

CALL FOR PAPERS

Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy

ETHICS WITH ONTOLOGY: A DEBATE ABOUT METAETHICAL NONNATURALISM

Deadline for submission: **May 31, 2016**

GUEST EDITORS

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OVERVIEW

“Ethics with ontology” is in sharp contrast with the title of Hilary Putnam’s book *Ethics Without Ontology* (2004), in which the question about the ontological and metaphysical implications of ethics – and the significance accordingly given to the realism/antirealism debate – was dismissed as erroneous and deeply misleading for the philosophical reflection on morality. In the same line of Putnam’s thought, many others (for instance, Th. Scanlon, R. Dworkin, Ch. Korsgaard, D. Parfit) have in a number of ways defended the idea that ethics, understood as capable of objective truth, does not need to have any ontological implication. This quietistic attitude notwithstanding, one of the most striking news in the metaethical debate of the last fifteen years has been the renewal of nonnaturalism, which is the metaethical view with the strongest ontological and metaphysical commitments, at least in its so-called “robust” versions (put forward, for instance, by D. Enoch, W. Fitzpatrick, G. Oddie). Within the nonnaturalistic front there is, however, a tension. On the one hand, the view is sometimes characterized in ontological and metaphysical terms, as a realistic thesis about the existence of nonnatural properties and facts. On the other hand, nonnaturalism in ethics is often understood and defended as an epistemological and methodological thesis about the autonomy of ethical knowledge and its discontinuity with non-ethical knowledge (R. Audi, R. Shafer-Landau), which not necessarily commits their proponents to admit of the existence of a nonnatural class of properties and facts. The aim of this special issue is to shed light on the question of the ontological and metaphysical commitments implied by nonnaturalism in ethics.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

Papers on the following (and other related) topics are welcome:

- Quietism in metaethics. Equally welcome are papers that intend to sort out the different positions in the debate about this anti-metaphysical stance, as well as papers that aim to defend or criticize it.
- The tension between different characterizations of the “nonnatural” in ethics: the dispute is between those who talk about moral *properties* and *facts* and those who prefer to talk about moral *concepts* and true moral *propositions*. Accordingly, the tension between the so-called “robust” and “minimal” versions of metaethical nonnaturalism.
- The various puzzles related to metaethical nonnaturalism, above all (but not only) in its strongly metaphysically committed versions. For instance: 1) Many nonnaturalist metaethicists maintain that nonnatural moral properties supervene on the natural ones. How should, then, this necessary connection between distinct properties be understood? (Supervenience problem); 2) Have moral properties causal powers? 3) What kind of knowledge is ethical knowledge, according to the advocates of nonnaturalism in ethics? (epistemic access to the non-natural domain; justification of moral beliefs; the challenge of so-called evolutionary debunking arguments, etc.); 4) More generally, how can knowledge be achieved in moral metaphysics?

INVITED CONTRIBUTORS:

Antonella Corradini (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Ciro De Florio (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

David Enoch (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

William FitzPatrick (University of Rochester)

Georg Gasser (Department of Christian Philosophy, Innsbruck)

Giuliana Mancuso (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Tristram McPherson (Virginia Tech)

Bruno Niederbacher (Department of Christian Philosophy, Innsbruck)

Graham Oddie (University of Colorado Boulder)

In addition, THREE PAPERS on those issues will be selected.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Papers must be in English and should not exceed 40,000 characters. Each submission should also include a separate title page containing contact details, a brief abstract and list of keywords for indexing purposes. All papers will be subject to double-blind peer-review, following international standard practices. Manuscripts should be submitted exclusively through the Online Manuscript Submission System (Editorial Manager), accessible at <http://www.editorialmanager.com/topo/>. Please save your manuscript in one of the formats supported by the system (e.g., Word, WordPerfect, RTF, TXT, LATEX2e, TEX, Postscript, etc.), which does NOT include PDF. Make sure to select the appropriate article type for your submission by selecting “S.I.: Ethics with ontology (Corradini/Mancuso/Niederbacher)” as the appropriate tab from the scroll-down menu.

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