someone feeling always joy is wise. The Stoics did not in fact aim at eliminating all emotions, but at substituting excessive and irrational affections with moderate and rational ones.

BEATRICE MICHETTI (FINO Consortium, University of Pavia)

Defining Human Being: Metaphysics Z11 and Socrates the Younger Passage

The conclusion of the argument carried out in Met.Z10 is that only the parts of the form are parts of the notion (1035b33-34), while the matter, being in itself unknowable and indeterminate, cannot be part of the definition. This statement is confirmed in the summary at the end of Z11 (1037a20-b7), where it is also asserted that even for the composite of matter and form only the parts of the form are to be included in the definition. Nevertheless, few lines earlier (1036a31-b32), in the so-called Socrates the Younger passage, Aristotle seems committed to the idea that the definition of natural entities should contain the matter as well as the form. My solution is based on a further distinction between material parts *tout court* (i.e. bones, flesh and sinews) and functional parts (i.e. the human hand) which allows to combine the idea that the being of natural substances, such as the human being, is determined as *this* form in *this* matter (τὸδε ἐν τῷδε), therefore implying the reference to a determinate kind of matter- that is, the organism's body specified functionally -with the view that, even for the composite substances, the definition is of the form and the essence. To do so, I firstly deal with the parallel discussion of E1, where Aristotle distinguishes the object of physics from the object of mathematics; secondly, I analyse the account of the soul as the first actuality of a natural organic body, illustrated within *De Anima II*, 1.

MAEVE LENTRICCHIA (University of Cambridge)

Lucretius on the Complete Life

This essay offers a vindication of the Epicurean view that 'death is nothing to us' against an objection raised by James Warren. According to Warren's objection the near-ataraxic's desire to continue her life until she reaches *ataraxia* would bar her from ever attaining psychological tranquillity because harbouring such a desire would generate the fear of premature death. I show that this objection stems from construing the psychological state of the near-ataraxic from the viewpoint of Warren's 'Narrative Model' of completeness, which combines Gisela Striker's operatic analogy with Bernard Williams' conception of categorical desires. This model, I argue, overlooks an important difference between the respective views of Striker and Williams and, in so doing, upholds a lop-sided set of criteria for completeness. Having clarified how Williams' views, in fact, diverge from Warren's Narrative Model, I suggest that the former's position provides us with a heightened sensitivity to the notion of completeness at work in the Epicurean context. Drawing on Lucretius and other extant writings of Epicurus, I articulate the mechanism through which the near-ataraxic, after having recognized her life as incomplete, can pursue the attainment of the Epicurean *telos*. The text-based portion of my discussion centres on how the very practice of philosophy in addition to being part of a philosophical community enables the advanced initiate to attain *ataraxia*.

ADITI CHATURVEDI (Ashoka University)

Empedoclean Harmony

My goal in this paper is twofold: I will argue that harmony is a much more important aspect of Empedocles' thought than has been commonly recognized and, in order to do so, I defend a view of Empedoclean harmony that requires us to dispense with some Empedoclean orthodoxy. In the first part of this paper, I discuss the standard reading of Empedoclean harmony which finds support in 46 DK B27: ἁρμονίη functions as a homogenizing principle, resulting in a completely uniform Σφαῖρος. In the next section I lay out three problems for the standard reading: a contextual problem, a methodological problem and, finally, a textual problem.

By the end of the second section we are left with two options: either we stick to the standard interpretation, which requires us to stray far from the textual evidence just in order to defend a view that is problematic for all kinds of reasons in the first place or we abandon the standard interpretation of B27 in favour of one that is grounded both in Empedocles' text and in the context of the fifth century.

In the third section, I show why we *must* not conceive of the Empedoclean Σφαῖρος as representing a state of 'perfect harmony' where all differences between the 'roots' are erased. I then offer further support for my reading of Empedoclean harmony. I conclude with a brief note on Empedocles' poetics.

NATALIE HEJDUK (Columbia University)

Knowledge and Voluntary Injustice in the *Hippias Minor*

Plato's *Hippias Minor* proposes the Voluntary Wrong Thesis (VWT), that it is better to do something wrong voluntarily than to do it wrong involuntarily. The VWT has long frustrated scholars, who have decried it as pernicious and un-Platonic; it has led many interpreters to consider the dialogue fallacious or otherwise not committed to its conclusions. Against these views, I argue that we can make sense of this thesis, and of the dialogue as a whole, by considering Socrates' and Hippias' attitudes towards knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), justice, and the relationship between the two. Socrates argues that the VWT applies to a number of different domains; Hippias counters that our intuitions speak against its application to the domain of justice. The tension in the dialogue results from the struggle to reconcile these two positions; one seeks to explain why justice does not work as the general VWT would indicate. Although Plato has not yet found a way to account for why justice does not work in this way, he has found that its status as an ἐπιστήμη, rather than a power or anything else, should explain why justice has a special status with regard to the VWT. In coming to this conclusion, however, he also finds his notion of ἐπιστήμη unable to do this explaining, prompting the search for a more well-developed theory.