



**The Actual and the Possible: Modality and Metaphysics in
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3 This new collection comprises nine essays offering a wide array of views on modal
4 metaphysics. One of the aims of the collection is to provide a recent survey of modal theories
5 from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. The book presents analytic and
6 continental theories in modal metaphysics alongside diversely interpreted subjects, including
7 the subjectivity and objectivity of modalities and the notion of possibility which is a focus of
8 seventeenth- to twentieth-century modal metaphysics. The book provides highly satisfactory
9 interpretations of modal theories and responses to more contemporary issues, such as the
10 (ir)reducibility of modal categories. The essays take diverse approaches, with some being
11 exegetical and some engaging critically with the literature. I consider four essays that
12 exemplify these two approaches.
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25 Mogens Lærke argues against two interpretations of Spinoza's idea of formal and actual
26 essences, which he summarises as follows: that formal and actual essences are distinctive
27 essences on separate ontological levels, and that actual essences are actualised formal
28 essences. Lærke calls them *Platonizing interpretations* because these views are akin to
29 Plato's idea of separate realms of forms and their copies, where the copies are understood as
30 actualised forms. Lærke's response is firstly to highlight Spinoza's *epistemological*
31 *parallelism*, that is, Spinoza's view that there is a correspondence between the order of things
32 in the attributes and that of their ideas in God's intellect. Lærke demonstrates that the source
33 of separate ontological levels in Platonizing interpretations is to conceive formal essences as
34 the ideas of things and actual essences as the existence of things. Lærke argues that the
35 interpretations are incompatible with parallelism since they conceive formal essences as
36 ontologically distinct beings from actual essences. Lærke secondly suggests that formal and
37 actual essences are different *aspects* of the essence of things. The issue, of which Lærke is
38 aware, is the status of formal essences of non-existent things because formal essences may
39 well be considered as the essence of a non-existent thing, a *mere* possibility, which is distinct
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3 from actuality. This generates a realm of possibilities that are incompatible with the principle
4 in Spinoza's philosophy that whatever is, is in actuality. Lærke overcomes the issue through
5 his *aspectual reading* suggesting that formal essences of non-existent things are contained as
6 actual in the attributes where formal essences are taken as *aspects* of the essence of a thing
7 regardless of the existential status of the thing, which is expressed by another *aspect*, actual
8 essences. Since everything is actual, actual essences only highlight whether a thing exists
9 durationally or eternally. The essence of durational things is the actual essence that expresses
10 the thing as present while the essence of eternal things pertains to formal essences as non-
11 present. Although formal essences of non-existent things express the thing as eternal, albeit
12 non-present, they are held as *actually* non-existent in the attributes. Lærke concludes that the
13 distinction between formal and actual essences is only an *aspectual* distinction of the essences
14 on the same ontological level.
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29 Jessica Leech invites us to consider Kant's modal theory as an alternative to Aristotelian
30 essentialism and Lewis' possible worlds, namely, modal theories in favour of a modal
31 analysis that requires non-modal aspects. The non-modal aspects of modal theories are
32 essence for the Aristotelian view and possible worlds for Lewis. Leech thinks that, for Kant,
33 the non-modal aspect is the investigation of conditions for cognition. Leech believes that
34 Kant's modal analysis of real possibility demonstrates the importance of cognition in
35 understanding modality. Accordingly, for Kant, real possibility pertains to experience whereas
36 logical possibility relates to thinking. Experience entails the conditions for cognition, which
37 requires material objects given through *sensibility* and compatible concepts through
38 *understanding* to grasp the object truly. Logical possibility, on the other hand, entails thinking
39 that generates formal conditions, namely non-contradiction, for an object to be *logically*
40 possible. In real possibility, Leech argues, material conditions, namely, given objects, include
41 an *illusory* presupposition of *reason* asserting that the material possibility of a sensible
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3 individual is to be held in the *given* sum of all possible sensible individuals. Leech maintains
4 that reason as a capacity that connects judgements of understanding produces this illusion. It
5 is an illusion since reason *presupposes* the idea of a totality as *given* conditions for the
6 determination of an individual. Leech maintains that this illusion is not harmful if it is
7 identified in a way that leads the examination back to cognition and understanding where
8 Kant stresses possible individuals *given* in *intuition*, such as in space and time. Thus, Leech's
9 suggestion, underlining the givenness of space and time, as material conditions for real
10 possibility, accounts for modal possibility through the non-modal examination of conditions
11 for cognition.
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23 Christopher Yeomans describes Hegel's position in modal metaphysics as *expressivist*
24 *realism*, suggesting that the actuality of the world is the process of its own manifestation
25 through formal, real, and absolute modalities. Accordingly, real modality refers to real
26 determinations constituted by the conditions and circumstances of the modal object, namely
27 real possibilities of the actual. By contrast, absolute modality pertains to an absolute
28 determination, where the absolute possibility of the actual eliminates multiple possibilities of
29 the actual by emphasising the one possibility rendering the thing as actual. Yeomans notes
30 that, in this transition, one of the real possibilities of the actual, when determined as the
31 absolutely actual, does not disappear. It operates as the real possibility of another absolutely
32 actual. Thus, absolute modality is developed in a way that it lets real modality operate
33 alongside. The absolute actual is the actual as substance that is in casual relation to another
34 absolute actual. However, Yeomans believes that Hegel considers the objective categories of
35 causality and substance as *inadequate* to express the totality of absolute actualities and their
36 relation to each other. Yeomans thinks that this leads Hegel to find adequate elements in
37 subjectivity to express the totality and the relation among absolute actualities, particularly in
38 judgments of necessity, where singularity and universality mutually express each other in the
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3 subject-predicate form. Yeomans maintains that judgements of necessity express absolute
4 actualities as aggregated in a total world in which the actual also operates as a possibility of
5 another. He claims that objective manifestation pertains to real modalities, whereas subjective
6 manifestation expresses absolute modalities. The distinctive terms of objectivity and
7 subjectivity, for Yeomans, become indifferent to their distinction because, in absolute
8 modality, objectivity signifies the self-organisation of *an actuality* whereas subjectivity means
9 the self-organisation of *actualities*. When they are conceived this way, he concludes that
10 absolute modalities with judgement *express* the world as comprising actualities and their
11 relations.
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23 Mark Sinclair investigates the notion of possibility in Heidegger with concepts of handiness,
24 movedness, temporality, death, and hidden appropriateness. The focus of the essay is on
25 Dasein's movedness since Sinclair demonstrates that the shift from Heidegger's early to late
26 understanding of possibility is the shift from possibility as Dasein's movedness to possibility
27 as hidden appropriateness. Sinclair notes that Heidegger criticises the idea of understanding
28 possibility with actuality and necessity by claiming that this idea conceals what possibility is
29 itself. Possibility, in the most proper sense, is non-modal: it is not a mode of being but is
30 being. Heidegger bases his account on the Aristotelian transition from possibility to actuality,
31 that is, possibility as not yet actualised. Sinclair argues that the most proper sense of
32 possibility, namely being-possible, lies where the transition from possibility to actuality is
33 understood as sheer movement without a result or process. Heidegger conceives this as
34 similar, albeit irreducible, to the transition from Dasein's possibilities to its actualisations
35 where possibilities reach the full sense. Sinclair states that, as being, Dasein never completes
36 its actualisation but is just in constant movement. Dasein's movedness highlights Dasein's
37 feature of being-possible, which constitutes Dasein as more than its actuality. Sinclair equates
38 conceiving being-possible to taking it as Dasein's movedness. However, in late Heidegger's
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3 thought on art work, Sinclair points out hidden appropriateness as being-possible developed in
4 a slightly different sense that implies (appearing) actualised possibility. Hidden
5 appropriateness implies an abstract capacity that is hidden in the object but unveils itself by
6 being crafted appropriately to the object's material. Sinclair argues that the hidden
7 appropriateness of an object is being-possible that forces the object to be fashioned by an
8 artist or a craftsman according to the capacity of the object. Contrary to the first sense of the
9 concept, being-possible is conceived as a mode of *beings* that is prior to the actualisation of
10 the object.
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20 To conclude, the collection will appeal to readers who engage systematically with modal
21 metaphysics and to those who have a historical interest in metaphysics. The book offers an
22 invitation to relate historical modal theories to debates in contemporary modal metaphysics. It
23 also sheds light on the modal theories that have not received great attention, such as those of
24 Wolff, Russell, Meinong and Lukasiewicz. As a disappointing detail, the collection does not
25 contain an essay dedicated to David Lewis, whose modal realism drew significant attention to
26 modal metaphysics in the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, for a collection that does not
27 claim to offer a complete survey, the variety of essays presented in the collection is rather
28 inclusive and rich.
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