6AANA042 Topics in Greek Philosophy
Syllabus – Academic year 2016/17

Basic information

Credits: 15
Module Tutor: Dr Joachim Aufderheide
Office: Room 706
Consultation time: Wed 12-1; Thur 1-2
Semester: 2
Lecture time and venue*: tba

*Please note that tutorial times and venues will be organised independently with your teaching tutor

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

Everybody knows that pleasure is important. But important in what way? Some think that pleasure is the only thing that is good; others think that pleasure is tempting us away from what is really good. To decide between hedonism (the thesis that pleasure is the good) and anti-hedonism (all pleasure is bad) or to find a middle way requires answering two questions, one about the value of pleasure and one about the moral psychology of pleasure.

Starting with Plato’s treatment of pleasure in the Republic, we explore how Plato seeks to answer the two questions by starting further back: what is pleasure? He thinks that the nature of pleasure determines our answers to the question about the value and the psychology of pleasure. In a later dialogue, the Philebus, Plato tackles the question of hedonism anew — not embedded in a political discussion, but in a question about the goodness of individual lives. Is the picture Plato presents in the Philebus essentially the same as that of the Republic? Is Plato more anti-hedonist, or less so? Does the difference, if there is one, depend on a different view of the nature of pleasure?

In the second part of the course we will study Aristotle’s conception, or rather conceptions, of pleasure as found mainly in his ethical writings (Nicomachean and Eudemian Ethics). In both texts, Aristotle strongly opposes the theories of pleasure Plato floats in the Republic and particularly in the Philebus (which Aristotle presents as anti-hedonist). Does Aristotle come out as a hedonist? And what is Aristotle’s view on the nature of pleasure?

Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment**: 1 essays, each of 2500 words length
- **Summative assessment**: 2 essays, each of 2000 - 2500 words length
- Deadline 12:00 (NOON) on 26 April 2017
Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

Week 1: Background: the good life in Plato’s Republic
- the challenge to justice in Rep I-II
- sketch of the argument of the Republic (as relevant for pleasure)
  - tripartite soul (Bk IV)
  - philosophers vs non-philosophers (end of Bk V through to end of Bk VII)
  - the psychology of the philosopher vs that of the tyrant (Bks VIII-IX)
Primary reading (P): Plato, Republic 327a-368c, focus on 357ff.
Further reading (F): TBA

Week 2: Plato Republic IX: second proof for maximum pleasure: 580d-583a
- what are pleasures?
- why are there kinds of pleasures?
- Plato vs Mill
  P: Plato, Republic 580d-583a; Mill, Utilitarianism II.1-6
  F: Erginel, 'Pleasures in Republic IX,' 94-137.

Week 3: Plato Republic IX: Olympian proof: 583b-588a
- nature of pleasure (filling: process, state, activity)
- value of pleasure (being and truth of pleasures)
  P: Plato, Republic 583b-588a
  S: Erginel, 'Inconsistency and Ambiguity in Republic IX.'; Warren, 'Socrates and the Patients: Republic IX, 583c-585a.'; Warren, 'Plato on the Pleasures and Pains of Knowing.'
  F: Wolfsdorf, 'Pleasure and Truth in Republic 9.'; Erginel, 'Plato on a Mistake About Pleasure.'

Week 4: Plato Philebus: restoration theory (nature of pleasure)
- the possibility of hedonism
- kinetic pleasures and representation
  P: Philebus 11a-14b, 20b-23b, 31b-55c

Week 5: Plato Philebus: pure pleasures and knowledge (value of pleasure)
- pleasure as genesis
- pleasure and content
  P: Philebus 53c-55c; 55c-67b
  F: Evans, 'Plato's Anti-Hedonism.'; Harte, 'Commentary on Evans: Plato's Anti-Hedonism.'

READING WEEK
– Formative essay due Monday 27 February 2017, 16:00
**Week 6: Aristotle: EN VII.11-12**
- against pleasure as process: pleasure as activity
  Primary reading (P): *Nicomachean Ethics* 1152b1-1153b35

**Week 7: Aristotle: EN VII.13-14**
- Aristotle's “hedonism” and the limits of pleasure
  P: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1153b1-1154b34
  S: Rapp, 'Pleasure and Eudaimonia.'; Aubry, 'Nicomachean Ethics VII.14: The Pain of the Living and Divine Pleasure.'
  F: TBA

**Week 8: Aristotle: EN X.1-3**
- endoxa: the value of pleasure
  - Eudoxus’ hedonism
  P: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1172a19-1174a12
  S: Warren, 'Aristotle on Speusippus on Eudoxus on Pleasure.'; TBA

**Week 9: Aristotle: EN X.4-5**
- the nature and value of pleasure reconsidered
  - pleasure and activity
  P: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a13-176a29

**Week 10: Comparisons: Plato vs EN VII.11-14 vs EN X.1-5**
- the nature of pleasure
  - the value of pleasure
  - the place of pleasure in the good life
  P: ---

End of Term
Suggested essay questions

Assessment

Two essays, 2000-2500 words each. You should choose your own topic and talk to me about it: you must have your titles agreed by 31 March. You can write about any aspect of the course, except on the “competent judge argument” (see below) and provided that a) there is only little overlap (if any) between formative essay and summative essays, b) there is only little overlap (if any) between the two summative essays, and c) at least half an essay is on Plato, and half and essay on Aristotle: you can either write one essay on each, or you can write one on your favourite philosopher, and one in which you compare Plato and Aristotle.

Formative essay: write an essay on the “competent judge argument” found in the Republic.

Bibliography

This bibliography is not meant to be comprehensive: it is selective, with special attention to topics we cover in the course. Items marked with the asterisk are especially worth consulting.

Monographs on pleasure in ancient philosophy

*Gosling and Taylor, The Greeks on Pleasure. — brilliant book, though at times difficult; covers all aspects of our course
Warren, The Pleasures of Reason in Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic Hedonists. — insightfully covers an aspect of our course
van Riel, Pleasure and the Good Life: Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists. — has chapters on Plato and Aristotle, but is perhaps best for tracing the influence of Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories
Wolfsdorf, Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy. — introductory book, covering all aspects of our course, but the Aristotle chapter is not recommended; to be enjoyed with caution
Russell, Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life. — interested in the relation between pleasure and the good life in Plato; interesting, but recommended with reservations only
Rudebusch, Socrates, Pleasure, and Value. — mostly on “early” dialogues (which we do not cover)

On pleasure: helpful contemporary resources

Aydede, ‘An Analysis of Pleasure Vis-à-Vis Pain.’
Feldman, ‘On the Intrinsic Value of Pleasures.’
Goldstein, ‘Why People Prefer Pleasure to Pain.’
Goldstein, ‘Pleasure and Pain: Unconditional, Intrinsic Values.’
Katz, ‘Pleasure.’
Kenny, Action, Emotion, and Will.
Ryle and Gallie, ‘Symposium: Pleasure.’
Taylor, ‘Pleasure.’
Williams and Bedford, ‘Symposium: Pleasure and Belief.’

Pleasure in Plato’s Republic

Erginel, ‘Plato on a Mistake About Pleasure.’
*Erginel, ‘Inconsistency and Ambiguity in Republic IX.’
Taylor, ‘Plato and Aristotle on the Criterion of Real Pleasures.’
**Suggested additional readings**

**Pleasure in Plato’s Republic (continued)**

Commentaries on the *Republic*
- Adam, *The Republic of Plato: Books VI-X.*
- *Annas, An Introduction to Plato's Republic.*

**Pleasure in Plato’s Philebus**
- Aufderheide, "An Inconsistency in the Philebus?"
- Carone, "Hedonism and the Pleasureless Life in Plato’s Philebus."
- Carpenter, "Hedonistic Persons. The Good Man Argument in Plato's Philebus."
- *Carpenter, "Pleasure As Genesis in Plato's Philebus."*
- Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Good in the Philebus."
- Dillon and Brisson, *Plato's Philebus: Selected Papers From the Eighth Symposium Platonicum.*
- Evans, "Plato and the Meaning of Pain."
- Evans, "Plato's Rejection of Thoughtless and Pleasureless Lives."
- *Evans, "Plato's Anti-Hedonism."
- Evans, "Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Mistakes."
- Frede, "Rumpelstiltskin's Pleasures: True and False Pleasures in Plato's Philebus."
- *Frede, "Disintegration and Restoration: Pleasure and Pain in Plato’s Philebus."*
- Hampton, "Pleasure, Truth and Being in Plato’s’ Philebus’: A Reply to Professor Frede."
- Harte, "The Philebus on Pleasure: The Good, the Bad and the False."
- *Harte, 'Commentary on Evans: Plato's Anti-Hedonism."
- *Harte, 'The Life of Protarchus' Choosing."
- Harte, "Desire, Memory, and the Authority of the Soul: Plato, Philebus 35 C—D."
- Miller, "The Pleasures of the Comic and of Socratic Inquiry: Aporetic Reflections on Philebus 48A--50B."
- Warren, "Plato on the Pleasures and Pains of Knowing."

Commentaries on the Philebus
- *Frede, Plato's Philebus, Translated with Introduction and Notes.*
- Frede, *Platon Philebos, Übersetzung und Kommentar.*
- Gosling, *Philebus Translated with Notes and Commentary.*
- Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure; A Translation of the Philebus.*

**Pleasure in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics**
- Annas, "Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness."
- Aubry, "Nicomachean Ethics VII.14; The Pain of the Living and Divine Pleasure."
- Aufderheide, “Aristotle against Delos: Pleasure in Nicomachean Ethics X.”
- Aufderheide, 'Processes As Pleasures in EN VII 11-14 - a New Approach."
- Bostock, 'Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle’s Ethics."
- Coope, "Why Does Aristotle Think That Ethical Virtue Is Required for Practical Wisdom?"
- Gonzalez, 'Aristotle on Pleasure and Perfection."
- Gosling, "More Aristotelian Pleasures."
- Hadreas, "The Functions of Pleasure in Nicomachean Ethics X 4-5."

Page 5
Pleasure in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (continued)

Frede, 'Pleasure and Pain in Aristotle’s Ethics.'
Frede, 'Nicomachean Ethics VII.11-12: Pleasure.'
*Owen, “Aristotelian Pleasures.”
Rapp, 'Pleasure and Eudaimonia.'
Shields, ‘Perfecting Pleasures: The Metaphysics of Pleasure in Nicomachean Ethics X.’
Strohl, 'Pleasure As Perfection: *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4-5.'
*Taylor, 'Pleasure: Aristotle's Response to Plato.'
Taylor, 'Plato and Aristotle on the Criterion of Real Pleasures.'
Urman, ‘Aristotle on Pleasure.’
Warren, 'Aristotle on Speusippus on Eudoxus on Pleasure.'

Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*.
Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*.
*Broadie and Rowe, Aristotle: *Nicomachean ethics*.
Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics*.
Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*.

Full bibliographical details


