

and claims that because knowledge is dispersed it cannot be wholly centralized, Oakeshott on Hegelian grounds argues that abstract reasoning will always fall short of the complexity of the concrete universal. Within this vision a concept is not something outside the world of sensuous experience, it is the very structure and order of that experience. But because it is not possible to abstract without falsifying, all abstractions mislead.

For a rationalist, all that is required for a successful performance is a correct theory. For Oakeshott, however, this is to apply the standards of one mode (theoretical reason) to another mode (practice) where they are not relevant. Awarding the primacy to theory ignores that all theory is grounded in practice. Theorists are correct to believe that they have identified a higher (because more abstract) form of knowledge, but in their enthusiasm they (to put it in Polanyian terms) ignore the primacy of our tacit awareness.

Aurel Kolnai, the subject (with Oakeshott) of the final essay in this collection, declares that philosophers should try to keep as close as possible in touch with the world of ordinary experience. As the author of this essay, Zoltan Balazs, reminds us, not because reason is reducible to will, but because our quest for understanding should be informed by intellectual humility. Oakeshott reminds us that it is reality not reason, experience not inference, that is the foundation of our being. Kolnai claims however that Oakeshott gives too much emphasis to practice: rationality is treated as if it were a disease, in ways

reminiscent of European intellectual fashions between the World Wars. For Kolnai it is morality rather than science that should be our primary concern; though not the happiness centered Aristotelian, the duty obsessed Kantian, or the consequence dominated Utilitarian versions. He seeks to ground morality in an objective phenomenology.

I compliment the editors for the way they arranged the articles in their book: each follows on from the next, in ways that extend and deepen the readers thoughts on the topic at hand. I recommend it as a starting point for a study of the thinkers they discuss, not least because every one of the contributors is clear and informative.

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Bagger, Matthew, ed. *Pragmatism and Naturalism: Scientific and Social Inquiry After Representationalism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018. Pp. 328 + ix. ISBN 978-023-118-188-4. \$75.

What does it mean to be a naturalist, and relatedly, a pragmatist? In *Pragmatism and Naturalism* (hereafter PN), Michael Raposa writes that “one can surely be a naturalist without embracing pragmatism. It is not immediately obvious whether the reverse is true” (33), due in part to the variety of contested versions of naturalism. If Polanyi is plausibly classified as a pragmatist, Polanyians might consider whether this classification is for

the best (given the iconoclastic nature of his writings, experience, etc.), and whether his philosophical project is fruitfully cast under the shadow of “naturalism.” With regard to the latter, Philip Kitcher raises similar concerns in drawing his distinction between content and method naturalism. The former encompasses predominant (largely analytic) preoccupations with what naturalism is, and the latter expresses Dewey’s pragmatic worldview. Method naturalism embodies the pragmatist concern with recategorizing human experience to reform human thought (75; a similar orientation is advanced in Matthew Bagger’s essay on William James). In Polanyian terms, the distinction would hold between a static conception of what tradition-and-discovery reflect—a Cartesian search for a separate order of the real—and a dynamic, evolving view reflexively countenancing tradition(s)-and-discovery(ies) in the process of making-and-being-made.

Thus a cornerstone of pragmatism is fallibilism, which allows for evolvability. Bagger notes that in “[e]schewing metaphysical or theological touchstones, pragmatic naturalism consists in the denial of any sources of authority transcending the practices by which humans collectively, cooperatively, and fallibly authorize their beliefs and behavior” (23). Most of the essays in PN argue for a different kind of naturalism that pragmatism presents, where the major pragmatists are considered (Peirce, Dewey, and James) and their ideas appropriated in view of the light pragmatic naturalism (Part I)

sheds on questions regarding religion (Part II), democracy (essays by Jonathon Kahn and Jeffrey Stout), and experience more generally (Part IV).

One of the virtues of pragmatic naturalism, I think, is that it reflexively reflects on its own evolving conception of naturalism. Wayne Proudfoot makes the important distinction between “*naturalistic* accounts of beliefs and practices as products of humans regarded as natural creatures and the *naturalizing* of concepts, beliefs, and practices in a way that assumes them to be naturally given and occludes their social and historical origins and development” (102). For example, consolidating the complexity of religious beliefs into “thin” evolutionary considerations (often subject to indignant charges of reductionism) falls in the latter category, which the former “thick” pragmatic naturalism (deploying, for example, Nietzschean genealogies or Foucaultian strata) seeks to avoid. Still, one may wonder whether pragmatic naturalism, no matter how thick, fundamentally misses the import of deep religious experience, the nature of spirituality, and the centrality of various transfigurative modalities; in other words, just what constitutes the field of experience?

Nancy Frankenberry represents a contemporary pragmatist position honoring the analytic sentiment that language goes all the way down, where experience—religious or otherwise—concerns “the things discussable in terms of the human ability to have and ascribe sentential attitudes” (223). Tacit knowing

apparently figures little in this accounting of religious experience (even more so for claims to prereflective or ineffable experience), as the tacit dimension would be relegated to a role outside the space of reasons/sentential attitudes that delimits the bounds of experience. But is experience conceptual through and through?

Terry Godlove considers a Kantian nonconceptualism (which he compares to Schleiermacher's view on piety and prereflective experience) that blurs the line between "epistemological and religious reflection" (253). On this differing interpretation of Kant, first offered by Robert Hanna and running against the mainstream view that all experience is conceptual, we "stand in" the "grip of the given." Although sounding like the "myth of the given," it actually seeks to turn this view on its head (employing the embodied metaphors of "grip" and "standing in"), as we always and already have "an inherently spatiotemporally situated, egocentrically-centered, biologically/neurobiologically embodied, pre-reflectively conscious, skillfully perceptual and practical grip on things in our world" (255). While offering a point of contact with Polanyi's view that all knowing is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowing (and also contact with contemporary non-Cartesian accounts of embodied knowing), what is interesting is that Godlove does not go the Polanyian route but instead lingers on the outskirts of the standard view; for his question isn't whether tacit knowing grounds all epistemological projects, but "whether we can isolate the nonconceptual aspect

of empirical cognition in the sense of entertaining it itself as a conscious state. Can we 'have' a Kantian nonconceptual experience" (256)? For Polanyi this isn't really a question worth asking, as it trades in Cartesian "contraband" (and from a cognitive science point of view, it begs the question that the Kantian picture of how concepts are formed is accurate). Thus the key marker distinguishing Polanyi from Godlove's reflections on Kant and Schleiermacher is that nonconceptual content is still essentially beholden to the space of reasons (267)—which Schleiermacher seeks to move beyond, and which for Polanyi fundamentally misses the point of tacit knowing's open-ended relations to experience (and the rich ways that the space of reasons is funded by the prethetic).

The last essay brings us full circle to pragmatism, naturalism, and the bounds of experience. The issue earlier mentioned looms in James Wetzel's essay: the suspicion that pragmatic naturalism, no matter how thick, fundamentally misses the import of deep religious experience, the nature of spirituality, and the centrality of various transfigurative modalities. For in pragmatically inquiring into these kinds of limit-experiences, the line appears irretrievably blurred between content naturalism and methodological naturalism (the Polanyian intertwining of ontological questions and our projected epistemic-ontologies). A bit of contextual background for PN helps to situate Wetzel's inquiry. The contributors by and large are part of what can be characterized

as a conservative contemporary pragmatism: PN is dedicated to Proudfoot's earlier work in philosophy of religion (especially his book *Religious Experience*), which has strong affinities with Donald Davidson's view that language goes all the way down regarding the fundamental conceptuality organizing the field of experience. The view that Wetzel questions presents conservative pragmatism cast in a disenchanted world, whereby as historical beings we define what is meaningful; the process of making-and-being-made places significance on the activities and habits we choose to construct, entertain, and re-form. Conservative pragmatism thus folds deep religious experience (etc.) into naturalism's field, as an ingredient of its re-forming project.

Wetzel is hesitant to make this modernist move, and thereby implicitly creates room for questioning the conservative approach to pragmatism. In other words, there isn't only one narrative for what pragmatism is, what naturalism's bounds are and what its relations to pragmatism are or should be, and what conception we ought to adopt regarding significance and our place in the cosmos.¹ Inverting William James' "piecemeal supernaturalism" (which mixes the ideal and real worlds), Wetzel opts for "piecemeal naturalism," which "cedes the domain of causes to nature, but without making too much of causes" (284), most especially when it comes to the domain of values (from a Polanyian viewpoint, a domain of constructed ideals that occur on an emergent level of being

heterarchically enabled, in piecemeal fashion, by other "lower" levels). So does this mean that value, purpose, etc. are cosmically vapid—that the universe has no telos, naturalism is inherently secular, pragmatism's account of the construction of value is essentially Protagorean, and so forth?

Wetzel offers another option that should be of interest to Polanyians: piecemeal naturalism "is the reminder that some opacities are not mysteries to be fathomed but bricks in the edifice of humility" (294). A key exemplar is what he terms the "secret oracle," embodied by Christ-as-teacher, which reveals the core wisdom of "giving and receiving love" (291). Such oracularity stands in opposition to an idol of supernaturalism: "a supernatural *cause*, as far as I can make it out, is not very supernatural. It is best cast as the tyrannical power to synopsize parts and fit them wholly within one, jealously singular perspective on the good" (291). This synoptic supernaturalism contrasts with the sort of open-ended, piecemeal naturalism that, I suggest, brings us to key considerations of Polanyian tradition(s) and discovery(ies). Two questions are again raised that this seasoned, penetrating collection of essays inspires: Is Polanyi best viewed as a pragmatist? And is his program fruitfully cast under the expanding domain of (pragmatic) naturalism? These are tacit, personalistic matters for Polanyians to contemplate and explore.

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¹Walter Gulick's (as usual) insightful piece in TAD 46.1 recommends focusing on "more precise terminology" (58) rather than quibbling over the "ambiguous ontology-epistemology distinction" (59). But lurking in the background of Gulick's "more robust" (59) recommendation is a metaphysical presumption lying at the heart of the "quibble" (55), which is revealed when he claims that there "are degrees of significance but not of reality" (59). This brings us full circle to issues raised in PN: what is experience and what are its bounds? For Gulick's focus on "significance" (59) and "intellectual traction" (58) are as much intertwined with the "metaphysics" of the ontology-epistemology distinction as this metaphysics is with conceptions of pragmatism, conceptions of naturalism, and their intimate relations to experience and its bounds. In brief, it isn't clear that Polanyi "confused matters by saying that significant things like persons and problems are more real than cobblestones" (59)—they may in fact be key quibbles worth harnessing.

Rolnick, Philip A. *Origins: God, Evolution, and the Question of the Cosmos*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015. Pp. 264. ISBN: 978-1-60258-369-6. \$29.95.

This work is a clearly developed exposition of the view that science and Christian faith are compatible and need not be at odds as they are sometimes presented in the media. Rolnick begins by explaining how a Christian should respond to grace by accepting the reasonable search for truth through scientific inquiry.

Next, he analyzes four issues sustaining evolutionary theory that are sometimes taken to challenge faith. Random mutations and natural selection are often

presented as sufficient in themselves to account for evolutionary development and thus eliminate the need for a divine creator. The struggle for survival over eons with many more losers than winners might challenge a view of creation as the effect of a loving God. And the acknowledgement that human and animal life are on a biological continuum might lead one to doubt whether humans are actually unique, as the belief that humans are an "image of God" might imply. Rolnick carefully disengages the scientific claims being upheld in these issues from the typically hidden naturalistic assumptions that surround them, analogous to the way Charles Taylor uncovers the exclusive humanism presumed by modernity. When this is accomplished, he argues, the scientific claims are in fact helpful ways to develop and strengthen religious faith. Regarding the issue of human uniqueness, for example, Rolnick acknowledges the biological continuities between higher animal forms and human life, but then points to the leap afforded humans by external factors, the ability to use language and develop culture. As Teilhard de Chardin pointed out over fifty years ago this "noosphere" opens human life to a realm transcending the biological and aiming toward the infinite.

Rolnick then moves on to a cosmic framework to explore the implications of current cosmological theory where the universe has been unfolding from a singularity over 13 billion years ago. Commonly called "the big bang," this event put in motion the processes that