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Preface

This volume contains papers presented at the Ninth Symposium Platonicum Pragense, on Plato's *Philebus*, held in Prague on November 14–16, 2013.

The Prague Symposium Platonicum was established in 1997 on the initiative of Aleš Havlíček. Thanks to him it soon became a valued international platform for scholarship on Plato and has flourished ever since. Aleš Havlíček passed away on July 22, 2015. The Ninth Symposium Platonicum Pragense on Plato's *Philebus* was the last he attended and contributed to. This book on the good human life is dedicated to his memory.

As in the previous volumes, the papers are arranged thematically, following the sequence of individual topics and passages in Plato's dialogue. Contributions of a more general scope are placed at the beginning of the volume.

Thus, the book opens with three papers dealing with the good, human experience and dialectic as they are conceived of in the *Philebus*. Thomas A. Szlezák challenges H.-G. Gadamer's interpretation, according to which the *Philebus* testifies to Plato's conviction that the good cannot be grasped "by a single Form". He emphasises that the dialogue takes us no further than "next to the vestibule of the house of the good". Far from being Plato's last word on the issue, it does not preclude conceiving of the transcendent Good. Maurizio Migliori offers a systematic survey of empirical aspects of Plato's inquiry into the good of human life in the *Philebus*. Reflecting on the good and happy life, and particularly on pleasure, Plato, despite his struggle against hedonism, shows a deep respect for the natural phenomena of human experience. On this evidence the author reassesses the relationship between Plato's ethical theory and Socrates' intellectualism.

Aleš Havlíček examines Plato's conception of dialectic in the *Philebus* given the difference between divine and human good. The latter does not consist purely in a life of thinking intelligible Forms but constitutes a mixture of thinking and pleasure. This is so because the human being is constituted of multifarious faculties. Dialectic, oriented as it is toward the Good, is the means of organizing these faculties into a harmonious whole.

Francesco Fronterotta raises the question as to what conception of causality underlies the ontology of the *Philebus* with its four genera of the limit, the unlimited, the mixed and the cause of mixture. As in other late dialogues Plato adumbrates here a theory of a causal agent which serves as an intermediary between a formal, intelligible principle on the one hand and an indeterminate substrate of sensible reality on the other. The result of this causal agency is described in quantitative, mathematical terms. This does not imply, however, that either the formal principle or the indeterminate substrate themselves are mathematical in nature.

The *Philebus* identifies the causal agent with Zeus' royal intellect. But what exactly does this mean? Gerd Van Riel argues against a "metaphysical interpretation" according to which a separate intellect, remaining above the world of becoming, is meant. Since there is no intellect without a soul, Zeus' royal intellect too must belong to a soul. It is a soul which looks after the body of the universe, viz. the World Soul. Far from being a higher or highest metaphysical principle, this intellect is subordinated to the intelligible reality and must obey the Good. Both in the case of the universe and in the case of the good human life, the intellect plays the role of the ruling force in the soul.

The *Philebus* suggests that sensation (*aisthêsis*) is the only activity common to body and soul. If sensation is not a form of cognition, what is it? R. A. H. King examines this puzzling question. On the one hand, sensation must be a *pathos* of which the subject is body-and-soul, being acted upon "in common". On the other hand, it must be different from activities and affections which are not common to body and soul, such as pleasures and pains of the soul itself, recollection or phenomena in which body and soul work against one another. Does the example of the scribe and the painter help us to understand what sensation is?

Another puzzling question is that of mixed and pure pleasures. Starting from discussion on pleasures and pains in Plato's earlier dialogues Sylvain Delcomminette establishes that, in the *Philebus*, mixed pleasures are made of pleasures which are coupled with pains and allow for "more and less", i.e. belong to the genus of the unlimited. Pure pleasures – pleasures of smell, aesthetic pleasures and pleasures of knowledge – are devoid of pain and necessarily mixed with thinking. It is thinking that makes them pure in focusing on what is determinate in this kind of experience. Pure pleasures are true pleasures whereas mixed pleasures are false, and false pleasures are based on errors concerning pleasure and pain. The topic of pure pleasures is addressed also by Georgia Mouroutsou who brings to light further aspects of this theory. Besides being devoid of pains that precede them, pure pleasures have the peculiarity of emerging at the end-stage of the process of sensing and attaining knowledge. They are not identical with the entire process. Thus, experiences of pure pleasure differ from those of impure pleasure in their temporality. While in the latter the present is linked to our past and future, in the former it stands out as independent of them and complete in itself. Were Plato in possession of a conceptual tool such as Aristotle's notion of activity, he could have made an even stronger case for the paradigmatic role of pure pleasures.

What is so good about knowing? Is it just the true pleasure that accompanies it? Amber D. Carpenter argues for other ways in which affects may be proper to knowing. Admittedly, the highest form of knowledge is dialectic. While in other kinds of cognitive activity criteria such as precision, clarity and reliability are valued, dialectic values truth above all else. Thus, in addition to the other criteria, the highest form of cognition is characterized by love of truth, an affect proper to knowing rather than consequent upon it. Other cognitive activities share in this affect in so far as they are subordinated to perfect knowledge and emulating it.

What did Protarchus learn from the discussion with Socrates? As Dorothea Frede points out, his final criticism of pleasures focuses only on erotic ones and omits the distinction between mixed and pure pleasures worked out in the course of the dialogue. Despite being convinced by Socrates of the superiority of reason over pleasure, she argues, Protarchus does not really understand why it is so. His all-too-easy 'conversion' at the end of the dialogue is to be understood

as Plato's invitation for his readers not to content themselves with Protarchus' attitude. Readers should be ready to re-examine the dialogue from the beginning in order to grasp the meaning of Socrates' final ranking of the goods.

This is what the last two contributors do in wondering about the final prizes awarded at the end of the dialogue. From this perspective, Chad Jorgenson reflects once again on pure pleasures. How is it that they constitute a necessary ingredient in the mixture of the good life whilst the life of gods, whom humans have to become like, is devoid of pleasure? His answer is that becoming like god does not necessarily imply the transcendence of human nature but may consist in the divinization of the human *qua* human. Unlike the *Phaedo*, Plato's *Philebus* does not preach the purification of the soul through its separation from the body. Rather it insists on the power of the *nous* and *phronêsis* to divinize phenomena resulting from human embodied condition, including pleasure. For Rachel Barney, the final ranking of the goods is puzzling in a number of ways. Imbedded into the complex structure of the dialogue as a whole, however, it can be interpreted as a well thought-out inventory of goods of human life. The rank-ordering, the author suggests, follows criteria concerning causality: 'Measure' wins the competition as a formal cause ahead of efficient (*nous* and *phronêsis*) and material causes (knowledge, lesser cognitive states and pure pleasures). Like the *Timaeus* on the cosmic level, the *Philebus* offers a fine analysis of causal factors on the level of the human life. Rachel Barney's interpretation of the final rank-ordering also accounts for the apparent absence of virtue from the winners podium.

The Editors