

SYMPOSIUM PHILOSOPHIAE ANTIQUAE QUARTUM ATHENIENSE

Physis and Nomos: Power, Justice and the Agonistical Ideal of Life in High Classicism

The fourth Symposium will be devoted to a fundamental re-examination of the bipolarity between physis and nomos in the context of 5th century B.C. philosophical thought. The proper understanding of lawfulness (as cosmic or societal order), and its connection to rational regularity and intelligent finality, may profitably bear fresh sustained investigation. The physis-nomos antithesis has been one paramount form which intellectual queries and moral concerns regarding the concept, valuation and exercise of power took in the era of High Classicism. The relationship between power and justice in society is a crucial question implicating complex issues of excellence and ability (arete and techne) on the one hand, of efficiency and success on the other, of the protection of the weaker members and communal cohesion on a third. A related focal point is whether optimizing individual perfection and maximizing social output put converging or diverging claims on human energy, functionality, wellbeing and happiness. The foundation or otherwise of collective structures on individual interest is a further major subject of debate in this connection. As is the existence and preponderance of natural or conventional factors in man's systems. The inquiry can correlate to contemporary controversies as to the respective roles of competition and collaboration, and the corresponding values of personal antagonism and social peace (of arete and homonoia), the relative merits of an adversarial versus a consensual spirit, in ordering human systems and coordinating human activities; also as to the openness or closedness of societal coexistence. In more general, cultural terms the theme of the Symposium will be the perceived Agonistical Ideal of Life in Classical times. Philosophically, it will revolve around the analysis of relevant views in 5th century Old Philosophy and, more prominently, in the New Philosophy Sophistic Movement, including also, or adding, the Socratic contribution. In particular, Antiphon's thought, and positions discussed in Plato's Socratic dialogues, such as the Gorgias and the first book of the Republic, are expected to provide significant axes to the development of the overall argument of the meeting.

The fourth Symposium will take place in Athens, from Saturday, July 3rd to Wednesday the 14th, 2004. Six working days are planned, with about 14 contributions plus one session of general debate at the conclusion of the meeting. The program will involve visits to Museums and archaeological sites, cultural events and a three-day excursion to Peloponnesus.