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## Summaries

GÁBOR BETEGH

‘The Next Cause’ – *Metaphysics* A 3–4

The paper is an abridged Hungarian version of the paper presented at the 18th Symposium Aristotelicum and which is forthcoming in the volume edited by Carlos Steel. On the basis of a close reading of the relevant sections of *Metaphysics* A 3–4 (984<sup>b</sup>8–985<sup>a</sup>29), it examines the way Aristotle describes the reasons and motivations, which, on his interpretation, lead his predecessors to introduce a second type of principle that could function as ‘the source of change’, i.e. the efficient cause. By bringing in parallel texts from the first book of the *Physics* and the first book of the *On the Parts of Animals*, the paper argues that, for Aristotle, the trajectory of the discovery of the truth is after all far less deterministic than what the language of *Metaphysics* A 3 might suggest. The paper aims to show, moreover, that what is discovered is not so much new types of Aristotelian causes but rather distinctions among types of principle. For, as Aristotle makes clear, already the Ionian monists used quasi-efficient causes by introducing opposites in the material substrate (hot–cold, fire–other elements). What is new in the thought of Anaxagoras and Empedocles is a new kind of principle, distinct from the material substrate that can assume the role of the efficient cause; but in part also that of the final cause. Finally, the paper tries to show why Aristotle’s method of interpreting his predecessors within the framework of his own theory of four causes is not illegitimate.

LÁSZLÓ BENE

**Causality and Moral Responsibility in Plotinus**

In this paper, I examine Plotinus' view of the causal order of the physical world and his theory of moral responsibility.

(1) I highlight three characteristic features of Plotinus' causal theory. First, he accepts the general causal principle in relation to the cosmos („everything that comes to be has a cause”). Secondly, he introduces incorporeal, psychic causes in order to explain the generation and motion of perceptible things. Thirdly, he insists on the plurality of such independent causal principles: individual souls are not causally dependent on the world-soul, which is responsible for the structure and motion of the universe. I argue that Plotinus' theory of the causal order of the sensible world is, with some important qualifications, rather like Stoic determinism. His treatment of divination reveals that he rejects the idea of a genuinely open future. Further, he argues that providence takes into account individual human choices in advance in such a way that the latter cannot circumvent the providential plan. Finally, it is not the case that Plotinus introduces an indeterministic element into his causal theory by granting the individual soul the status of a principle. Unlike Middle Platonists, he does not refer to the possible (*dunaton*) or the contingent (*endeichomenon*) in connection with moral responsibility. He does not separate character and choice – we are responsible for our choices precisely because they express the individual profile of our mind.

(2) For Plotinus, moral responsibility is grounded in the autonomy of the agent rather than in freedom to do otherwise. This kind of theory works only if it can be shown that we are responsible for our character. The Plotinian soul is not merely a product of its principle or of external causal influences. Metaphysically speaking, the soul is a self-constituting entity; furthermore, the actual state of discursive reason is a result of its acts in its previous life (Plotinus' account combines Platonic myths of transmigration with Aristotle's theory of moral development).

(3) Plotinus systematically connects moral responsibility with normative autonomy. Moral responsibility is grounded in the fact that the soul is a primary source of causation. In turn, the rational soul enjoys this causal status because it qualifies, at least in its original intellectual nature, as a “free principle”. In this way, freedom, taken in the sense of complete independence from external factors, is not only a normative ideal to be achieved, but it also has a major role to play in the explanation of responsible action. It has been claimed that normative freedom (*eleutheria*) and the compatibility of causal determinism with moral responsibility remain separate issues in Hellenistic and Imperial times. Plotinus' conception shows that this thesis needs to be qualified.

JÓZSEF SIMON

**From the Causality of Intelligibility to the Intelligibility of Causality – Causality in Duns Scotus' Philosophy**

Through a close reading of extracts taken from the *Liber de causis*, from Thomas Aquinas' Commentary on Boëthius' *De Trinitate* and from several works written by Duns Scotus, the paper examines how the role of causality changed from an explanatory principle of the intelligible properties of things into a mere characteristic of natural phenomena. It claims that Duns Scotus denied the causal efficacy of intelligible entities – even that of God – which served as an explanation for the ontological structure of things. For Scotus, this denial was possible through his innovative concept of possible intelligibility, which provided him with an ontology that required no causal explanation whatsoever. The paper

examines the characteristics of the so-called ‘essential causal processes’, which Scotus discusses in his reductive concept of causality when providing proof for God’s existence as the first efficient cause.

JUDIT SZALAI

### **Aristotelian-Scholastic Elements in Descartes’ Theory of the Passions**

This paper analyzes Descartes’ account(s) of psychophysical interaction involved in the passions. According to its main argument, in certain respects, Descartes failed to abandon the Aristotelian-scholastic paradigm of sensation he criticized in a tendentious and unjustified way. This recognition does not render the Cartesian account of sensation sufficiently comprehensible, let alone plausible. However, it does highlight a factor that feeds into the problematic character of the Cartesian conception: Descartes’ borrowings from the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition sit ill with some elements of his own philosophy of mind.

LÁSZLÓ E. SZABÓ – BALÁZS GYENIS –  
ZALÁN GYENIS – MIKLÓS RÉDEI – GÁBOR HOFER-SZABÓ  
**Causal Explanation of Correlations**

*No correlation without causation.* This is, in its most compact and general formulation, the essence of what has become called Reichenbach’s Common Cause Principle. More explicitly the Common Cause Principle says that every correlation is either due to a direct causal effect linking the correlated entities, or is brought about by a third factor, the so-called common cause. Thus the Common Cause Principle is a non-trivial metaphysical claim about the causal structure of the World. In the essay the authors intend to give a brief overview of their fifteen year long research project devoted to the investigation of the status of the Common Cause Principle, or in other words, to the question of common causal explanation of correlations.

FERENC HUORANSZKI  
**Causation at a Distance**

The paper investigates the issue concerning the transitivity of causal relations. First, it claims that the assumption of transitivity is basic in the sense that it plays an essential role both in the explanation of causal asymmetry and in the debates about the possibility of reflective causation. Second, it shows why Humean, and more specifically, counterfactual accounts of causation are unable properly to explain when and why causation is transitive. Finally, it argues that transitivity is best explained by the agency-theory of causation. According to the agency-theory, an event cannot be a cause of another unless it is, or would be, rational for a free agent to choose the former as a means to produce the latter. Thus we might be able to understand transitivity from the perspective of the effects. Given means-ends relation, the events in the chain can be viewed as connected by ‘by-relation’, so that they constitute a chain of effective means to produce the final outcome. It is then the transitivity of ‘by-relations’ that explains why certain causal chains are also transitive processes.