Paul Giladi (ed.): Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism[1]

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The first question the reader might ask when looking at the subtitle of this volume is whether the combination of idealist and pragmatist critical perspectives on naturalism is a relatively loose grouping of texts by different authors or whether there is some deeper intention in the background. A quick glance at the contents of the volume might seem to support the first possibility. A relatively lengthy introduction by editor Paul Giladi is followed by twelve essays by various contemporary authors (including Giladi himself), which are arranged in two main sections respectively entitled "Idealist Responses to Naturalism" and "Pragmatist Responses to Naturalism". Given that that idealist philosophy (whether in the form of classical German idealism or Husserl's phenomenological idealism) has traditionally been a clear opponent of the naturalistic way of philosophising, while pragmatism is regarded as a philosophical movement sympathetic to and to a large extent overlapping with philosophical naturalism (especially the pragmatism of Deweyan or Quinean type), the reader might well expect simply a sharp critique of the basic premises of naturalism from the idealist contributors, and from the pragmatists an attempt to critically reform some of aspects of naturalism.

In fact, this first impression needs a certain correction right at the outset. As is clear from Giladi's introductory text, one of the aims of the publication was precisely to encourage dialogue between contemporary idealist and pragmatist philosophers and to exploit the synergetic effect of their critical reactions to prevailing naturalism (p. 11). This is far from just a formal proclamation of the editor, since the proximity – both with respect to main topics and modes of argumentation – of idealism- and pragmatism-oriented contributors to this volume really shows up in most of the essays. To put it briefly, all authors agree that science-oriented naturalism ignores or underestimates those aspects of human existence that feature intentionality, self-conscious action and the search for meaning in the midst of a network of intersubjective relationships framed by rational normativity. Of course, specific strategies, terminological choices, and thematic emphases vary significantly from essay to essay. There is a telling difference, for instance, in choice of terminology reflecting whether authors position themselves against naturalism as such, or retain the designation "naturalism" for their proposed conception while modifying it with added adjectives (such as "normative," "liberal" or even "transcendental").

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A sharper opposition to naturalism can be found in contributions by Paul Giladi and Alexis Papazoglou in the first (idealist) part of the book. In his critique of naturalism, Giladi uses Hegelian vocabulary, especially in distinguishing between the (limited) analytical way of thinking (Hegel's *Verstand*) and the dialectical way of thinking (Hegel's *Vernunft*), which is able to overcome and integrate fixed ('static') differences. Giladi has major reservations about the type of naturalism in which one such difference, the difference between the manifest and the scientific image of the world, is to be erased in favour of the scientific picture that the naturalist presents as the deepest level of description. According to Giladi, this unjustifiably reduces the first-person perspective characteristic of the manifest image to the perspective of the third person, which leads to a "radical form of dehumanization" consisting in the creation of a misguided self-image of human being that does not take into account intentionality and self-reflection as essential features of our existence (p. 81). Giladi's Hegelian strategy suggests a deeper look at reality, in which there is a place for human being as a being moving both in the space of reasons (norms) and in the space of nature; he makes frequent use of terms such as *Geist, geistige Einstellung* or overcoming of "self-alienation".

In Papazoglou's "idealist challenge" to naturalism, it is not only Hegel's but also Kant and Husserl's work that serves as the inspiration for a critique of naturalism. Although the Hegelian way of thinking seems to appeal more to the author than the Kantian or Husserlian, what he considers to be decisive when it comes to naturalism are the things that they all have in common. Essentially, this is the belief that "the explanatory framework of the human subject is that which takes priority over other explanatory frameworks, including, crucially, that of nature and natural science" (p. 115). Thus, if we (partially) define naturalism as a philosophical position promoting continuity between the natural sciences and philosophy, Papazoglou's position is uncompromisingly antinaturalistic because it seeks to defend not only the possibility but also the inevitability of philosophy as an autonomous sphere of reasoning in the form of transcendental reflection.

In his contribution, Paul Redding revisits the beginnings of analytical philosophy which – especially as represented by Russell and Moore – was formed in the struggle with neo-Hegelian idealism. Redding tries to show that, from a historical point of view, Hegel's idealist monism is a better alternative to Spinozist naturalism. With respect to contemporary philosophy, he argues that it is high time to reconsider idealism in a more positive spirit, because of the unsatisfactory metaphysical underpinnings of analytical philosophy (p. 139).

I will mention the other three chapters of the first part of the book only briefly: Giuseppina D'Oro (like Giladi) defends the priority of the manifest image of the world, but this time it is the Heideggerian distinction between "Vorhandenheit" and "Zuhandenheit" that does most of the analytical and interpretative work. In his essay on "Naturalism and the Primacy of the Practical", Johannes Haag inter-

prets Kant's philosophy (based on his reading of the third Critique) as a "transcendental-idealist version of philosophical naturalism" (which may strike some readers as an undue extension of terminology). Kant's practical philosophy is part of the focus of the essay "Moral Natural Norms" by Katerina Deligiorgi, but in this case the starting point and stimulus for analysis and criticism is neo-Aristotelian moral naturalism in the spirit of Elisabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot.

Let us now look at the pragmatist responses to naturalism in the second part of the book. While the idealist section is clearly dominated by references to the works of Kant and Hegel, in the second part there seems to be more plurality with respect to key influences. All the same, it is to be noted that among the classical pragmatists Peirce (to whom two chapters are explicitly devoted) is the thinker to whom reference is most often made. Regarding the more recent authors inclined to pragmatism, the influence of Sellars and Putnam is particularly noticeable (in the case of Sellars, his influence is also evident in much of the first half of the volume).

The first essay on Peirce, authored by Shannon Dea and Nathan Haydon, is more of a historical-philosophical exegesis, but a shift to current discussions can be seen in the way that the authors present Peirce's philosophical system as going beyond the usual conceptual divisions. From their point of view, Peirce is a naturalist, but also an absolute idealist. This leads them to introduce such surprising phrases as "theological naturalist" or "naturalistic idealist" to characterise his thinking. Experimentalist mind-set and desire (and optimistic hope) to philosophically grasp the absolute are inseparable from Peirce's philosophising. By contrast, the second text on Peirce's philosophy has a more modest goal and focuses on only one aspect of his naturalism. Gabriele Gava aims to show that Peirce's philosophy can be characterised at least as "methodological naturalism," although he also acknowledges that especially in Peirce's later philosophy there are elements that put him in opposition to naturalism. These relate to his understanding of the method of philosophy. Making a distinction between moderate and radical methodological naturalism, however, Gava manages to argue in favour of the thesis that Peirce's later position still falls under methodological naturalism.

In his contribution, Mario De Caro traces the philosophical development of Hilary Putnam and presents his account of liberal naturalism. He sees it as a metaphilosophical conception that seeks to avoid reductionism in the sense that "not all the real features of the world can be reduced to the scientifically describable features, and the natural sciences are not the only genuine source of knowledge," although on the ontological side the liberal naturalist does not accept any entities that conflict with the current scientific image of the world (p. 200). De Caro considers Putnam's version of naturalism to be "very promising," even though he fails to find a satisfactory solution to the key problem facing this position in Putnam's work. It is clear that this conclusion on the perspective of liberal naturalism is in-

tended in a comparative sense, with an eye to the analogous problems (so called "placement problems"), to which the illiberal form of naturalism is exposed.

David Macarthur's text "Pragmatic Naturalism" most directly fulfils the task outlined in Giladi's introductory study, namely to find connections and develop a conversation between idealist and pragmatist philosophy in order to confront the scientistic variants of naturalism. Some common ground is found in their normativism, i. e. in the belief that "rational normativity is not reducible to objective causal categories recognised by scientific naturalism" (p. 271). Macarthur subsequently argues, however, that the pragmatist version of naturalism is better than the idealism of Kantian provenance because it can most convincingly cope with an old epistemological problem called Agrippa's trilemma. The connection between such pragmatism and idealism is maintained in the fact that, according to Macarthur, a pragmatist theory of inquiry can be seen as a "naturalized and democratized form of Kant's epistemology" (p. 285).

The two remaining essays in the second part of the book deal with Sellars' philosophy, which is very appropriate and useful given how often Sellarsian themes emerge throughout the book, primarily the distinction between the manifest and scientific image of the world and the problems associated with it. Willem A. deVries offers an interpretation of Sellars's specific kind of naturalism, emphasising its connection to German idealism, while the main aim of Steven Levin's study is to defend the critical thesis that Sellars' strategy of incorporating normativity into the naturalistic picture of the world cannot ultimately be successful because it leads to "unacceptable theoretical consequences" (p. 250).

It should be noted that all the chapters are significantly richer in terms of content than indicated by my brief summary, and in this regard, the book undoubtedly provides the reader with plenty of very specific food for thought. This is the case despite the fact that not only do several topics crop up repeatedly across the individual chapters, but also some answers to the questions sound very similar: the irreducibility of normativity, an emphasis on the common sense / manifest image of the world, etc. The book contains some very well-mastered interpretive returns to classical philosophical texts, and so it may also be of some interest to readers whose dominant interest is a better understanding of the philosophical tradition. Nonetheless, the answers that it offers are mainly responses to the situation in contemporary philosophy, and the success of the work must be judged mainly with regard to how thoroughly and convincingly it has fulfilled its role of critical reflection on current naturalistic orthodoxy. In this light, the essays which operate with a sufficiently clear notion of naturalism and which present unambiguous argumentative alternatives to the naturalistic way of thinking appear to us to be the most interesting and inspiring. Suffice it to say that these are the ones to which we have devoted the most space above. The efforts (in some essays) to redefine or terminologically modify naturalism raise some doubts as to whether clear di-

viding lines may not be getting lost in the process. It is true that in contemporary philosophy, "naturalism" is indeed a Protean and perhaps infinitely flexible term, but *sunt certi denique fines*, and problems and controversies will not be illuminated by inducing such a conceptually confusing situation that the original questions lose their clear contours.

Needless to say, the response to the present book is likely to vary widely depending on whether the reader tends to adopt a strictly naturalistic or a distinctly non-naturalistic approach. The first group of readers will no doubt point out that the positive theses (purporting to expand our philosophical knowledge) contained in individual essays look too much like traditional vague philosophical statements, while the second group will enthusiastically highlight the authors' clear achievements in identifying the undeniable weaknesses of contemporary "scientific naturalism." Either way, one great accomplishment of this volume is that it brings philosophical idealism back into the discussion in a relatively vigorous way, and in a form that makes it capable of an intriguing confrontation with various versions of contemporary philosophical naturalism.

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