**CALL FOR PAPERS**

Metaphysical Society of America

2019 Annual Meeting in Seattle (March 28-31, 2019)

**Theme: Metaphysics and Political Thought**

The theme of the 2019 Metaphysical Society of America Annual Meeting in Seattle (March 28-31, 2019) will be “Metaphysics and Political Thought.” Papers on any aspect of this wide topic are welcome. Possible paper topics can be either *thematic* or *historical*. Regarding the former, consider the following questions that can be raised regarding democratic political theory:

---Is a metaphysics of radical contingency required to support (in a nonfoundational way) democratic political theory, as Rorty thinks?

---Is democracy by its very nature metaphysics-less or metaphysics-poor?

---Or, by way of contrast, is democratic political theory and political liberalism actually hyper-metaphysical, as Rawlsians think, in that the political beliefs of citizens can be inserted into many different comprehensive doctrines or metaphysical systems?

---Do human (or animal) rights require a metaphysical concept of the person? If so, are many contemporary defenses of rights living off of the interest earned throughout the Judeo-Christian ages, but without having to pay any premium, as Habermas suggests?

Many other questions could be imagined that deal with the relationship between democratic political theory and metaphysics. The same could be said regarding the relationship between other political theories and metaphysics. For example:

---To what extent is Marxist political philosophy dependent on metaphysical materialism? Can it be supported by other metaphysical views?

Regarding historical figures, the topic of Metaphysics and Political Thought has rich potential. In the ancient period Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, among others, developed influential political philosophies that are intertwined with their metaphysical views:

---Does Plato’s hierarchical metaphysics necessarily require social hierarchy and/or the noble lie (*gennaion pseudos*) told to those who are not capable of metaphysical truth?

---To what extent does Aristotle’s metaphysics of form/matter composite make it easier than in Plato’s view to defend democratic political theory? Or is Aristotle’s view irredeemably tainted by his defense of slavery?

The theme of the conference also has implications for the influential figures in the Middle Ages and its aftermath: St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. For example:

---To what extent, if any, does Thomistic metaphysics provide guidance in political philosophy? Further, to what extent, if any, are the political views found (whether explicitly or implicitly) in the *Treatise on Law* based on his metaphysics?

In the modern period several major figures in the history of political thought also developed metaphysical positions. For example:

---What is the relationship between Hobbes’ metaphysical materialism and his very influential political philosophy? Does his political philosophy flourish as well when based on metaphysical views different from his own?

---What exactly is the relationship between Locke’s very influential political philosophy and his metaphysics? Is his political philosophy mostly informed by his epistemology or does his metaphysics also play an important role?

---To what extent, if any, are Spinoza’s political views an extension of his metaphysical views? What exactly is the relationship between his metaphysics and his political philosophy?

---To what extent does the political conservativism of Burke or the political conventionalism of Hume rest on metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) assumptions?

---What exactly is the relationship between the political writings of Kant that cluster around the second and third critiques and the metaphysics (or anti-metaphysics) of the first critique? Is Kant, as Rawls alleges, a comprehensive (i.e., a metaphysical) rather than a political liberal?

---Given the wide range of political views that Hegel’s thought has inspired, how are we to understand the role of Hegel’s metaphysics in interpreting both his own political philosophy and the political philosophies developed by his followers?

The theme of the conference also has rich potential regarding the political thought of several contemporary thinkers. For example:

---To what extent is Nussbaum’s influential capabilities approach at least implicitly built on an Aristotelian metaphysics of the person? To what extent is her capabilities approach Rawlsian in the sense that it can be inserted into various different metaphysical theories?

---What connection is there, if any, between postmodern political views (e.g., of Derrida, Foucault, Butler, Ranciere, Deleuze, Agamben, Mouffe, etc.) and metaphysics? Are such views necessarily anti-metaphysical or post-metaphysical? Are post-metaphysical views implicitly metaphysical?

---To what extent is the tension between nationalism and (Appiah-like) cosmopolitanism ultimately due to debates in metaphysics?

---To what extent are issues in critical race theory and issues in gender studies reactions against various stances taken in the history of metaphysics? To what extent are positions taken in these contemporary fields themselves implicitly metaphysical?

---Do the various sorts of ecoholism defended by environmentalists require metaphysical support in the effort to avoid an implicit individualism?

---What is the relationship between metaphysics and political thought in comparative philosophy where east/west and north/south comparisons are highlighted?

---Finally, there is the explosive question regarding the relationship between the metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) views of Nietzsche and Heidegger and their respective political views (and those of their followers).

From the above it should be clear that papers are welcome that deal with either the metaphysical presuppostions of political thought or the political presuppositions of metaphysical thought.

500 word abstracts should be distributed electronically by September 1, 2018 to: Daniel Dombrowski, Professor of Philosophy, Seattle University at: [ddombrow@seattleu.edu](mailto:ddombrow@seattleu.edu)

Those whose abstracts are chosen by the Program Committee should submit completed papers by January 15, 2019 to allow review by commentators and publication of the program. Further information on the conference will become available at: [www.metaphysicalsociety.org](http://www.metaphysicalsociety.org)

**Aristotle Prize**: Papers submitted by persons who have not yet earned a Ph.D. or who have received a Ph.D. within five years of the submission date will be considered for the Aristotle prize, if the Program Committee is made aware of their eligibility. The prize carries a cash award of $500, inclusion in the program, and assistance with the costs associated with attending the meeting. Graduate students and relatively recent Ph.D.s are encouraged to apply. Full papers must be submitted for the prize by September 1, 2018.

**Travel Grants**: Thanks to the generous support of past presidents of the MSA and a grant from the Hocking-Cabot Fund for Systematic Philosophy, we are pleased to offer travel grants to graduate students whose papers are selected for the program for our annual meeting. More information and an application can be found on the Society’s website.