

Mario De Caro and David Macarthur, eds. *Naturalism in Question*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press 2004. Pp. viii + 340. [space for price] (Cloth: ISBN0-674-01295-X)

De Caro and Macarthur's ambitious collection – *Naturalism in Question* – is a call to arms for opponents of the set of related doctrines that constitute scientific naturalism. It includes critiques of these doctrines from such luminaries as Barry Stroud, Hilary Putnam, John McDowell, Donald Davidson, Jennifer Hornsby, and Stanley Cavell, among others. Scientific naturalism is, in a nutshell, the view that the physical sciences should be given pride of place in our ontological, epistemological, and semantic endeavors. Operationally, this involves requiring that the concepts, posits, and methodologies of disciplines outside the physical sciences be shown to be suitably related to scientific concepts, posits, and methodologies, or be judged suspect. And suitable relatedness to the physical sciences is more often than not taken to require some form of reducibility.

Because scientific naturalism is “the current orthodoxy,” the editorial decision was made to include only papers critical of this cluster of views, rather than additionally including responses from its defenders. *Naturalism in Question* thus consists of fourteen critiques of scientific naturalism, three of which – Stroud's ‘The Charm of Naturalism,’ McDowell's ‘Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind,’ and Davidson's ‘Could There Be a Science of Rationality?’ – have previously appeared elsewhere. There is also a useful introduction written by the editors. The articles are divided into sections on Science and Reality, Mind, Agency, and Ethical and Aesthetic Normativity. It is worth noting that the last section is a bit of a hodgepodge.

At the level of individual articles, *Naturalism in Question* contains a number of gems. In ‘Naturalism Without Representation,’ for example, Huw Price defends a *subject* naturalist conception of the placement problem – the problem of reconciling various disciplines with the physical sciences – against the more familiar *object* naturalist conception. According to the latter, the placement problem is a matter of determining how moral and semantic facts and entities, for example, can be natural facts and objects. According to the former conception, in contrast, the placement problem is a matter of reconciling the various ways of talking human subjects engage in, of explaining ‘what differences there are between the functions of talk of value and the functions of talk of electrons...’ (87). Price argues against the collapse of subject naturalism into object naturalism (via semantic descent) by conjoining it with a deflationist account truth and reference and a use theory of meaning. And he argues that the representationalist theory of meaning, which underpins object naturalism, cannot be reconciled with the empirical contingency of semantic relations to which object naturalism is committed.

To my mind, the best paper in the collection is Stephen White's ‘Subjectivity and the Agential Perspective.’ The focus of White's discussion is the notion of a passive subject – someone who, although possessing the concept of a happening, lacks the concept of a doing. A passive subject can only hope that her body will move in such a way so as to satisfy her desires; she does not understand what you mean when you ask her to move it herself. White argues that no objective metaphysics – expressible without psychological, agential, or normative concepts – can capture the difference between a passive subject and the rest of us. White's own account of this difference invokes a

theory of perceptual experience that links perceptual access to objects in the world to our basic action capacities and our demonstrative capacities: perception requires demonstrative abilities such as the ability to point at objects we perceive; and the capacity for action requires that we be able to demonstratively pick out the “environmental levers of action.” The difference between the passive subject and the rest of us is that she lacks demonstrative abilities – the ability to pick out such environmental levers and recognize them as such. What blocks the incorporation of this explanation of the passive subject into an objective metaphysical picture is the irreducibility of demonstrative to descriptive content.

Other papers deserving special mention include Jennifer Hornsby’s ‘Agency and Alienation,’ Akeel Bilgrami’s ‘Intentionality and Norms,’ and Erin Kelly’s ‘Against Naturalism in Ethics.’ Donald Davidson’s piece, which includes a new Afterword, is also a tasteful inclusion.

Unfortunately, the sum of the parts may be greater than the whole. The editors point out that, although most Anglo-American philosophers call themselves ‘naturalists,’ the use of this term varies widely (2-3). The downside of this is that distinct critiques of naturalism risk being directed towards very different doctrines. And a corresponding lack of critical unity does infect *Naturalism in Question* to a certain degree. Many of the articles do seem to be focused on various forms of reductionism. On the other hand, Putnam, for example, seems at times to be rehearsing his well-known arguments against metaphysical realism (a view De Caro (200) also warns against). But Leeds (Stephen Leeds, ‘Theories of Reference and Truth,’ *Erkenntnis* 13: 111-29, 1978), among others, has shown us that Quinean scientific naturalists, at least, need not be committed to realism. And Carol Rovane’s interesting but quirky piece, “A Nonnaturalist Account of Personal Identity,” seems to be focused not on the reducibility or irreducibility of personal identity to the physical sciences, but on the orthogonal distinction between the natural and the human/ social/ technological often remarked upon in environmental philosophy. More generally, there are a number of articles that seem only tangentially connected to the declared theme of the collection.

There is also a tendency among some of the authors to make suspect claims about the implications of the rejection of scientific naturalism. The editors go so far as to say that ‘... the fate of analytic philosophy is now, in large part, tied to the fate of scientific naturalism’ (9), and conclude that with the rejection of the latter, philosophical methodology should be re-conceived on the model of art criticism, rather than science (16). Moreover, Putnam, Dupré, and others, argue that the rejection of scientific naturalism commits us to conceptual pluralism, which in some forms runs the risk of entailing objectionable species of relativism. But one can reject scientific naturalism – and its strongly reductionist variants probably warrant rejection – while retaining a Sellarsian methodological *telos*: ‘[the] aim of philosophy ... is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term’ (Wilfred Sellars, *Science Perception and Reality*, Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing Co, 1963, p. 1). Doing so requires no reconception of philosophical methodology, and undercuts both the relativistic and quietist undercurrents of conceptual pluralism: contra relativism, things really do hang together; and contra quietism, an account of how they do so is required. And the articles that received special mention above did so exactly because they share in the spirit of this Sellarsian *telos*.

Peter Alward
University of Lethbridge