

CALL FOR PAPERS

Metaphysical Society of America

62nd Annual Meeting

Emory University

March 11-12, 2011

THE METAPHYSICS OF HUMANISM: USES AND ABUSES

What is the relation between metaphysics, however defined, and humanism, however one conceives of it? To what extent is the threatened eclipse of “man” merely the shadow cast by the obstruction of metaphysics, as some contemporary thinkers contend? Addressing the “modern” predicament, Michel Foucault observed: “The only thing we know at the moment, in all certainty, is that in Western culture the being of man and the being of language have never, at any time, been able to coexist and to articulate themselves one upon the other. Their incompatibility has been one of the fundamental features of our thought” (*The Order of Things*, 339).

The theme proposed for the 2011 meeting is the problem of relating the metaphysical with the human and the post-metaphysical with the post-human. The varieties of humanism are almost as numerous as the kinds of metaphysics. And since the nineteenth-century, one could echo the remark apropos anti-humanisms and anti-metaphysics. Indeed, to the extent that metaphysics is not only the theory of categories but also a questioning of what it means “to be,” there is a respected tradition of questioning not only the “being of man” and the “being of language” but the very “being of being” (*to ontos on*) —metaphysics as ontology.

The possibilities opened by the metaphysics-humanist discussion are extremely promising for fruitful exchange. They include the perennial questions in the history of Western philosophy such as existence and freedom, same and other, intellectualism and voluntarism, difference of kind and of degree, and the like. But they face particularly contemporary challenges from ethics and science. The former raises accusations of “racism” “sexism” and “speciesism.” The latter mounts increasingly difficult attacks on so-called “folk psychology” and its presumed metaphysical basis and bias.

These are but a few of the suggestions that the theme of metaphysics and humanism brings to mind. Many others will certainly occur to the members. Interested philosophers are encouraged to submit abstracts of essays that would address some form of this topic or any of its cognates.

While the conference theme is the metaphysics of humanism, the program committee will consider papers on any area of metaphysics.

500-word abstracts should be submitted by June 1, 2010 to:

Thomas R. Flynn, Department of Philosophy, Emory University via tflynn@emory.edu.

Those whose abstracts are chosen by the Program Committee must submit completed papers no later than December 1, 2010 to allow time for review by commentators and publication of the program

ARISTOTLE PRIZE: Papers submitted by persons who have not yet earned a Ph.D. or whose Ph.D. is less than five years old at the time of submission will be considered for the Aristotle Prize if the Program Committee is alerted to eligibility. The prize carries a cash award of \$500 and inclusion in the program. Please encourage graduate students and junior colleagues to consider entering the competition. Papers submitted for the Aristotle Prize must be complete by the deadline for submission: June 1, 2010.