

Preface

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Metaphysics, traditionally conceived, has often been defined as the inquiry into what lies beyond or is independent of experience, but which nonetheless pertains to the fundamental structure of reality. Thus understood, metaphysics produces claims that are not empirically testable. The twentieth century logical empiricists famously—and ferociously—criticised metaphysics on these grounds as being devoid of cognitive content. Despite logical empiricism’s seminal role in the genesis and propagation of the analytic tradition in academic philosophy, metaphysics has made a remarkable comeback during the second half of the twentieth century. Contemporary analytic metaphysicians unabashedly refer to intuitions, conceptual analysis, and other genuinely philosophical, speculative methods in their search for insights into the fundamental nature of reality. Or so it seems.

During the last decades, these practices of academic metaphysicians have come under fire again. At least since the publication of *Every Thing Must Go* by James Ladyman and Don Ross in 2007—which is not the only, but the most comprehensive plea for a naturalisation of metaphysics in the current debate—philosophers can no longer ignore meta-

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metaphysical questions regarding the relationship between metaphysics and science. Whereas strict naturalists argue that any legitimate metaphysics must be motivated exclusively by science, others allow for mutual influences, or even argue that the domains of science and metaphysics only partially overlap, leaving genuinely metaphysical issues, which are to be tackled independently of scientific results.

The papers collected in this Special Issue of the Journal for General Philosophy of Science were part of a colloquium held at the international conference of the German Society for Analytic Philosophy (GAP) at Osnabrück in 2015. The colloquium was co-organised by the DFG Research Group “Causation, Laws, Dispositions and Explanations at the Interface of Science and Metaphysics” (FOR 1063) and the German Society for the Philosophy of Science (GWP).

In their contributions, the authors set out to explore various aspects of the relationship between metaphysics and different branches of science. Tobias Rosefeldt argues that metaphysics will profit greatly from considering the results of linguistics, which help us bridge the gap between our everyday commitments to tables and chairs and more profound metaphysical claims. Katherine Hawley, too, acknowledges the motivation that guides naturalised metaphysics, and discusses the prospects of three ways—familiar from the metaphysics of the natural world—in which the findings of social science could be applied to the metaphysics of the social world. Finally, Steven French suggests that even if naturalistic criticism applies and the bulk of metaphysical claims do not receive positive support from modern physics, mainstream metaphysical research programmes are valuable by way of providing a toolbox for the philosophy of physics. In their commentaries, Julia F. Göhner, Oliver R. Scholz and Barbara Vetter diligently discuss the three major contributions by reexamining the proposed connections between metaphysics and science and by expounding alternative approaches.

This collection of papers tackles some of the issues that have been pressed by the critics of naturalised metaphysics, and which have, up to now, been generally neglected. They take on the question of mutual dependencies between metaphysics and science, and address the debate’s disadvantageous fixation on contributions by the natural sciences. In doing so, our authors underline the complexity and breadth of the relationship between metaphysics and science, which is all too easily lost sight of when you are emerged in the details of the contemporary debate over the naturalisation of metaphysics.

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