



American Philosophical Practitioners Association

Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 26, 2014

at The City College of New York
160 Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031

North Academic Center
Department of Philosophy
Fifth floor, Room 5/144

Theme: Humor in Philosophical Practice

Arrival and Registration 9:00-9:30

9:30-10:00 APPA Annual Report, **Lou Marinoff**

10:00-11:00 **Lydia Amir**, The Practice of Philosophy – A Necessarily Humorous Endeavor (for Most of Us)

Coffee break & book sale

11:15-12:15 **Beau Shaw**, Good Humor and Ill-Humor in Nietzsche

12:15-1:15 **Alina Feld**, Melancholy and Humor

Lunch & book sale 1:15 - 2:15

2:15-3:15 **Emily Muller**, Cynicism, Humor, and Wholeheartedness

3:15-4:15 **Lou Marinoff**, How to Be Happy on Mondays

Coffee break

4:30-5:30 **Barbara Jones**, To Be or Not to Be: The Virtue of Wisdom

Dinner 6:30-8:00: Zen Palate, 663 9th Avenue (corner of 46th Street), New York, NY

Program Summary

* * * * *



The Practice of Philosophy – A Necessarily Humorous Endeavor (for Most of Us)

Lydia Amir, Ph.D.

The College of Management, Academic Studies,
Rishon L'e Zion, Israel

Following the recent publication of Amir's book, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard*, the lecture focuses on the role of humor in the practice of philosophy, whether as a search for the good life, as a means to attain to philosophic ideals, as a tool for self-knowledge, for handling ambivalence and effective deliberation, for living successfully with conflict and eventually for resolving it through the realization of a new worldview, *homo risibilis* or the ridiculous human being. The lecture explains how the development of a reflective, self-referential and intra-personal sense of humor may be necessary for successfully practicing philosophy, at least for those of us who are not wholly rational.

* * * * *



Good Humor and Ill-Humor in Nietzsche

Beau Shaw, Ph.D.

Philosophy Department, Columbia University, New York

This paper seeks to identify two aspects of humor, through looking at the understanding of humor in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. These two aspects are what I call “good humor”—or humor which relieves a person’s suffering; and what I call “ill humor”—or humor which creates, for a person, its own kind of suffering. I show how, in his work, Nietzsche provides an account of good humor—that is, he explains how humor relieves a person’s suffering. But I suggest that, contrary to his intentions, this good humor that he describes actually contains ill humor—that is, while it does relieve a person’s suffering, it also causes a person suffering. Ultimately, therefore, my intention is to describe, and to clarify, a conflict within humor itself: how, on the one hand, humor can relieve a person’s suffering; but how, on the other hand, humor causes a person suffering.

* * * * *



Melancholy and Humor

Alina Feld, Ph.D.

Hofstra University

The relation between melancholy and humor is intuitively one of opposition, thus being bound together in dialectic tension. Hubertus Tellenbach as well as Heidegger explain that since melancholy is an experience of self-entrapment in time and space, self-transcendence has been the therapy par excellence. Self-transcendence has taken surprising forms. Ficino guides the scholars victims of melancholy an occupational dis-ease through solar and jovial imaginal therapeutic; Le Senne invokes Poe's demon of perversity and metaphysics of the nihil; Kant links philosophy to melancholic temperament capable of the sublime; Hegel presents cases of melancholic

insanity healed by shock therapy. Le Senne observes that therapy sets free the non-transcendent melancholic, and hence humor is one of the privileged therapeutic modalities employed intuitively especially by phlegmatic melancholics. In this presentation I will focus on Ficino and Hegel humorous treatments of melancholic pathology.

* * * * *



Cynicism, Humor and Wholeheartedness

Emily Muller, M.A.

LifeWise Philosophical Counseling, Winnipeg, Canada

This presentation is an exploration and expansion upon Harry Frankfurt's provocative suggestion that having a sense of humor offers a path to identity that is potentially more important for integrity than the possession of life-shaping convictions, whole-heartedly undertaken. In the course of this discussion, I also draw on the ancient Cynics, remark upon the counterproductive self-seriousness of our age

and offer insights into the ways humor has been useful in my own practice. The aim of both my proposed talk and my counseling method is to take humor seriously and to endeavor to take seriousness more lightly, with a grain of sugar and a grain of salt.

* * * * *



How to be Happy on Mondays

Lou Marinoff, Ph.D.

The City College of New York

This presentation is a reading of selected passages from the penultimate chapter of a new book, *The Power of Tao* (forthcoming, Perseus). The chapter itself is entitled "How to be Happy on Mondays." It offers a whimsical, offbeat, Taoist view of "Blue Monday," its causes, and cures.

Drawing also on Plato and Orwell, it affords a cautionary tale of how euphemistic speech can deform conceptions in unhappy ways. It also illustrates why some philosophers should never shop alone. That leads to the question: Isn't "self-help" really "other-assisted help"? -- and to a tangential question: Doesn't humor necessarily arise as "self-humor" in the process of becoming "other-assisted humor"? Beneath the humor lurks seriousness; beneath the seriousness, more humor. It's yin and yang, all the way down.

* * * * *



To Be or Not to Be: The Virtue of Wisdom

A one-woman cabaret performance demonstrating the use of humor in philosophical practice

Barbara Jones, Ph.D.

"Humor is a great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place."

Mark Twain

Philosophical practice refers not only to philosophical counseling but also to other applications of philosophical thought directed towards concrete situations. Cabaret, an intimate, small scale yet ambitious revue which utilizes songs, monologues, and humor as its mediums of communication is intellectual and self-reflective and has often been used as a mirror of topical events including philosophy.

This particular cabaret performance is a commentary on wisdom -- the capacity to recognize the essentials of what one encounters and to respond well and fittingly to them. There would be no need for more commentaries on wisdom if we were all wise. We aren't, and hence we must live with the tragedies of our lives and the ridicule which follows.

Fortunately humor can play an important role in helping us to mitigate our insufficiencies and shortcomings as well as to help us tolerate and ultimately forgive them. In this sense, humor is a serious trait that is based on the wisdom that nothing earthly and human is perfect. This is at the heart of what makes humor contemplative, pensive, and profound. Audience members viewing "To Be or Not to Be" enrich and develop their worldview of wisdom through a humorous as well as logical and aesthetic consideration of it. The humorous treatment of wisdom will also be illustrated through songs by such comedic greats as Mel Blanc and Billy Field.

* * * * *

Dinner, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

at

Zen Palate, 663 9th Avenue (at 46th Street), New York, NY

* * * * *

RSVP by July 18, 2014

admin@appa.edu