

VOLUME LXXI, Number 2

December 2017

FRANKLIN I. GAMWELL, A Defense of Metaphysical Necessity

Against the widely affirmed dictum, “all existential statements (that is, statements of the form “something that is x exists”) can be denied without self-contradiction,” this essay argues for some existential statements being necessarily true semantically and thus for transcendental metaphysics in the strict sense. Having briefly reviewed how Ronald Dworkin, Karl-Otto Apel, and Thomas Nagel each affirm the dictum in question and, thereby, imply the possible truth of the statement, “nothing exists,” the essay seeks to show how the statement, “‘nothing exists’ is possibly true” (not simply “nothing exists”), is pragmatically self-refuting. Against the implications of subjectivity as such, that statement implies the impossibility of knowing any existential statement; that is, knowing what exists or, indeed, whether anything exists is forever denied to us. The dictum is, therefore, itself impossible, and the essay concludes with the assertion that transcendental metaphysics should be neoclassical.

HOWARD J. CURZER, *Akrasia* and Courage in the *Protagoras*

Akratic agents know what is best, can do it, do not do it, and rationalize. According to Socrates, seemingly akratic agents are confused, ignorant of what is best. According to the Many, they are overcome, unable to do what is best. Unlike Socrates and the Many, Plato rejects hedonism and psychological egoism, but not the existence of akratic acts in the Socratic reductio (351b–358c). Counterexamples to both Socrates’ mismeasure account and the Many’s overpowering account pervade Greek literature and even the *Protagoras* itself. In the courage-is-wisdom arguments (349d–351a, 358c–360e), Plato again argues against hedonism and psychological egoism, and advances an Aristotelian definition of courage.

BENJAMIN S. YOST, Kant’s Theory of Motivation: A Hybrid Approach

To vindicate morality against skeptical doubts, Kant must show that agents can be moved to act independently of their sensible desires. Kant must therefore answer a motivational question: how does an agent get from the cognition that she ought to act morally to acting morally? Affectivist interpretations of Kant hold that agents are moved to act by feelings, while intellectualists appeal to cognition alone. To overcome the significant shortcomings of each view, the author develops a hybrid theory of motivation. His central interpretive claim is that Kant is a special kind of motivational internalist: on Kant’s view, agents are moved to act by a feeling of intellectual pleasure at the prospect of accomplishing a task they have set for themselves, a feeling that originates in free choice. The resulting theory is immune to the challenges facing intellectualism and affectivism, thus strengthening the prospects of Kant’s justification of morality.

LEEMON B. MCHENRY, Whitehead and Russell on the Analysis of Matter

While Whitehead and Russell’s collaboration on the foundations of mathematics ended with the publication of *Principia Mathematica*, both philosophers separately developed a philosophy of physics in the 1920s that was based on the revolutionary advances in modern physics. This essay explores the affinities and contrasts in Whitehead and Russell’s event ontology as a metaphysical

foundation of physics and demonstrates the influence of Whitehead's method of extensive abstraction on Russell's metaphysics and epistemology.

LOUIS DUPRÉ, Heidegger's Interpretation of Poetry and the Transcendent Openness of Being

Heidegger's commentaries on Hölderlin's poetry constitute an essential part of his philosophical heritage. They played a decisive role in the move from a self-enclosed theory of Being to a transcendent openness. Nietzsche confirmed Heidegger's aversion of the philosophical subjectivism that had come to paralyze all of Western philosophy and, related with it, threatened Western culture with collapse. The time before and during World War I confirmed both the consequences of a philosophical subjectivism and the urgent need for an active political attitude. Heidegger's support of Nietzsche did not outlast the war nor the information that the will to power's political interpretation was not Nietzsche's own but his sister's and had become a secret weapon in the service of the Nazi party. By that time Heidegger studied Hölderlin's poetry and understood that also his own philosophy of Being had been rigid and one-sided. From Hölderlin's poetry he learned the indispensability of passive attitudes. Thus far atheism had served as protection of the absoluteness of a self-enclosed Being. Through the poems of Hölderlin Heidegger learned that Being is not a self-supporting absolute but a transcendent openness that might be expressed actively in religion or in a mystical *Gelassenheit*.