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SYLVIA BERRYMAN, Aristotle in the Ethics Wars

In the latter half of the twentieth century, some prominent ethicists turned to the history of philosophy to challenge the prevailing trend toward subjectivism or noncognitivism. G. E. M. Anscombe offered the first of several historical narratives challenging the world picture that undergirded this prevalence, narratives in which Aristotelian ethics is presented as a possible alternative. It is striking, however, how differently these narratives characterize the ancient–modern divide and how differently Aristotle is interpreted, particularly on the issue of his appeal to naturalism in ethics. The tendency to view Philippa Foot as Anscombe’s best interpreter might leave us with the unfortunate supposition that Aristotelian ethics is saddled with an implausible Archimedean naturalism. The author suggests that there is another way to read Anscombe’s message, which does not fetter it to a kind of metaphysical biology that we have no reason to accept.

AVRAHAM ROT, The Ontological Status of the Affects in Spinoza’s Metaphysics: “Being in,” “Affection of,” and the Affirmation of Finitude

The article examines the relation between two kinds of ontological relations that hold together the building blocks of Spinoza’s metaphysics: “being in” and “affection of.” It argues that in order to speak of existence in a single sense, Spinoza equivocates on the notion of affection. On the one hand, substance is in itself in the same sense that every other existing thing is in substance. On the other hand, (1) substance is not the affections of itself, (2) affections of substance are not related to substance in the same sense that affections of modes are related to modes, and (3) affections of modes, which are affections of affections of substance, cannot, at least in some cases, be regarded as affections of substance. Thus, although “God is without passions,” the passions themselves exist in the same sense that God, human beings, and other modes exist, that is, in the sense that they are all in nature; but while the meaning of “being” remains the same, the meaning of “being affected,” or “feeling,” necessarily changes as the *Ethics* unfolds.

DANIEL E. FLAGE, Is Berkeley’s God Omnipotent?

In both the *Principles of Human Knowledge* and the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, George Berkeley provides a description of God’s attributes immediately after his arguments for God’s existence. Neither description deems God omnipotent, yet shortly after each he freely uses “omnipotent” and its synonyms to describe God. Why is this? The author argues that his reluctance to ascribe omnipotence to God is the reluctance of a careful philosopher, his willingness is that of a religionist, and his account of language explains why he can speak in two voices. Focusing on *Principles* §146, the author shows that the argument does not support the claim that God is omnipotent. The notion of omnipotence is ambiguous, so a careful philosopher should avoid it. Nonetheless, his discussion of noncognitive uses of language allows the

religionist to use “omnipotent” to express divine veneration. Berkeley’s use of the word “omnipotence” is religious.

CHAD ENGELLAND, “Rational Animal” in Heidegger and Aquinas

Martin Heidegger rejects the traditional definition of the human being as the “rational animal” in part because he thinks it fits us into a genus that obscures our difference in kind. Thomas Aquinas shares with Heidegger the concern about the human difference, and yet he appropriates the definition “rational animal” by conceiving animality in terms of the specifically human power of understanding being. Humans are not just distinct in their openness to being, but, thanks to that openness, they are distinct in their animality, a distinction that changes the very significance of animality itself. Heidegger also thinks the traditional definition closes us to the experience of our essence, but again Aquinas has resources for bringing out the experiential character of rational animality. Aquinas’s inclusion of animation has significance for what Heidegger calls fundamental ontology; by virtue of the human animate body, particular beings can be pointed out and designated as such.

NATHANIEL F. BARRETT AND JAVIER SÁNCHEZ-CAÑIZARES, Causation as the Self-Determination of a Singular and Freely Chosen Optimality

The philosopher Roberto Unger and the physicist Lee Smolin have recently argued that the current explanatory framework of cosmology, which presumes a timeless background of unchanging physical laws, should be replaced by a thoroughly relational framework in which time is fundamental and all laws are subject to change. Within this alternative framework, however, Unger and Smolin find themselves confronted by a dilemma: either the laws of nature evolve according to some higher set of “meta-laws,” which reinstates a timeless background at a higher level, or the laws of nature evolve randomly and the path of inquiry is blocked. In response to this dilemma, the authors propose a theory of causal events as singular, freely chosen, and self-determined optimalities constrained only by their intrinsic relations to all other events.