

HOW IS METAPHYSICS POSSIBLE?

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ABSTRACTS

Kant's Investigation into the Conditions of Possibility of Metaphysics

Karin de Boer (University of Leuven)

Putting into perspective the prevailing approach to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I will claim that the main aim of the Transcendental Analytic consists in determining the conditions of possibility of synthetic a priori cognition of objects, and hence of metaphysics, rather than that of experience. Seen in this light, Kant's account of the conditions of experience in the Transcendental Deduction plays a merely subordinate role in the overall argument. After determining the relationship between the two strands of the text, I will consider whether Kant succeeds in solving the tension between them. In this context I will take into account the two editions of the first *Critique*, the *Prolegomena* and the *Metaphysical Foundations of the Natural Sciences*.

Why Must the Title 'Ontology' Give Way to 'A Mere Analytic of the Pure Understanding'?

Houston Smit (CAS; University of Arizona)

Kant claims to have shown, over the course of the Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that ontology, as traditionally conceived, is not possible as a science. In a famous passage, he recaps his argument, concluding that "the proud name of an ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic a priori cognition of things in general in a systematic doctrine . . . must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding" (A247/B303). I try to explain what Kant means in proposing to reconceive the enterprise that came, in the 17th century, to be called 'ontology' as one fittingly referred to by this more modest title, 'a mere analytic of the pure understanding', as well as the grounds on which he argues that it must be reconceived in this way.

Metaphysical Judgments and Their Justifications: A Fregean Perspective

Leila Haaparanta (CAS; University of Tampere)

In his *Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (1884) Gottlob Frege presented his distinctions between analytic and synthetic truths, and truths a priori and truths a posteriori. On his view, those features do not concern the contents of judgments; instead, he took them to be labels for ways in which judgments receive their justifications. Frege was not explicit about the features of philosophical judgments. However, what was important for him was listing procedures which are permitted and which give us permission to move from merely entertaining thoughts to judging and asserting. In his last writings in the 1920's Frege distinguished between three sources of knowledge, the logical, the empirical, and the geometrical source. Following Frege's line of thought, this paper asks what kind of procedure is permitted in metaphysical discussion. It considers metaphysical judgments and assertions in terms of contemporary theories of

assertion that are inspired by Frege's thought. By critically examining a few theories that give norms of assertion, it seeks to show the relevance of those theories to the methodology of metaphysics.

In What Sense is there Metaphysics in Husserl's Phenomenology?

Mirja Hartimo (CAS; Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

The talk aims to locate and examine the metaphysical commitments of Husserl's phenomenology by discussing first the natural attitude and then the transcendental attitude. Attempting at metaphysical neutrality, Husserl portrays people in the natural attitude to be Aristotelian realists. However, as it is a result of a putatively neutral description, one cannot regard Aristotelian realism as a specifically phenomenological approach to metaphysics. In the transcendental attitude Husserl examines the way in which such a picture of the world is constituted. This examination brings to the fore the structures of consciousness involved in our conceptualization of the world. These structures amount to what could be called 'phenomenological metaphysics,' and they include, e.g., formal and material ontologies. The talk will then focus on Husserl's conception of essences and will in the end suggest regarding them as a priori norms or rules that guide our activities. The ultimate aim is to show that "phenomenological metaphysics" can be regarded as being about normative structures within our natural course of thinking.

Kant's Way of Moral Worldmaking: Rejecting Voluntarism for the sake of the Possibility of A Priori Knowledge of the Moral Law

Christel Fricke (CSMN, University of Oslo)

Bernard Williams famously asked whether, according to Kant, the moral agent should be a legislator. The answer to this question is historical; it allows us to understand the nature of Kant's moral theory. Furthermore, it allows us to see certain parallelisms between Kant's theoretical and Kant's practical philosophy. In both realms, his main concern was to provide an answer to the question 'How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?' A less enigmatic way to phrase this question is: How can we have certain knowledge of the laws of nature and their necessary authority? The respective laws of nature include both the 'principles of the understanding' and 'the moral law'.

Kant inherited his conception of the moral philosopher's central concerns from the tradition of the divine command theory and of Crusius' voluntaristic version of this theory in particular. According to this tradition, the moral laws are among the necessary natural laws of a world created by God; accordingly the task of the moral philosopher is to provide an account of our knowledge of these laws and their necessary authority. Whereas Kant followed Crusius and his claim that the moral laws had necessary authority, he rejected Crusius' voluntarism. A voluntarist account of the moral laws does not allow them to be objects of synthetic judgments a priori.

Reference and Criteria of Identity

Øystein Linnebo (CAS; University of Oslo)

My talk will provide an accessible overview of a monograph I am currently completing. The book defends a Frege-inspired approach to reference and ontology. One central idea is that an object is anything to which we can refer; another is that the provision of a suitable criterion of identity suffices for successful reference. Together, these ideas ensure that the existence of many kinds of object is (in a sense I aspire to make precise) not a "big deal".

Gödel on Russell, 1942-3 – An Infinitary Version of the Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

Juliet Floyd (University of Boston)

Recent efforts to analyze the first two of Gödel's "MaxPhil" notebooks IX-X, originally encoded in his Gabelsberger shorthand (1942-3), reveal a fascinating attempt on Gödel's part to come to grips with Russell's overall philosophy — and not just *Principia* and Russell's logical work. The distance between Gödel's manner of working and his published tribute to Russell (1944) is considerable, evincing a more sophisticated grasp of Russell's overall philosophy (and philosophy as such) than has been thought. In particular, Gödel did not uncritically hold that we can "see" sets. The historical record shows, I shall argue, that Gödel not only got to the undefinability of truth and the idea of proving incompleteness *via* the Richard Paradox from reading *Principia* Introduction, Ch. II in 1930. He also went on to study Russell's purely philosophical writings on the nature of truth very carefully after confronting Russell's analysis of "judgments of perception" in just that passage. Right up through *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), Russell's writings left their mark on Gödel, including in philosophy of mind, and in metaphysics. In turn, Gödel's negative reactions to Wittgenstein's influence on Russell help to bring out features of Russell's philosophy, and the multiple relation theory of judgment (or truth), that one might otherwise have missed. The question for Gödel would be, not how or whether metaphysics is possible, but how it is possible *critically*. An untutored conception of "perception" is *not* what Gödel had in mind.

Knowing the World – Hilbert, Weyl, and the Foundations of Physics

Katherine Brading (University of Notre Dame)

In the early twentieth century, David Hilbert and Hermann Weyl both saw important philosophical significance in a newly emerging property of physical theories known as general covariance. For Hilbert, general covariance required a fundamental revision of Kantian epistemology. I explain what Hilbert and Weyl thought was so important about general covariance, and contrast the implications that Hilbert saw in this for Kantian epistemology with the implications that Weyl saw for physics. I show that for both Hilbert and Weyl, general covariance was an important tool for separating the contributions of human cognition to the structure of physical theories from that due to the structure of the world in itself.