

Preface

This issue of Reason Papers is dedicated to the task of "Rethinking Foundationalism." Since the project of foundationalism has been central to modern philosophy from its inception, the task of rethinking foundationalism is an ideal starting point for the task of rethinking philosophical modernity as such. And, since modern philosophy figures itself out against the background of classical philosophy -- just as postmodernity configures itself against the ground of modernity -- rethinking philosophical modernity requires us to rethink philosophy as such. Hence our subtitle: "Metaphilosophical Essays."

What is the necessity of such a task? Here is one possible argument. Phenomenology and Gestalt psychology have revealed a deep, structural necessity in consciousness: to do any familiar activity is not to reflect upon it; to reflect upon it is not to do it. In doing, our focal awareness is directed toward what is to be done, not toward our activity of doing it. When playing the piano, we focus on the piece being played, not on the individual finger movements. Because of this, all human action, cognitive or practical, tends to be naïve. In turning toward its proper objects, human action turns away from reflection on itself. In gaining the world, we lose ourselves. And in losing account of ourselves, we lose responsibility and autonomy. Philosophy is the recovery of human autonomy and responsibility from naïveté. Philosophy thinks what is unthought in all worldly activities; philosophy is thinking about thinking itself. But if philosophy is truly to think about thinking without simply duplicating the naïveté of ordinary life on a higher level, then *philosophy must think about itself*. It must become metaphilosophy.

Now this account of the necessity of metaphilosophy is itself metaphilosophical and would not gain the assent of some of our contributors. Our purpose here, however, is not to set out a single metaphilosophical approach, but rather to gather together a set of synoptic statements representing the plurality of metaphilosophical options. In this we have not been fully successful. Some approaches are represented twice while others are conspicuous by their absence. We would have liked, for instance, to have included papers representing such perspectives as Popper and Bartley's evolutionary epistemology; feminism; social-linguistic pragmatism in the tradition of Quine, Sellars, Putnam, Davidson, and Rorty; Thomism; and process philosophy in the tradition of Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Weiss. Our ignorance of Eastern philosophical traditions is, of course, scandalous. We hope, however, that we can rectify these gaps in the future, that this issue will be the first installment of a larger project.

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