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Jan Zwicky. *Alkibiades' Love: Essays in Philosophy*. McGill-Queen's Press 2015. 384 pp. \$110.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780773544635); \$34.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780773544622).

Jan Zwicky's *Alkibiades' Love* is a collection of eleven essays whose publication dates range from 1995 to 2014 and which includes one new essay. In her first two major works, *Lyric Philosophy* (1992) and *Wisdom & Metaphor* (2003), Zwicky developed a nuanced metaphilosophical vision all her own. This collection will both serve new readers as an introduction to that vision and also show how it influences Zwicky's understanding of the work of other thinkers: roughly half the essays concern themes of long-standing interest to Zwicky, such as metaphor and ineffability; the others are interpretative essays on the Presocratics, Plato, Freud, and others.

Among the interpretative essays, two of Zwicky's four readings of Plato bring to life one of the 'most central theses' of *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom & Metaphor*: "that meaning is a function of form—that there is no 'content' detachable from form" (3). Plato's *Phaidros* is famous for appearing to undermine itself: Sokrates' critique of writing and rhetoric in the second half seems to discredit the dialogue itself as a lovely piece of writing. In 'Plato's *Phaidros*: Philosophy as Dialogue with the Dead,' Zwicky argues that the tension between the dialogue's content and its form is essential to its meaning. The essay is a detailed answer to the natural question of how well the dialogue itself responds to each of Sokrates' objections. Does *Phaidros* provide evidence of Plato's own views on writing? Zwicky thinks it does, though not as a statement of doctrine. She approaches the dialogue, not as a settled record of Plato's views on the significance of writing, but as the 'literary enactment' of his thinking on the matter (59).

In *Meno*, likewise, Zwicky argues, a central element of the text's content—the question whether virtue can be taught—is answered by its form. 'Plato as Artist' is a detailed commentary on the unfolding conversation between Sokrates and Meno, with interludes to develop the dialogue's overt and covert themes. One of the latter, Zwicky argues, is a distinction between two kinds of teaching: 'imparting information' and 'assisting someone towards understanding' (171). When the slave boy figures out how to draw a square double in area to a given square, Sokrates has taught him in the second sense, but not the first. As Sokrates himself insists, after all, he has not told the boy the answer; the boy has recollected it. If virtue can be taught, according to Zwicky's reading of Plato, it will also be in the second sense. But what is it to assist someone towards understanding? Zwicky argues that Plato portrays such assistance in the interaction between Sokrates and Meno. Sensitive to Meno's capacities and preoccupations, Sokrates tries but fails to help him to think for himself. Witnessing the failure, the reader nonetheless learns something of what is involved in assisting someone toward understanding, and toward virtue.

Among the essays that are not interpretative, several rely on Zwicky's characteristically close attention to the phenomenology of her subject. In 'What Is Ineffable?' she considers what it is like to experience the ineffable. Relying partly on the reports of others (including Suzanne Langer), she identifies some common features, such as a sense of timelessness and 'an awareness of opposites that do not exclude each other' (243). Zwicky shows that these features are shared by what Freud calls primary process thought (such as dreaming). Partly on that basis, she concludes that ineffable experience 'is a species of primary process ideation' that involves a form of meaning that is not at home in words (251).

Along the way to this conclusion, Zwicky develops its significant philosophical implications. Even though ineffable experiences are clearly open to description, those who have them think that

words fail to ‘capture what *matters* in the experience’ (240). What matters is the experience’s meaning. If there is meaning that is not adequately expressed in language that suggests that ‘the *structure* of some meanings is different from the structure of language’ (243). If that is true, what are the implications for the pursuit of epistemology and ontology? With respect to the first question, it suggests the need for a ‘plural epistemology’ according to which there are ‘at least two structurally distinct ways of knowing the world’ (243). It is at this point that Zwicky appeals to a somewhat modified version of Freud’s contrast between secondary process thought, which is easily expressed in language, and primary process thought. With its tolerance of contradiction, lack of sense of self, and suspension of diachronic temporality, primary process thought resists linguistic expression. Here in this essay, in *Lyric Philosophy*, and in another essay in this collection, ‘Dream Logic and the Politics of Interpretation,’ the notion of primary process thought helps Zwicky to give voice to what she considers a legitimate and underappreciated way of knowing the world. Not only ineffable experience, but also understanding metaphors and visual mathematical proofs are forms of such knowing. Its legitimacy rests on Zwicky’s answer to the second question, about the implications for ontology. Some of the meaning whose structure is different from the structure of language has, instead, the structure of an organic or integrated whole—a whole, in Max Wertheimer’s words, whose ‘behaviour...is not determined by that of [its] individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole’ (313). These wholes are not artifacts of human perception and cognition for Zwicky. Genuine experiences of the ineffable are a form of sensitivity to the structure of reality.

The philosophical experience of reading *Alkibiades’ Love* itself deserves comment. I noted Zwicky’s attention to the lived experience of the phenomena that interest her. When she presents another’s description of what something is like, we can hear the underlying question ‘Is it like that for me?’ animating her subsequent discussion. And when she tells us how it is for her, we can hear the invitation she extends to each of us to ask the same question. This is not new in philosophy; a similar enactment in the first person is essential to understanding Descartes’ *Meditations*. But Zwicky’s invitation is noteworthy in two ways.

For one, it is essential to the way her work makes philosophical advances. The invitation applies not only in cases in which the reader is to compare her experience with Zwicky’s; it applies also to the theses central to Zwicky’s metaphilosophical vision. It is not, in those cases, an invitation to pay attention to what something—such as ineffable experience—is *like*, but an invitation to see *that such-and-such is so*. Zwicky’s work yields understanding in part by issuing this invitation to understand what is there to be understood. Confronted with her sparer, aphoristic essays, a reader may be tempted to set them aside as too short on argument. Aware of that possibility, Zwicky confronts the question underlying the reader’s doubts: ‘What is an argument?—An attempt to assist others to see what we (think we) have seen’ (11). An insight both necessary to appreciating much of Zwicky’s work and available *in* that work is that there are many ways to assist others to see, some as basic as pointing and hoping. Many of Zwicky’s arguments are elaborate, skilled invitations to see.

In my own case, Zwicky’s assistance often works: I do see. But—and this brings me to the second point of interest—these invitations appeal to capacities beyond those taught in a critical thinking course, especially patience, courage, hope, and community. When I *do* see, I cannot help but share Zwicky’s metaphilosophical vision. But when I do not see, I am left wondering what to conclude: am I not up to understanding what is there to be understood, or is there nothing there, after all? What a reader does next—whether she draws the skeptical conclusion, sets the work aside in peaceful uncertainty, or keeps on trying—depends partly on those capacities. When Zwicky characterizes a point as something she ‘wish[es] to call to our collective attention,’ for instance, the point indeed relies for its full appreciation on the lone reader’s acknowledgment of community with other philosophers (122). The point in question is that ‘*requiring* analytic structure for any claim or view

that aspires to philosophical status' has as a consequence that 'visions of the world...that insist on the intimate connectedness and interdependence of things—and which understand this connectedness as coherent but not formalizable, intelligibly patterned but not reconstructible according to an articulable set of criteria—...will tend to strike us as suspect' (122). Anyone who has that insight has it in the first-person plural: *We (philosophers) do tend to such suspicion...* Insofar as it stakes philosophical understanding on an appeal to the reader as a whole person, Zwicky's work belongs to a tradition reaching back from such recent thinkers as Stanley Cavell to such canonical figures as Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Plato.

In collecting many of Zwicky's shorter works, *Alkibiades' Love* consolidates her contribution to philosophy. Given the essays' varying subjects—from mathematical proof to the Presocratics—the volume may also provide avenues into Zwicky's other major works for a range of new readers.

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