INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL REPORT
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This report is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for international travel, funded by the Maricopa County Community College District. I traveled to and from Vancouver on 4/17 and 4/20, respectively. If you have any questions or would like to receive more information about the contents of this report, please email me at david.yount@mesacc.edu. Thank you.

Thursday, 4/18:

Attended a three-hour Author-Meets-Critics session on Plato, where explanations and criticisms from three commentators were given to author Blake Hestir (author of Plato on the Metaphysical Foundation of Meaning and Truth). Hestir’s project is mainly on the Sophist, where Plato argues that both those who claim that everything changes all the time in every respect, and those who claim that there is only Being, which never changes in any way, are incorrect. Plato also develops a view there about how we can say something that is false. Hestir claimed that Plato does not believe in and is not the originator of the correspondence theory of truth, which is something I’ve held that Plato believes. Hestir also made the distinction between Strong Platonism (i.e., Plato’s Forms are one, immutable, has/is being, and is incapable of combination/blending) and Restricted/Minimal Platonism (i.e., a Form is one in at least one respect but not every respect, always the same in at least one respect but not every respect, has/is being in at least one respect but not every respect). In the Q&A, I asked a question about whether Hestir believed that Plato held that the Forms blend in the Republic, and he did not think so.

Attended a two-hour Author-Meets-Critics session on Plotinus, where explanations and criticisms from two commentators were given to author D.M. Hutchinson (author of Plotinus on Consciousness). Hutchinson argued that Plotinus believes in three layers of self (physical – the soul trace, dianoetic – the lower soul, and noetic – the higher soul), and four modes of consciousness: (a) susaisthesis = awareness; (b) suesis = awareness; (c) antilepsis = apprehension; and (d) parakolouthesis = consciousness. I hadn’t thought a lot about this aspect of Plotinus’ thought, so it was valuable to think about these distinctions. One of the commentators also raised the issue of whether consciousness is a genus and if so, how do they connect, which is an interesting question I would like to think further about.

Attended a two-hour session sponsored by the Society for the History of Political Philosophy, entitled, “Plato on Rule, Eros, and Law.” There were three papers:
The first paper was on Alcibiades in the Symposium and the [Aristophanes’ play] Frogs. The author argued that we find elements in the Symposium (a dialogue written by Plato that I use to teach PHI 218: Philosophy of Sexuality) that are parallel to the character of Alcibiades in the play, the Frogs. He argued that Alcibiades misses Socrates’ ignorance and his eroticism, and discussed the connection between wisdom and beauty. Lastly, he wondered whether Socrates really did not have wisdom.

The second paper was on the laws in Plato’s dialogue Minos. The author drew conclusions about what Plato thought about the law. For instance, he argued that Plato holds that the law demands sacrifice, even animal and human sacrifices (King Minos chose people to sacrifice to a god to keep the god happy and not kill his subjects). In these human sacrifices, he used these people only as a means, as Kant claims. The author then stated that the state, not only religion, sacrifices people for its end(s) as well. But Plato makes the citizen/non-citizen, law-abiding citizen/criminal distinction as well. The author’s examples were the death penalty and sending citizens into battle. These sacrificers act like gods, above humans, to decide whom to sacrifice. Lastly, the author claimed that Plato defines the law as follows: “Law wants to be the finding out [ideally] of what is.” (Minos 315a)] The problem with these statements is that the author based his view on a dialogue that is not considered to be authentically Plato, so though the conclusions were intriguing, I didn’t think the author explained well why we should assume that Plato wrote the dialogue, and if that is not explained, then we cannot make any meaningful conclusions about Plato’s view from that dialogue.

The third paper was “Plato on Ruling and Being Ruled,” and it was well argued. The author made the point that there is the intellectualist position of the law – the reasons behind the law, and the non-intellectualist position – that is, that law is to produce docility. These do not preclude force, but the author focused on citizens’ willing deference to command and to be commanded. There are three general political claims in the law:

1. For citizens, some rule and being ruled is necessary.
2. To be ruled, is in some sense not to be free.
3. The rule-giver should aim at freedom and law creation.

So there must be freedom and being ruled simultaneously, and being ruled willingly is key. Then she quoted “necessity of rule” passages from Plato to prove that he claimed that and then the author asks if democratic citizens are free. She claims that Plato holds (from Book VII in the Republic) in a city of freedom, you don’t have to be ruled, but then also gave Plato’s passage from the Gorgias: How can someone be happy if they aren’t free, and states that Socrates (the character who represents Plato’s view in the Gorgias), redefined “freedom.” The most unlimited form of freedom is no rule, so we need to balance power (i.e., rule of law) and freedom.

Friday, 4/19:

Attended a three-hour Author-Meets-Critics session on Plato, where explanations and criticisms of Dominic McIver Lopes’ book, Being for Beauty: Aesthetic Agency and Value. Lopes asks what makes a value an aesthetic value, and what makes aesthetic values reason-giving? [The latter question is a normative question.] He claims that aesthetic value (V) is reason-giving = “the fact that x is V lends weight to the proposition that A (aesthetically) should φ [do something] in C [certain circumstances]. He also posits the common ground thesis, dealing with aesthetic evaluation, acts, and what it takes to be an aesthetic expert in aesthetic acts. Lastly, he has a Network Theory of aesthetics, which better explains why aesthetic experts: (a) specialize by aesthetic domain; (b) specialize by activity; (c) where specialization by activity and domain interact; (d) disperse into
almost all demographic niches; (e) jointly inhabit the whole aesthetic universe; and (f) have relatively stable expert competencies. Aesthetics is not my area, but I found the session thought-provoking.

Attended a two-hour session on Plato’s *Parmenides*, a very puzzling dialogue in Plato’s corpus. The author of the first paper, “What the Forms Are Not: Plato on Conceptualism at *Parmenides* 132b-c,” argued that Plato may have endorsed conceptualism (i.e., the view that Forms are thoughts or concepts), even though Plato is usually interpreted in the relevant argument in *Parmenides* as rejecting the view that Forms are thoughts or concepts. Concepts are construed (by Plato according to the author) as mental and common entities; (weak) predication and numerical unities; link up to reality because they derive from and depend on Forms; and are differentiated according to the Form to which they correspond. The reason I was not persuaded by this talk is that Plato clearly states that the Forms are essences of what things really are, and, while one can think and know the Forms, they are not themselves propositions (i.e., statements or claims) or just any thought that anyone can have. But it was an original interpretation and beneficial to hear the author’s argument and be able to evaluate it.

The author of the second paper (which was entitled, “Parmenides’ Love of Honour: An Account of How Not to Do Philosophy in Plato’s *Parmenides*) argued that what is known as the second section of the *Parmenides* (the very puzzling/enigmatic part of the dialogue where Plato discusses what follows if a one is, and if a one is not), consists of a bunch of incoherent arguments, to show the reader the way in which one should not do philosophy. In favor of her view, some other commentators have called that part of the dialogue silly, full of bad arguments (fallacies), and have struggled to make sense of it. So the author recommends that we do not look at the arguments, but instead look at the framing of the dialogue and parallels with other dialogues. She found that Parmenides (the real person/philosopher, who is a character in the dialogue) is seen as a lover of winning and honor. She next brought up passages to show what Plato says about antilogic (bad arguments) in other dialogues, where he says that the dangers of antilogic are believing that there is no such thing as truth (*Phaedo*), and that people will become lawless (*République*). I found this argument quite implausible because the author did not (i) focus on the content of the actual arguments, (ii) criticize the major interpretations of the second section; or (iv) address Plato’s passage before the second section, where Plato says through the Parmenides character that they need to go through the arguments about if a one is or not, as a training, which will help them prove that Forms really exist, because if Forms do not exist, according to Plato, then we would not be able to have any meaningful discourse.

I also went to the book exhibits and bought several books that I was not aware existed. I will be reading those books to remain current in my field. Moreover, I obtained some academic philosophy journals, which I brought back and shared with my fellow colleagues (e.g., I gave one on political philosophy to my colleague in philosophy and one in philosophy of mathematics to a colleague in the math department) and students, which they appreciated very much.

In conclusion, I very much appreciated being able to attend this conference and learn more in my area of philosophy.