



Panel Abstracts Booklet

Celtic Conference in Classics

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Organization



Funding



Partners



[PANEL 15] ETHICAL LANDSCAPES IN EPICUREANISM

[Thursday]

Slot 5: 9:00 - 9:50am

Antonio Júlio Garcia Freire, Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte-UERN
A invidia e a ambitionis como motivação para os conflitos civis em Lucrécio

O poema filosófico *De rerum natura* do epicurista Lucrécio (séc. I a.C.) foi escrito e publicado em um período de grande agitação social e política romana. No início do poema, indicando sua preocupação com os conflitos civis da sua época (*hoc patriai tempore iniquo*), Lucrécio faz uma súplica a Vênus para a paz entre os romanos (DRN, I, 1-43). Esta parece ser uma posição de consenso entre a maioria das interpretações qualificadas do poema (FOWLER, 1989), as quais defendem que o poema é antes de tudo, um trabalho de filosofia política. Parece que tal interpretação é baseada, principalmente, na aprovação do conceito grego de *stasis*, usado na antiguidade para denominar o prenúncio de conflitos e guerras civis entre as cidades estado gregas. Considerando a audiência a que foi dirigida o *De rerum natura*, Lucrécio estava preocupado com um tipo particular de *stasis*, a saber, os embates entre os membros da elite aristocrática romana (McCONNELL, 2012), ávidos de poder e impulsionados por ambição e sede de riqueza. Nesse sentido, cabe a presente comunicação apresentar as noções de *invidia* e *ambitionis* e a sua relação com os conflitos civis mencionados por Lucrécio.

Slot 6: 10:00 - 10:50am

João Pereira de Matos, Universidade Nova de Lisboa [escrevinhices@gmail.com]
Epicureanism and the Political Thought

The goal of this paper is, in a panoptic view, to discuss the political thinking in the context of the Epicurean school of thought. Starting from the traditional epicurean position that the wise men must refrain from politics and live in obscurity («live hidden!») we will try to show that such a warning was not inflexible and that despite this school had made a relatively small theoretical corpus about the more general phenomenon of politics, still their teachings had major implications in the development of Political Thought from Rome to the present day with, perhaps unexpected, but profound practical consequences on History.

Slot 8: 12:10am - 1:00pm

Antonio Mura, University of Pisa [a.mura5@studenti.unipi.it]
Κατ' ὄμοειδειῶν ἀνθρωποιδεῖς: perceiving gods to pursue ὁμοίωσις θεῶν

Since gods are the Epicurean paradigm of perfect life and behavior, but Epicurus' conception of gods is still obscure for the lack of Epicurus' ipsissima verba, it is possible to find an answer in the works produced by the Epicurean school. Also the scholion to Epicurus' first *Kύρια Δόξα*, easily ascribable to the Epicurean school, can enlighten the Epicurean conception of gods as an ethical model, even though it only constitutes an introductory step in the knowledge of gods. Since all the Epicurean doctrine is aimed

to ethics, even this scholion, which deals with the gnosiology of gods, can be read from an ethical point of view. In this paper, through the analysis of other sources – mainly treatises of the Epicurean school – I will propose a new conjecture about the text of the scholion, and I will clarify, starting from the conjecture, the ethical implications of the expression “κατ’όμοείδειαν ἀνθρωποειδεῖς”. The explanation will show that gods can be perceived in two ways, the latter of which, for its link with human nature, can be correlated with the concept of ομοίωσις θεῶν, which is the final goal of Epicurean ethics.

Slot 10: 3:30 - 4:20pm

Markus Figueira da Silva, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte [markusficus@gmail.com]

Sobre escolher e recusar: o que significa a autarkeia na ética de Epicuro

O exercício de compreensão da *physis* (*physiología*) é uma atividade filosófica constante que tem como consequência uma prática de vida (*pragmateía*) que se evidencia em toda escolha (*hairesis*) e recusa (*phygén*) que o homem faz quando age de acordo com o conhecimento que tem da natureza das coisas. Escolher e recusar só são possíveis para quem tem o princípio da ação em si mesmo (*autarkeia*), logo a ética de Epicuro se fundamenta na compreensão da *physis*, o que significa, neste contexto, livrar-se da ignorância e dos temores infundados propagados pelas falsas crenças e pelas falsas opiniões aceitas e praticadas por multidões de insensatos. Postulamos que a relação entre a *physiología* e a ética dá coerência à prática filosófica de Epicuro. Pretendemos mostrar neste trabalho o sentido que o termo autarkeia adquire no pensamento de Epicuro quando é empregado na Carta a Meneceu, nas Máximas Principais e nas Sentenças Vaticanas. A liberdade (*eleuthería*) se mostra no exercício ininterrupto de escolher o que aprouver e recusar o que é nocivo, portanto ela só é possível quando resulta de uma conduta autárquica. Neste sentido, o conhecimento se realiza na atitude e a ignorância também.

[Friday]

Slot 11: 9:00 - 9:50am

Gerson Leite de Moraes, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie [gersonleitedemoraes@usp.br]

Lorenzo Valla and neo-epicureanism of the late Middle Ages

The present work has the purpose of discussing the questions related to the construction of the theoretical framework of Lorenzo Valla as someone affiliated to the epicurean tradition. In this sense it is important to emphasize his philosophical and mainly philological understanding, and the repercussions of his thought for the quattrocento and for the following century. As far as his philosophical thought is concerned, Valla can be defined as neoepicurist, since it promotes a series of polemic against stoic asceticism and against the excesses of monastic asceticism. When it is said that Lorenzo Valla is a neoepicurist it is tried to emphasize his understanding on the “pleasure”, understood far beyond the pleasure said carnal. In 1430, Valla wrote his first version of the *De Voluptate* (Pleasure) dialogue in Piacenza, city for which he had fled after the manifestation of the Pest in the city of Pavia. The following year, after returning to Pavia and becoming a public reader, he published *De Voluptate*, which underwent at least four modi-

fications throughout his life, without which there was, however, a significant change in the structure of the text. It is in *De Voluptate* that Valla builds a dialogue involving a series of people who were part of her circle of friends and even some enemies. Using the epicurean theme of pharmacology to explain his method, Valla goes along the text showing who the sick are, in this case, the Stoics, also called several times in the text of “philosophers” and “enemies.” Taking the New Testament environment as a background, Valla classifies the ethics of the Stoics in a manner similar to the ethics of the Pharisees, and the epicureans play the role of the Sadducees. The proposal of work is to highlight and discuss the theses of Lorenzo Valla for the political and social environment in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age.

Slot 12: 10:00 - 10:50am

Kyriakos Fytakis, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne [Kyriakos.Fytakis@etu.univ-paris1.fr]
Clinamen, Necessity and Modern Receptions of Epicureanism: the Figure of Spinoza

During the early modern period, epicurean thought was often refuted as an atheist and hedonistic philosophy. Both in ethics and in natural philosophy, the term epicurean designated an impious thinker whose philosophy threatened the religious authorities. However, the emergence of the Cartesian tradition, changed the relation to epicurean thought; it also influenced the creation and diffusion of a form of neo-epicureanism, a renewal of Epicurus’s thought that was thus adapted in 17th and 18th centuries’ historical context. It is in this perspective that Baruch Spinoza’s philosophy was perceived by many of his contemporaries as epicurean. But what does permit this kind of comparison between the two philosophies? Would it be accurate to affirm that Spinoza’s philosophy belongs to the neo-epicurean tradition? An identification between epicurean and spinozist philosophies can be found in many 17th and 18th century texts. We find it in Spinoza’s biography, written by Jean Colerus and in texts written by thinkers who refuted his thought, such as François Fénelon or Jean La Placette. More specifically, it was the epicurean doctrine on the hazard that was often identified to Spinoza’s doctrine on absolute necessity. In our paper, we proceed to a thorough analysis of this comparison, intending to shed light on one of the most interesting and influential receptions of Epicurus’s philosophy in modernity. Indeed, both Epicurus’s and Spinoza’s philosophies had an important influence on European Enlightenment, namely on French materialists. However, the identification between epicurean hazard and spinozist necessity seems paradoxical. In this perspective, we shall show the relation between the two philosophies, by focusing on their modal theories; thus, we shall examine the reasons why- contrary to other cases- their comparison was based less on ethical and mostly on metaphysical matters and we shall show at what extent their identification is legitimate.

Slot 13: 11:10 - 12:00am

Carlo Delle Donne, Sapienza-Università di Roma [carlo.delledonne@sns.it]
Ataraxia and philology: tackling textual troubles

How was ataraxia to be reached? What could put the fulfilment of such an objective at risk? The aim of my proposal is to shed light on a particular and often neglected kind of threats to ataraxia: the anxiety brought about by the detection of cases of inconsistency

in Epicurus' own words. In light of the crucial role played by the Master's works in the Epicurean tradition, an alleged contradiction in them was likely to result in a serious concern, for it could ruin the whole Epicurean system. As a consequence, Epicurus' disciples were expected to develop some exegetically adequate strategies. Thus, they could "neutralize" the potential difficulty represented by any inconsistency, and they could consequently prove themselves to strive to deliver on the crucial dogma of ataraxia in any possible way. Apart from that, I set out to briefly take into account also the relationship between such an Epicurean *philologia medicans* and the Middle Platonist *philologia philosophica*.

Slot 14: 12:10am - 1:00pm

Alexandra Valadas, Michigan State University [alexandralavaladas@gmail.com]
Tracing back Gender in the Kepos through Leontion, the Epicurist hetaira

Epicurist *ethos* was never free of controversy. In the Kepos, where egalitarianism was practiced and Democritus' teachings amply discussed, it is not surprising that a new form of humanism was inaugurated. All members of the 'Garden,' free citizens, metics, slaves, women, and men were entitled to the benefits and responsibilities of being Epicurists, and it is not surprising then, to find a *hetaira* (or even several *hetairai*) among the Kepos. Leontion is, probably, the most famous as well as the most vilified woman to belong to the ranks of Epicurus' followers. Even if her role as an Epicurist has been belittled and almost erased from history, the 'echo' of Leontion remains. Such is the echo of women thinkers and philosophers that have been systematically erased and silenced throughout history. To return to Leontion is to return to the way of life of the *sophós* of the Kepos. As a presumed *hetaira*, Leontion was neither circumscribed to the *idios* or the *oikos* and could practice a degree of autonomy inaccessible to other women. Leontion, the Epicurist, could then not only exercise her *autárkeia*, but to live the life of the sage, as for Epicurus, every living being naturally seeks pleasure and naturally avoids pain (DL, X, 129), and therefore searches for a wise life in equilibrium with a *telos* based on *ataraxia* (tranquility of the mind) e *aponia* (absence of pain). Epicurist ethics in which there is a liberation from dogma and teleological systems, focusing on a degree of individual asceticism and moderation, permitted that women could participate and flourish in such an intellectual milieu. Leontion's figure, apocryphal or not, allows us to draw the critical relationship between the ethical landscapes of Epicureanism and the role of women in the Garden.

Slot 15: 2:30 - 3:20pm

Silvio Di Cello, University of Salento [silvio.dicello@outlook.it]
Epicureanism in Vergil's Georgics

The Georgics is a didactic poem written by Vergil. Eventhough it formally deals with agriculture and animals, the main feature of this poem is its philosophical background. Not only does Vergil shows a plurality of influences derived from several philosophical schools, but he also shows Good skills in giving an original shape to the dogmas of the philosophical works he studied. Features inspired by Epicureanism, Stoicism and Platonism are spread all over the poem, and it's sometimes easy to underline the contra-

dictions between them, thus showing the multiple perspectives which Vergil adopts in his work. The purpose of this essay is to provide information on the epicurean influence which permeate the Georgics. It is widely known that Vergil studied in Naples with the philosopher Siro, and that his

former poems, the Catalepticon and the Bucolics, are known to be strongly influenced by this philosophy. Studying the Georgics, I noticed that the epicurean features are deeply rooted in the very fabric of the poem, both in the lexic and in its conceptual structure. My paper will prove that taking into account the epicurean influence is a crucial element in order to understand this poem as a whole. At the end of it, I will focus on some of the contradictions created by the juxtaposition of all the perspectives which characterize the Georgics, and make it a polyphonic poem influenced by many doctrines and philosophies.

Slot 16: 3:30 - 4:20pm

Stephen M. Kershner, Austin Peay State University [kershners@apsu.edu]

Vergil's Philodemean Bees and the Virtues of an Epicurean Collective

Vergil's Georgics appeared in Rome, after nearly a century of politically, culturally, and emotionally devastating civil wars. As such, the poem is more than pastoral fancy in a farming how-to manual. Within its elegant hexameters, it also possesses a variety of philosophical arguments, such as the benefits of the simple life of a farmer (Geo. 1.145; 4.125-148). According to ancient biographies of Vergil, it is clear that he was an avowed Epicurean, having learned from the Italian Siro, in turn the student of the Epicurean master Philodemus. When we read the Allegory of the Bees in book four (lines 67-227) closely, instead of bland instruction on apiculture, we find a subtle discussion of the possibility, the benefits, and the failings of a collective society in the Epicurean moral tradition. In this paper, I will argue that Vergil constructs a careful Epicurean discussion of the possibilities of a collective society, in the form of a beehive, and its ability to manage crises, according to Epicurean ethical doctrine. I will argue that he shows that a well-managed collective society is consistent with and beneficial within Epicurean thought, according to Epicurean doctrines on the limits of pleasures, justice, and friendship. I will further argue that this type of collective is only possible when all members are "Sages," who behave consistently with Epicurean ataraxia, which allows for contentment with even a lifestyle without cultural artefacts. Ultimately, I argue that what binds this discussion together in an educative way for its audience is the presence of Philodemean therapeutic techniques, primarily from his treatises On Frank Speech and On Anger. Philodemean Vergil presents the beehive as a moral portrait—in Philodemus' terms, a "setting-before-the-eyes" or, "tithenai pro ommaton"—as a form of frankness meant to educate.