

## SPECIAL ISSUE OF BALKAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY 2013

### 21st-CENTURY METAPHYSICS

Since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in every historical epoch metaphysics has been the most important part of mainstream philosophy.

This is true especially of classical Continental philosophy. Problems of “being as such”, “the first causes of things” and “things that do not change” have characterized metaphysics since the ancient Greeks and the medieval philosophers and are still being discussed today. In addition problems such as “the categories of being”, “universals”, and “the ontological structure of objects” have been accepted as topics of the “new” or “post-Medieval” metaphysics, and can be considered as bridging the old and the new metaphysics. Finally, the metaphysical problems of modality, space and time, the mental and the physical, and the constitution of material objects, for example, have arisen with the epoch of Modernity. The Modern period is not an autonomous epoch but is simply the last phase of classical Western metaphysics, a metaphysics that is today still dominant throughout the world in its final form: scientific and technical rationality. Can this be true? Following Kant, wouldn't it be more correct to say that scientific and technical rationality has replaced metaphysical thinking?

Since the time of Hume and Kant there has appeared a tendency to present arguments for the impossibility of metaphysics. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this has become much more a full-blown effort than a tendency. The post-metaphysical approach, which starts with rejecting metaphysical objectivism, rests on Kant's transcendentalism. Further, a tendency has also appeared in the postmodern epoch to “deconstruct” metaphysics. Deconstructive postmodernism expresses its expectation for a break with metaphysics, which, it argues, has reached a definitive end. Finally, one of the dominant philosophical trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that Heideggerian rejection of classical metaphysics, while early analytic philoso-

phy also rejected metaphysics, as do current supporters of “metaphysical anti-realism” which advocates a strong form of the claim that metaphysics is impossible.

However, out of the postmodern critique of metaphysics has arrived an opposite tendency, a tendency to re-think the place of metaphysics in philosophical inquiry. A counter-trend of constructive postmodernism appeared in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which metaphysics occupies an important place. The representatives of this trend proclaim that only the old form of metaphysics should be deconstructed while a new form should be elaborated and developed. Attempts at such a reformulation of metaphysics are present in philosophers like C. S. Peirce, William James, A. N. Whitehead, N. Hartmann, G. Deleuze and many others. Even analytic philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century has revived metaphysical theorizing contrary to the tendency in the early analytic philosophy. With this, a number of contemporary philosophers claim that metaphysics has an important role in philosophy, but is in need of radical rethinking.

The current intellectual landscape and its history gives rise to the crucial question: what direction(s) should 21<sup>st</sup>-century metaphysics take? From this, a number of further questions arise:

- Is metaphysics simply a compendium of philosophical problems that cannot be assigned to epistemology or logic or ethics or aesthetics or to any of the parts of philosophy that have relatively clear definitions?
- Is metaphysics really in need of radical rethinking?
- What are the relationships between contemporary metaphysics and ontology? Is it correct to consider metaphysics as a theo-

ry of Being and ontology as a theory of beings?

- Will the 21<sup>st</sup>-century metaphysics be able (at least partly) to bridge the analytic-continental divide?
- What should be the relationships between the 21<sup>st</sup>- century metaphysics and the other

branches of philosophy and humanities: humanism, ethics, aesthetics, logic, epistemology, etc.?

These and similar problems will be the focus of this issue of *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*.

From the Editorial Board  
of *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*