

U. Abaci, *Kant's Revolutionary Theory of Modality*, Oxford University Press, 2019, 304 pp., \$85 (hbk), ISBN: 9780198831556.

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Uygar Abaci's *Kant's Revolutionary Theory of Modality* starts with a helpful and illuminating historical contextualisation of Kant's theory of modality. It sets out the ontotheological debates that form the backdrop of Kant's pre-Critical modal theorising. Abaci covers the arguments by Anselm and Descartes, as well as Leibniz and Wolff. The former start from the idea of God as the *ens perfectissimum* and then try to establish the existence of God by arguing that existence is a perfection. The latter, by contrast, consider God to be the *ens necessarium*, such that God exists necessarily as long as the concept of God is not self-contradictory. They then attempt to establish the possibility of God by identifying the *ens necessarium* with the *ens perfectissimum*, allowing them to argue that this concept only contains positive predicates that cannot contradict each other.

The second part covers Kant's pre-Critical modal theory, both his critique of the ontological argument in terms of existence not being a real predicate and his own attempt to establish the existence of God in the Only Possible Argument of 1763 (OPA). Kant is standardly taken to decisively depart from his logicist predecessors by introducing a conception of real modality in the OPA. Once real possibility is not merely a matter of conformity to the logical law of non-contradiction and, correspondingly, real necessity is not a matter of logical necessity, room opens up for Kant's argument that, even though God's existence is not logically necessary, given that existence is not a real predicate, it is nevertheless really necessary, since God is the ground of all possibility such that God's non-existence would cancel all possibility.

Abaci argues that Leibniz and Wolff already had a conception of real modality and that Kant's pre-Critical work on modality is, accordingly, merely revisionary and belongs to the same paradigm as that of his predecessors. He correctly points out that some rationalists, most notably Leibniz, accepted material conditions on possibility in the form of an actualist principle, according to which every possibility must be grounded in something actual. These material conditions, however, have no bearing on what possibility consists in, i.e. on what it is to be possible, but only on which things are possible, i.e. they concern what material there is to which the conditions of possibility can apply. A genuine account of real modality would also include non-logical formal conditions on what it is to be possible, something that neither Leibniz nor Wolff countenances. Attributing a conception of real modality to them is thus somewhat tenuous. Abaci's claim that Kant's OPA theory is broadly continuous with that of his predecessors can nevertheless be sustained. In particular, one might think that Kant himself does not have a

genuine conception of real modality in the OPA and that this is one of the crucial innovations of his Critical modal theory. Abaci provides strong arguments against the standard interpretation that Kant recognises metaphysical incompatibilities in the OPA. He nicely illustrates how real opposition implies a logical contradiction in the case of the *ens realissimum*, insofar as real opposition results in a lack or defect which is logically incompatible with having all perfections to a maximal degree, thereby illustrating that countenancing real opposition need not imply countenancing real modality.

Whereas Abaci considers the pre-Critical modal theory to be merely revisionary, the Critical modal theory is taken to be revolutionary (though he recognises that the core ideas are already, at least implicitly, present in the OPA and that their systematic development naturally leads to the Critical modal theory – in fact, Abaci nicely sets out how theorising about real modality plays an important instrumental role in leading to the Critical turn). The third part comprehensively covers the core discussions of this revolutionary theory of modality: the modal functions of judgement, the modal schematism and the Postulates before turning to the ideal and the critique of the ontological argument as well as the difficult and puzzling claims about noumenal amodalism in the Critique of Judgement. According to Abaci, Kant effects a radical break from traditional theorising about modality by switching from theorising about objects to theorising about the cognitive subject and considering modality to be nothing but a feature of our representation of objects. This strongly subjectivist interpretation of modality has some textual support but would benefit from greater clarification and elaboration – after all, the existence of the subject itself cannot be understood as being nothing but a feature of the subject's self-representation.

*Kant's Revolutionary Theory of Modality* is a comprehensive treatment of Kant's pre-Critical and Critical modal theory that helpfully situates Kant's theorising in the relevant historical background. It is clear, well-researched and interesting throughout. Anyone interested in Kant's theory of modality will benefit from reading this book.