13th Annual Duquesne Graduate Students in Philosophy Conference

Theme: The Ascetic and the Ecstatic: The Limits of Pleasure
Keynote Speaker: Karmen MacKendrick (Le Moyne College)
Date: February 23, 2019
Deadline for Submissions: December 1, 2018
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We invite submissions to our 13th annual graduate-student conference on asceticism and ecstasy. The event will be held on Saturday, February 23, beginning in the morning with a symposium on preselected material relevant to the conference theme and followed by participant presentations and the keynote address in the afternoon and evening.

Throughout its history, western philosophy has warned of the evils and dangers of the excessive in the sphere of pleasure, from Pythagoras and Plato in the ancient Greek world to modern thinkers like Kant and Schopenhauer. This tendency towards the ascetic exceeds the bounds of the western world, being a common element in much non-western philosophy and religion. However, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the present era, western philosophy has begun an assault on the ascetic ideal and introduced a new veneration for the ecstatic. This is most explicit in the work of Nietzsche, but has been continued by many of those following in his wake: Freud, Bataille, and Deleuze, to name a few.

Viewed in this way, the ascetic and the ecstatic seem to be opposed. But is this actually the case? What is the relationship between asceticism and ecstasy? In what ways do these concepts condition and determine each other, and what has been the effect of this for human society? Is asceticism merely a renunciation of the will, as Nietzsche claims, or is it something more? Can there be asceticism without ecstatic pleasure, or ecstatic pleasure without asceticism? What roles do asceticism and ecstasy play in mystical and religious experience? Does not the ascetic tend toward the ecstatic in trying to avoid it? In what ways do culture and society mediate between asceticism and ecstasy? What has been the result of the push to ecstatic excess in contemporary philosophy? In which direction should we seek to move in the twenty-first century, in our era of consumerism and purity rings?

Some topics for consideration include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Asceticism in Ancient Philosophy (Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, etc.)
- Asceticism in Ancient Ethics (Epicureanism, Cynicism, Stoicism, Skepticism, Virtue Ethics, etc.)
- Asceticism in the Catholic Church (Augustine, the Desert Fathers, The Franciscans, the Dominicans, etc.)
- Conceptualizations of Ecstasy/Excess in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
- The Relationship between Asceticism and Ecstasy in Mysticism (Theresa, Hildegard, Simone Weil, etc.)
- Ecstatic Excess in Contemporary Philosophy (Bataille, Klossowski, Blanchot, Derrida, Deleuze, etc.)
- Psychoanalytic Views on Asceticism and Ecstasy
- Phenomenological Approaches to Asceticism and Ecstasy
- Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche on Asceticism and Ecstasy/Excess
- Non-Western Conceptualizations of Asceticism and Ecstasy/Excess

We invite both full-paper and abstract-only submissions on any topic related to the conference theme. Full-paper submissions should contain both a paper (not to exceed 3,000 words) and an abstract (about 250 words). Abstract-only submissions should be about 350 words. Selected submissions will be allotted a presentation time of 15–20 minutes.

Please prepare all submissions for blind review. Include all identifying information either as a separate cover sheet or in the body of your email. Identifying information should include the paper title and author’s name, email address, and institutional affiliation. Send submissions via email, as .doc or .pdf files, to gsipconference2019@gmail.com.

Please direct any inquiries to gsipconference2019@gmail.com.