

Mario De Caro and David Macarthur, eds.
Naturalism and Normativity.
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Naturalism and Normativity is a follow up to De Caro and Macarthur's previous co-edited collection, *Naturalism in Question* (Harvard University Press 2004). Whereas the first volume presented itself as broadly critical towards what B. Stroud called the 'naturalistic consensus' ('The Charm of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, 23) of much contemporary analytic philosophy, the remit of the new collection is to examine whether there can be an alternative to standard forms of materialistic or narrowly scientific forms of naturalistic philosophy that nevertheless can retain the title 'naturalism'—a *liberal* (or perhaps *non-scientific*) naturalism. In focusing on normativity, one question in particular becomes whether there is room for an unreconstructed notion of normativity within a world-view that can justifiably be called naturalistic. Despite this overall framing, the issues of the two volumes overlap to a large degree, with emphasis on the metaphilosophical issue of how to understand naturalism as a philosophical position, and more generally on the relationship between science, philosophy and everyday modes of understanding. In this respect the present volume can be seen as furthering the trends set not just by *Naturalism in Question* but also other *fin de siècle*-style volumes such as Georg Gasser's *How Successful is Naturalism?* (Ontos Verlag 2008), and Brian Leiter's *The Future for Philosophy* (Oxford University Press 2004).

In a little more detail the questions the editors pose are (a) whether (natural) scientific modes of understanding or a scientific ontology are adequate to giving an understanding of human beings and their characteristics/products (language, reason, morality, society, science itself); and (b) whether, if this is not the case, there need be a threat to a liberal naturalism which, whilst denying that science explains everything, is not supernaturalistic in positing anything that breaks with scientific fact. As De Caro and Voltonlini note in their contribution 'Is Liberal Naturalism Possible?', it is far from obvious that such a position can be coherently formulated or defended. At the same time, it is also a potentially very attractive view, given the problems that science seems to have in explaining—or in 'placing' in its world view—the inherent normativity attaching to language, reason, etc.. Below I focus on the papers I see as most directly addressing this broad issue, which I take to include the vexed question of how we should understand science itself. First, however, in the next paragraph, I say a few words about the other contributions.

Part 4 of the book, 'Meta-ethics and Normativity', is comprised of T. M. Scanlon's 'Metaphysics and Morality' (reproduced), Erin Kelly and Lionel

Macpherson's commentary on this, titled 'The Naturalist Gap In Ethics', and Stephen White's 'Phenomenology and the Normativity of Practical Reason'. They all concern how to understand the authority of moral reasons, with Scanlon defending a form of cognitivism, Kelly and McPherson proposing a middle way between this and the view they dub 'moral naturalism', and White professing that demands of practical reason are directly perceptible. Part 5, 'Epistemology and Normativity', contains Huw Price's 'Truth as Convenient Friction' (reproduced), which is followed by an exchange between Price and Rorty amounting to an intriguing in-house neo-pragmatist debate about whether truth is a separate norm from that of justification. In Part 1, Akeel Bilgrami's 'The Wider Significance of Naturalism: A Genealogical Essay' provides a historical case for thinking that traditional scientific or materialistic naturalism was by no means a mere corollary of the new science of the seventeenth century, but rather an upshot (in Britain at least) of the machinations of prominent members of the Royal Society and the ruling class more generally, who had a vested interest in expunging value from the natural world.

Richard Rorty's contribution 'Naturalism and Quietism' (reproduced) sees the opposition between a scientific and a more liberal naturalism in terms of alternative conceptions of philosophy itself. Building on Leiter's introduction to his (Leiter's) volume (*op. cit.*), Rorty holds that 'naturalists'—synonymous here with 'scientific naturalists'—inherit the view of philosophy from Kant as a quasi-scientific programme of research now to be pursued through the ontological framework of physics and other natural sciences, including neuroscience. 'Quietists', by contrast, want to dissolve many of the traditional problems and in particular the idea that there is privileged vocabulary that maps directly onto the categories of the world itself. This leads Rorty to endorse what can appear to be a kind of liberal naturalism, namely Price's *subject naturalism*—cf. 'Naturalism Without Representationalism', in *Naturalism in Question*—which rejects ontology and instead studies human linguistic behavior. Rorty thinks this is best understood as a kind of cultural-political initiative. For this reason, and also because subject naturalism aims *scientifically to explain* language-use, it seems doubtful that Price can straightforwardly be recruited to the ranks of Rortian quietism. What is interesting about Rorty is that he thinks discomfort about normativity is most fundamentally a symptom of systematizing philosophy, rather than any particular brand of naturalistic metaphysics.

De Caro and Voltonlini's paper argues against an alleged dilemma for liberal naturalism, posed by Ram Neta (*Philosophical Review* 116 [2007], 657-62), to the effect that it collapses either into scientific naturalism or else supernaturalism (a view that trades in miracles, divine intervention and the like). Their middle ground posits entities that are not motivated by science but are not in conflict with it either, and which also tend to be studied in a characteristically 'philosophical' way. These entities should have no causal powers in order to be compatible with the causal closure of physics. De Caro and Voltonlini take (abstract) modal properties by way of example, whose apprehension is not mysterious but based simply on the everyday mental faculty of imagination. In fact it

seems many liberal naturalists think that some causally efficacious properties are also non-scientific but compatible with science in being at a different level of causality entirely. For example, desiring (that so and so) causally explains an action (cf. e.g., J. Hornsby, *Simple Mindedness*, Harvard University Press 2007). Papineau ('Naturalism', in E. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2007: §§ 1.6-7) raises an objection to both kinds of view: insofar as mental states, including apprehension of abstract objects, *at some point* will impact on the world of physics, we get either breach of causal closure or overdetermination. The alternative is of course to try to mesh these features with the scientific world-view, *contra* liberal naturalism.

Hilary Putnam's 'Science and Philosophy' charts various roles for philosophy in contemporary intellectual life, resisting any attempt to reduce or eliminate it, be this by way of ontotheology, a logic of science or post-modernistic posturing. It is hard to not feel sympathy with the roles Putnam mentions, including 'education for grown-ups' (Cavell), interpretation of contemporary physics, understanding the truth in everyday talk and rebutting popular myths (e.g. value-freedom in science). Putnam's article is an edifying antidote to the feeling that peculiarly philosophical questions evaporate when rigorously pursued, though it does not systematically address itself to this problem (cf. Redding's contribution, below).

In 'Why Scientific Realism May Invite Relativism' Carol Rovane argues that contrary to common assumptions relativists can be realists, and indeed that a realist rather than a non-realist conception of facts is more conducive to relativism. This is supported by reference to Chomsky's view that we are cognitively bounded, something that Rovane sees as undermining Davidson's famous argument against the possibility of alternative conceptual schemes. I found the paper problematic insofar as scientific realists presumably would not employ Davidson's argument against relativism (and because Chomsky's argument, in assuming scientific realism, seems to beg the question against Davidson). This makes much of the argumentation largely irrelevant to the issue at hand.

David Macarthur's 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously' has three goals. First, he wants to show that what passes for natural science in the world today encompasses much more than what traditional positivist or post-positive views of this have seen it as doing. Hence he thinks that an extreme form of scientific naturalism, such as reductive physicalism or a unity of science view, is implausible—by the lights of science itself. These are themes that John Dupré has argued for in several publications, and they are further developed in his (Dupré's) contribution, 'How to Be Naturalistic Without Being Simplistic in the Study of Human Nature'. Macarthur suggests this line of reasoning can be taken a step further, yielding a 'Broad Scientific Naturalism' (BSN) that embraces the social and human sciences along with other branches of science. Furthermore, if the ontology of such sciences includes entities with value and normative properties then the alleged dichotomy between 'reason and nature' may be deflated. However, Macarthur doubts that even a naturalism of such liberality can solve or dissolve the issue entirely, for

its own claims to knowledge are irreducibly normative in presupposing the values inherent in scientific rationality, and of this normativity we can have no science. I have two objections to Macarthur's piece. First, he doesn't consider the possibility that the basic cognitive capacities underlying social and (especially) human science might be explicable from a natural science perspective, and thus that these are not really autonomous forms of science (cf. J. Knowles, 'What Is Naturalism? Towards a Univocal Theory', *SATS: Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 9 [2008], 28-57, § 3). Second—though here I find Macarthur less than clear—his suggestion that the fact that scientific explanations presuppose values and norms impugns the naturalistic credentials of such explanations seems hard to understand if indeed these explanations may quantify, in accord with BSN, over norms and values. This would seem no more reasonable than thinking that the fact that the scientific beliefs of psychologists are themselves psychological states undermines psychology as a science.

In 'Reasons and Causes Revisited', Peter Menzies argues *contra* Davidson that intentional properties like having a belief can causally explain actions *as such*: rationalizing and causal properties coincide. This view is developed by thinking of intentional psychology as a *model* that can be applied to concrete agents. I found this paper unsatisfactory because it seems to overplay the difference between model-based and deductive-nomological explanation, and also because the former treats rationality like other scientific concepts, such as 'two-body gravitational system', thus bypassing much of what really concerned Davidson.

Paul Redding's 'Two Directions for Analytic Kantianism' addresses itself to the problem of philosophical method as distinct from scientific method, exploring the possibilities of a naturalized Kantianism and the threat of nihilism. I found this a particularly welcome contribution insofar as (for me anyway) much of the interest of scientific naturalism derives from the problem of understanding what knowledge philosophy can contribute, beyond high level scientific theorizing or *ad hoc* remarks on everyday life. Price's subject naturalism features (again), here as a kind of naturalized transcendentalism, but Redding faults it on the grounds that, though it seeks to entitle us to non-scientific discourse, it is only science that can actually give knowledge at the transcendental level. (For a slightly different take on this aspect of Price's view, see Knowles, 'Naturalism, Pragmatism and the Retreat from Metaphysics: Scientific versus Subject Naturalism', in J. Knowles and H. Rydenfelt, eds., *Pragmatism, Science and Naturalism*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang [forthcoming].) Redding's preferred solution is idealism—in a broadly Hegelian, *not* Berkeleyan sense—as reflected in recent work by Robert Brandom and, according to Redding, Bernard Williams. Philosophy has an essentially contextualized nature, concerning 'the normative commitments of the *present point of view* from which our present commitments will be regarded as more rational than those they replaced...' (278). Of course whether one can, must or should accept this is another issue, but that it be on the table here seems appropriate.

Peter Godfrey-Smith's 'Dewey, Continuity and McDowell' and Marie McGinn's 'Wittgenstein and Naturalism' also usefully serve to widen the debate, here in the direction of philosophers that have been central to thought about naturalism. For Godfrey-Smith, Dewey's version of naturalism is preferable to McDowell's: whereas the latter simply helps itself to the idea of second nature and opposes our understanding of this to that of first or brute nature, mindedness for Dewey is seen as emerging through interaction with the environment and others, thus allowing for both a distinctively scientific study of mind, and a rejection of the residual dualism between reason and nature we find in McDowell. McDowell is given a more favorable assessment by McGinn in the role of interpreter of Wittgenstein, his quietism about rule-following being seen as preferable to Crispin Wright's dispositional account. But the role of pre-conceptual action also seems important for Wittgenstein in a way McDowell's account does not respect.

There is, in sum, much food for thought in De Caro and Macarthur's latest offering, and many of the papers will no doubt figure prominently in future discussions of the scope and limits of naturalism, which should also reflect on what we understand by philosophy and, not least, science.

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