

Grad Colloquium III Abstracts

"Political Unification in the State of Embodiment"

Rachel Elliott

One of Plato's main concerns in the Republic is the unity of the Polis: why it is necessary, why it is challenging to achieve, and how it can be brought about in actuality. Ultimately political unity is said to be a matter of attending to one's own own affairs. Plato's suggestion in Book V, however, that citizens should obfuscate one particular sphere of ownness, one's own family ties, sits uncomfortably with this general current towards sticking to what is proper to oneself as a political virtue. Here I argue that Plato's recommendation in Book V to 'hold women and children in common' is a comedic suggestion aimed at foregrounding the condition of embodiment as an uncontrollable element of political existence. I say that this suggestion uses embodiment - laughter, affect - to highlight the nature of embodiment as affective resonance: we are pulled toward and repulsed by the bodies of others irrespective of whether the state names them to be proper targets of our attention or derision: it would be impossible for the state to regulate who mates with whom (and so whom we regard as family...) because our bodies will not listen to 'what is best'. Perhaps the body is a force of disunity. I'll be referencing Antigone and also trying to integrate Eva Brann's Music of the Republic here.

"The Art of Living With Oneself: Autophasma and the Animal with Logos"

Doug Halls

In this presentation, I examine some aspects of the relation between phantasia ('imagination') and the lived situation of the animal with logos in Aristotle's philosophy. I take up and develop the idea of an autophasma, or 'self-image,' to discuss that relation. I argue that being 'with' or 'having' logos involves a certain way of being with or having oneself that is, nonetheless, only accomplished through a form of phantasmatic self-absence. As we will see, the affective and temporal dimensions of the relation between sense-perception (aisthesis) and phantasia prefigure this complex situation. I close with some suggestions about what I think this means for the animal with logos to be well with itself, or proficient in the 'art of living.'