

THE PARMENIDEUM AT ELEA

Conference, Philosophy of Ethics: 27-29 May 2011, Elea, Italy

“Better to be an unhappy human than a happy pig.” Was Mill right?

Language: English

Abstracts and Papers: Non-mandatory, though submissions will be published in the conference issue of the Parmenideum Journal. Deadline for inclusion in the Journal, April 30th.

Confirmed key note speakers:

Timothy Chappell, Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Ethics Centre, The Open University: “Nobility in Ethics”

Contributors: Sarah Nooter (University of Chicago), Livio Rossetti (Perugia University), Z.G. Mimica (Vienna), Alan Preti (Rosemont College), Safiye Yigit (Bogazici University), Dina Babushkina (Helsinki University),

In *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill provides a detailed argument as to why unhappiness as a human is preferable to the happiness of the most satisfied “beast”, concluding that

It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

Utilitarianism (1861) Ch.II.

Participation and papers are invited by all those interested in the themes broached by the above conclusion and the rather difficult question it raises: is it actually better to be an unhappy human than a happy pig?

Papers on related themes, such as the substance and purpose of morality, the nature and desirability of happiness, the comparative value of happiness and contentment, and indeed the question of why a human who experiences extreme unhappiness would not wish for the ignorance of a pig or a fool, are welcome. Papers will be reviewed and published in the Parmenideum Journal. Deadline for papers and abstracts for inclusion in the conference issue of the journal is 30th April 2011. Submissions are most welcome after this time, but will be published in a subsequent issue.

The program will be posted shortly at www.parmenideum.com/index_philo.html

Participants will be pleased to know that the RM Group will perform new works at the supper (optional) on the Saturday night (28th May).

Travel to Ascea is straightforward by road or by direct train from either Rome or Naples without need for changes. Participants can be met at the station on arrival. Accommodation can be arranged at a number of agriturismo establishments (Italian country B&Bs) or at residential apartments and hotels nearby, many of which are searchable via the internet.

Accommodation help <http://www.parmenideum.com/general/accomm.htm>

Directions for air/train or road travel <http://www.parmenideum.com/general/arrivals.htm>

To register <http://www.parmenideum.com/reg-wkends/form.htm>

There is a nominal registration fee of €40 per participant. For further details contact:

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Website http://www.parmenideum.com/index_philo.html

The Parmenideum periodically holds “philosophy under the olives” venues, both as formal conferences and informal encounters at the southern Italian town of Ascea in the Cilento, close to the archaeological ruins of the Greek settlement of Elea – the home of Parmenides and Zeno.

Weather permitting, talks may be delivered at the site of the archaeological ruins, providing an ideal setting for the discussion and exploration of philosophical issues.

Next conference announcement, autumn 2011.

Provisional title: "Ancient rationalism and modern mysticism: the former as antidote to the latter".

The conference will address the question of why the philosophy of Parmenides is important in a modern context. Specifically this question addresses two aspects of Parmenides. The first considers Nestor Cordero's (University of Rennes) contention that Parmenides was as much a scientist as a philosopher, in that his poem is a thesis on rational inquiry as opposed to opinion. The second aspect is that rational inquiry provides a powerful countercheck on superstition and the dangers that lie in superstitious belief. What can be viewed as particularly powerful about Parmenides' thesis, it might be argued, is that his answer to the origins of Being avoids a creator or god. One interesting corollary is the possibility that Parmenides was an atheist; or at least, despite apparently being a mystic, the possibility that he did not take the gods of his day too seriously.

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