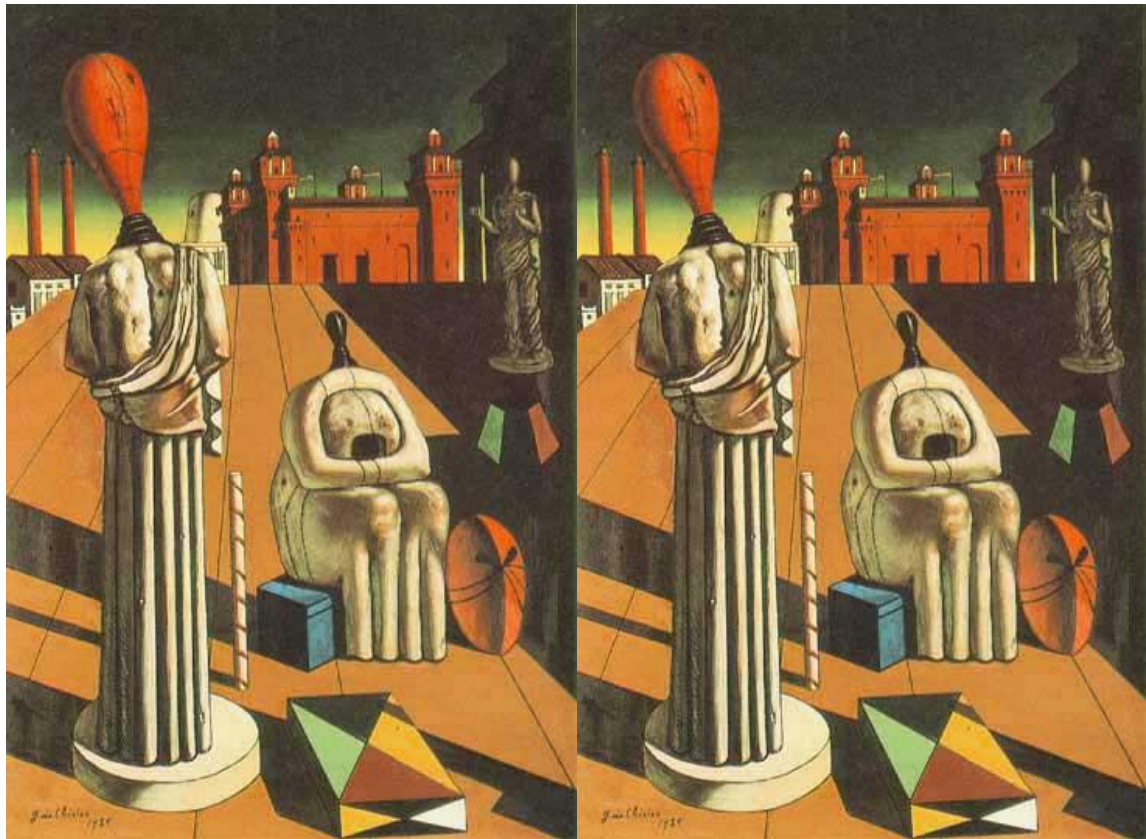




**PHILOSOPHY AND THEATRE
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
20-21 November 2025**

Abstracts

Mauro Bonazzi: *Heidegger Reads Sophocles' Antigone*

What happens when you read the *Antigone* in the middle of a revolution? The aim of my paper is to explore Heidegger's reading of Sophocles' masterpiece in 1935, in his Sommersemester course. This course is important from several perspectives, and most notably because it marks a turning point in Heidegger's thought and perhaps also in his relationship with National Socialism. Heidegger concentrates on one single section, the first stasimon, and insists on violence as the key-motive to decipher the deep meaning of the tragedy. This is partly predictable given the political context. And yet Heidegger seems to endorse a non-political reading of the tragedy, contrary to many other interpretations. To be sure, it is a surprising reading. But not entirely wrong, perhaps, as I will try to show.

Francesco Ceraolo and Simona Turturro: *Philosophy vs Theory of Theatre. Methodological Perspectives*

The philosophy of theatre is a very different practice from what is traditionally called "theatre theory". Philosophy does not produce a normative discourse on the theatrical object, like theory, but a strictly conceptual one. In order to do this, philosophy betrays the theatrical object/procedure instead of supporting it like theory. We could paradoxically say that philosophy partly instrumentalizes theatre to allow its procedure to reveal its eminently theatrical truths. These truths allow theatre studies to distance themselves from contemporary, performative or historical-literary studies, because they

bring out the continuum of theatrical forms and their capacity for meaning as specific theatrical truths (e.g. how Shakespeare and Cervantes began to break the Aristotelian device of *mimesis praxeos* or the importance of bourgeois drama to understand the separation between theatrical forms and dramatic forms in the twentieth century, etc.) In such a perspective, this paper aims to investigate the theme of the philosophy of theatre by framing it in a methodological perspective based on what Alain Badiou calls “inaesthetics”. The latter does not reduce theatre to a mere object of philosophical thought, but recognises its status as an autonomous discipline capable of producing its own meanings, which philosophy is able to unveil. Badiou argues for the need for inaesthetics to supplant aesthetics as the modality with which philosophy learns the theatre, in order to restore to the latter its own truthful pregnancy. In light of this thesis, it is necessary for theatre to begin to pose the ontological question.

David Davies: *Appreciating theatrical works as ‘Wollheimian types’*

I have recently argued that artworks, in those artforms traditionally viewed as ‘multiple’, are properly viewed not as Platonic types but as what I have termed ‘Wollheimian types’. Wollheimian types are contextualised actions whereby a work is ‘initiated’. ‘Initiation’ provides the necessary primary input into an established presentational practice for producing multiple strict instances of a work. Multiple artworks are ‘multiple’ in that different instances can play the ‘experiential’ role in the appreciation of a work *in virtue of* such initiation. In this paper I examine how theatrical works, as Wollheimian types, differ from musical works, and how this affects our appreciative interest in theatrical works and theatrical performances. In appreciating a musical performance, it is usual to relate performance details to conditions for right performance established through the composer’s activity. Only if we can identify those conditions can we hold an individual performance accountable to them. But there are reasons to doubt whether this model applies to theatre: (i) given the relative freedom of a theatrical company in adapting specific features of a work for practical or thematic reasons, it is unclear what is essential to being a performance of a given play and how this is established through the activity of the playwright; (ii) our interest in a theatrical performance is often primarily in what the company has done with what playwright has provided - hence the attraction of Hamilton’s ‘ingredients’ model - rather than in how this bears upon our appreciation of the work; (iii) performance practice in theatre is much more open to accommodating what a company is doing - there is little interest in ‘authentic performance’. This suggests that, while there can indeed be performances *of* theatrical works, where a company commits to realizing a set of conditions specified by a playwright, it is less clear what those conditions *are*, and the different focus of our interest in theatrical performance means that we generally ascribe less value to something’s being ‘of a work’ than we do in music.

Edith Hall: *Aristoteles philotheōros: Interactions between Aristotelian Poetics and his Other Works*

The objections to theatrical mimesis in Plato’s *Republic* were countered by his student Aristotle in his *Poetics*, which has remained the almost exclusive focus of literary scholars’ engagement with the Aristotelian corpus. But Aristotle’s allusions to theatre performance, both comic and tragic, and to the texts of the plays, run throughout his oeuvre, including his works on ethics, politics, logic and natural science, and, I argue, helped to shape his understanding of numerous phenomena other than the development and best practice of the composition of drama. Aristotle must have engaged extensively with the live delivery of both tragedies and comedies in the Athenian theatre during his two extended periods of residence in that city, between 367 and 347 BCE and again between 335 and 323. The latter period was during Lycurgus’ government of the city and supervision of the creation of canonical texts of the great tragedians (long ago linked by Werner Jaeger with Aristotle’s work on theatre texts), and for three years afterwards. Building on my previous study of references to actors and dramatic texts in his *Rhetoric* (‘Actors and Theatre in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and Beyond’, in G. Moretti and Biagio Santorelli (eds.) *Atti Il Teatro dell’ Oratoria* (= *Maia* suppl., 2021), in this paper I propose that Aristotle was himself a *philotheōros* or ‘lover of spectacle’, including dramatic shows,

whose magisterial command of the corpus of theatre texts and experience as a spectator and reader of plays informed his philosophical views on diverse matters, especially shaping his Virtue Ethics and model of the best constitution in his *Politics*. But the relationship between his understanding of theatre and his other works is reciprocal: several features of his analysis of tragedy in *Poetics* need to be illuminated from works on cognition, memory, the four causes, anatomy, cooking, medicine, and even zoology.

Alice Lagaay and Suzanne Knip-Mooij: *Not Dead Yet: Rehearsing Finite Futurities*

Coming from philosophy on the one hand and theatre and performance studies on the other, Alice Lagaay and Suzanne Knip-Mooij investigate what happens when they don't just ask themselves how the one has to do with the other, but embark on an adventure to find out *together*, allowing their voices, questions, concerns and modes of responding to these to intertwine, resonate and bounce off each other in performance-philosophical reverberations. The result will be an experimental performance lecture on conditions of work, methods of thinking, arts of bodily transformation, boundaries and (in)tolerances, grief and its rituals, synchronicity and sickness, repetition, rehearsal, and the building of resilience.

David Schalkwyk: *Shakespeare's Poetic Will: The Grammar of Character and Moral Agency in the Narrative Poems*

How can an invented speech act give the impression of moral agency? How, in other words, do we see a person where there are only marks on a page? There is a tradition in literary studies that would argue that Lucrece is no more than a conglomeration of signifiers. These signifiers do not grieve or hate or feel pain, nor are they the bearers of any agency beyond what is carried by the systems to which they belong. By the same token, there can be no distress in Hecuba's face; indeed, there can be no face, it is merely a conglomeration of lines and daubs of colour. I use *The Rape of Lucrece* to explore the intelligibility of such claims, not in the sense that they cannot be understood, but rather by asking what literary criticism would be like if they were true. If we treat literary texts as representational art then there is no getting away from what I call the "grammar" of character. This grammar (in Wittgenstein's sense of the term) imposes itself upon us whenever we want to do what Lucrece does: make sense of any human representational form. It is embedded in what Wittgenstein calls human "forms of life", and it is carried by the language-games that engage in and spring from those forms of life. It is inextricably part of what Joseph Margolis terms the "Intentionality" that informs all human cultural experience, including works of art. To respond to and interpret such Intentionality we have to resort to the grammar of character.

Tzachi Zamir: *Philosophy of Theater Beyond the Theater*

Standard philosophical accounts of hope incorporate three conditions (belief, desire, and some preoccupation, imaginings or other, with the desired state). Drawing on distinctions from the philosophy of acting, I propose that contexts of what Jonathan Lear called 'radical hope' (hoping for a future state which cannot yet be conceived), invite a kind of roleplaying. Hope becomes a performed space, a temporal, gestural, emotional, intersubjective space, which possesses instrumental and substantive value. Further distinctions will be introduced to set apart wishful thinking from roleplaying hope.