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BOOK REVIEWS

Naturalism, by Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. Pp. 132 \$16.00 (paper)

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This volume appears in the “Interventions” series—“the product of the work carried out at the Center of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Nottingham.” Each book in the series promises consciously to address issues that appear at the interface between the two disciplines of philosophy and theology. *Naturalism* is no exception to this, as it considers philosophical critiques of both theism and naturalism and explores the contributions that theism might make to our understanding of freedom, consciousness, and value.

Goetz and Taliaferro (G&T) begin with the acknowledgement that there is no real consensus as to just what naturalism amounts to. (Someone in a hair salon spotted me with the title, and, judging from her initial, curious questions, assumed it to involve volleyball and sunbathing.) Alvin Plantinga has recently compared “naturalism” to “pornography”—you know what it is when you spot it, but it is very hard to define. Presumably, it is the view that, as C. S. Lewis once put it, “nature is the whole show”—that reality is exhausted by “natural” phenomena and that the only good explanations of things are “naturalistic.” But this leaves us to determine what is meant by “nature.”

One virtue of the Goetz-Taliaferro book is their careful distinction between two general varieties of naturalism, “strict” and “broad.” While all naturalists will agree that “nature” exhausts reality and see this to entail a denial of the “supernatural” (chiefly, God and the soul), strict naturalists maintain, and broad naturalists deny, that “nature itself is whatever will be disclosed by the ideal natural sciences, especially physics” (p. 7). Arthur Danto apparently would have found Richard Lewontin’s warning, “We cannot allow a divine foot in the door,” too anemic. He described naturalism as “repudiating the view that there exists, or could exist, any entities or events which lie, in principle, beyond the scope of scientific explanation” (p. 14), thus securing all *possible* doors against such intrusion.



But G&T observe that there is no room for persons of any sort—divine or human—on strict naturalism. In chapter 1, “The Challenge of Strict Naturalism,” we find David Papineau suggesting that a complete physics would eclipse psychology in that all the facts there are, including putative psychological facts, are in principle describable in the language of physics (p. 15). Thus, G&T write, “Strict naturalism, as an ideal scientific philosophy, seeks to include all aspects of reality within a comprehensive and unified perspective that excludes anything that is either conscious, or psychological, or mental in nature” (p. 16). It is common knowledge that naturalists have no place for any sort of consciousness or teleology at the cosmic level: “Man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving,” Russell said. But the same would appear to be true of my decision to order a beer. There is no place for the irreducibly conscious or teleological on this view, and this much is acknowledged by its proponents. Thus, Daniel Dennett and Georges Rey insist that the conscious must be explained in terms of the non-conscious if it is to be explained at all. And our perception of ourselves as the purposive originators of our thoughts and deeds is an understandable mistake for “information processing systems” such as us (p. 17).

Susan Blackmore seems to have taken this to heart. “I long ago concluded that there is no substantial or persistent self to be found in experience, let alone in the brain. I have become quite uncertain as to whether there really is anything it is like to be me” (p. 22). This has the ring of something confessed in confidence from a couch, but it would appear to be a corollary of the strict naturalist’s agenda. The first person “what it is *like* to be me” perspective eludes the third person language of science.

In chapter 2 (“Strict Naturalism versus a Natural View of Persons”), G&T defend “a natural view of persons” as irreducibly conscious and teleological sources of action against influential arguments for reduction or elimination. In particular, the “argument from causal closure” comes to the fore, as presented by the likes of Jaegwon Kim. According to this argument, every physical event has a causally sufficient physical antecedent so that there is never room for an irreducibly mental cause to produce physical effects. Even if they were thought to exist, souls, like vice presidents, would be without any real influence in the world. Further, causal closure is an indispensable methodological commitment of the physical sciences, including the science of the brain.

G&T reply that the causal closure argument ultimately begs the question against the dualist. Kim’s scientist must be committed to causal closure only if he is already committed to strict naturalism (p. 35). The authors observe the conditional or “iffy” nature of lawlike physical explanation. We discover the dispositional nature of things—the “propensities of particles”—so that some set of physical causal antecedents C proves sufficient for some effect E. So we observe that *if* C obtains, then E will be observed, and we formulate laws with justified confidence. We might say that the link between C and E is causally closed. But this does not in itself

preclude a different set of causal antecedents C^* that includes forces non-physical in nature so that some relevantly different effect E^* results. And perhaps E may be had by other means, including the irreducibly mental. To reject this possibility from the outset is, at the same time, to assume the truth of strict naturalism (p. 42).

As G&T observe, and as Kim has made clear in recent work, the argument from causal closure, if successful, precludes mental causation on *any* sort of view that holds out for the irreducibly mental (p. 30). That is, it is just as effective against currently popular versions of property dualism (G&T's "broad naturalism") as it is against substance dualism, so that the resulting view is an implausible form of epiphenomenalism. In fact, it is difficult to see how the naturalist of any sort—strict or broad—is in a position to deny causal closure. The property dualist must insist that mental properties supervene upon physical properties. But if there is causal closure at the physical level, and the instantiation of the base properties is sufficient for that of supervenient properties, then epiphenomenalism seems unavoidable. Kim thus argues that mental causation may be preserved only if some program of reduction is successful. But, he adds, candidly, "reductionism may not be true."

G&T press the case against reduction. They cite McGinn. "You can stare into a living, conscious brain . . . but you will not thereby see what the subject is experiencing, the conscious state itself" (p. 32). Michael Lockwood confesses that the language of physics or other relevant sciences, once sanitized of all explicit references to mental properties or events, is not even "remotely capable of capturing what is distinctive about consciousness." He adds that, were it not for a prior "deep-seated conviction" that current physical science "has essentially got reality taped," the reductionist programmes on offer would not be given any serious consideration (pp. 32–33). As G&T observe, in the case of other identifications involving natural kinds, such as $\text{water}=\text{H}_2\text{O}$, to understand the microstructure is to grasp the phenomenon itself. Not so in the case of the putative identity of, say, pain and the firing of C-fibers. Later in the chapter, G&T urge that, whereas the physical structure involved in an experience of pain is essentially compositional in nature, the intrinsic nature of pain itself is essentially simple, and this difference alone is enough to foil an identity claim (p. 49).

Kim has recently urged a "functional identity" of a limited class of cognitive properties (e.g., "To be in pain, by definition, is to be in a state which is caused by tissue damage and which in turn causes wincing and groans"). But he suggests that *qualia*, such as *what it is like* to be in pain, resist such a functional reduction. But this entails eliminativism with regard to the seeming intrinsic nature of such experiences, and the fortunes of such a proposal would seem to depend upon the plausibility of the suggestion that there is really nothing that it is like to be in pain—what G&T call the "ouchiness" of pain. But isn't there more to pain (and to Susan Blackmore)—something that it is *like* to be in pain (or to be Blackmore)—

than a system of inputs and outputs? I, for one, think that there is something that it is like to be astonished at assertions to the contrary.

Chapter 3, "Naturalism and the Soul," is given to a defense of substance dualism against some rather forceful objections. In particular, G&T entertain an argument by Sosa, who argues that causal relations supervene upon certain non-causal conditions, and these include spatial relations. Cartesian dualists conceive of minds as essentially immaterial and non-spatial. And so, Cartesian minds cannot be spatially related to physical bodies and thus cannot causally interact with those bodies.

G&T counter by observing that Sosa's view assumes that causal properties are possessed extrinsically, supervening as they do upon more basic non-causal and spatial properties. Indeed, this assumption parallels a similar view that numerical identity is derivative of more basic spatial relations. To this one may reply that, on the contrary, identity is intrinsic and ontologically more basic than such relations. Similarly, G&T urge that causal properties should be viewed as intrinsic to the agent. "The power of an agent and the capacity of a patient are ontologically irreducible and intrinsic causal features of those objects. They are not derivative properties" (p. 60). Of course, though causal properties may be intrinsic, causal relations may themselves be dependent upon various non-causal conditions, but it is not obvious that those conditions must include spatial relations.

G&T think this latter conclusion stands despite Kim's argument for spatial relations as necessary conditions. Kim argues, in effect, that any two intrinsically indiscernible objects must also be indiscernible with regard to their causal powers (because those powers are plausibly thought to be either identical to or supervenient upon the intrinsic properties). However, it is possible for them to exercise those powers differently. The difference must therefore be accounted for by appeal to differences in their extrinsic properties or relations, and spatial relations fit the bill nicely (p. 63).

G&T reply, "It seems as if the fundamental issue is whether it is possible for a nonspatial object to exist." They add that "if it is possible for it to exist, then it is not obvious in strictly a priori or conceptual terms that it cannot interact causally with an object located in space" (p. 63).

It is not immediately clear to me that this is, in fact, the fundamental issue. Kim is concerned with discernibility, but the argument is not that, apart from discernible spatial relations, intrinsic indiscernibility entails numerical identity. As G&T have already suggested, identity is ontologically prior to spatial relations. (If one were to ask regarding two intrinsically indiscernible and non-spatial objects, A and B, "In virtue of what are A and B distinct?" the correct answer is "In virtue of their distinctness.") Rather, Kim seeks "a principled way of distinguishing intrinsically indiscernible objects *in causal situations*" (emphasis added).

Kim's worries seem not to be limited to a principled distinction *among* objects. Suppose that, at *t*, I am contemplating Jaegwon Kim, but then, at *t*₁, I have thoughts of Kim Basinger. I have undergone no changes among my intrinsic properties, so they are indiscernible between *t* and *t*₁, and the

same is true of my corresponding powers and potentials. How have I managed this feat? What explains this difference in the exercise of my powers? To suppose that the differences must be analyzed into differences in recipes consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic properties and relations (so that any two objects that are indiscernible with regard to all of these will also be behaviorally indiscernible), is just to beg the question against the libertarian appeal to irreducibly teleological explanations. To insist, further, that the differences must be spatial or compositional in nature is to commit a similar offense against the Cartesian dualist, not to mention the theist.

However all of this may be, the following proposition—*an immaterial and nonspatial thing, A, produced an effect in B, which is material*—is not obviously a contradiction nor would it seem to entail one. And so G&T appear to be correct in noting that there is no obvious a priori reason for ruling it out. As they confess at the close of the chapter, the mind-body connection remains mysterious according to dualism, but perhaps the mystery is simply a function of the fact that the connection is brute and thus, in principle, admits of no further analysis. As they observe, brute connections seem unavoidable on physicalism as well. G. K. Chesterton noted that everyone knows that pumpkins always produce pumpkins. “What nobody knows is why they should not produce elephants and giraffes.” We might suppose that, in Chesterton’s day, pumpkins were “black boxes,” so to speak. We have since cracked the pumpkin genome and understand that pumpkin helices are programmed to reproduce after their kind. Of course, this involves connections that either are or are not open to further analysis. We may proceed for a time opening boxes within boxes, but on an ideal natural science, there is a fundamental level of explanation at which the answer to the question “Why is β always occasioned by α ?” is “It just is.” The appeal, then, is to intrinsic causal powers possessed by microparticles. G&T ask, “If this is not a deeply vexing mystery for physical causation, it should not be one for non-physical causation” (p. 70).

G&T devote a portion of chapter 3 to a discussion of “non-Cartesian dualism” under the heading “Why Not Locate Souls in Space?” Most of what they have to say here is in dialogue with Kim’s critique of such a proposal, and so one is left to piece the view together out of inferences from that exchange. The basic suggestion is that souls may be conceived as being “located in the same spatial framework” as bodies. After all, it *seems* that the conscious part of me is found wherever my body is, so if I am otherwise convinced of dualism, this may seem a natural view. Thus, souls have spatial properties, but are immaterial and, presumably, unextended—on the order of geometric points. The basic soul-body “pairing account” is thus one of spatial contiguity rather than causation. The view apparently has some affinity to the Jain view of the soul or *jiva*, which literally occupies the body and fills it as light fills a room.

Chapter 4, “Naturalism, Consciousness and Values,” assesses “broad naturalism” in its attempt at preserving “consciousness and values within a fundamentally physicalist or materialist naturalism” (p. 71). Kim

observes that this sort of “minimal physicalism” is “seductive” but also “a piece of wishful thinking.” As we have already noted, Kim urges an argument from causal closure (“The Supervenience/Exclusion Argument”) that reduces property dualism to epiphenomenalism. G&T consider “The Problem of Emergence,” which arises out of considerations of both the striking difference between conscious states and the physical processes from which they are said to emerge and the contingency of the relationship between them. The broad naturalist resists the reduction of the mental to the physical, but is committed to the supervenience of the former upon the latter. Minimally, this requires that certain sets of physical properties or combinations of physical phenomena are sufficient for mental properties or conscious phenomena. But it seems possible for the physical properties to be instantiated without their attendant mental properties. Searle suggests that thought experiments that purport to discover worlds that are physically indiscernible from the actual world but are devoid of conscious phenomena involve a form of “cheating” (p. 77). Of course, if we already *know* that mental properties just are constituted by physical properties and thus supervenient in this way, then we must agree. But this is precisely the point in dispute, and apart from such a stipulation such worlds appear to be conceivable. (Similarly, if Hitler is depraved, and his depravity is constituted by some combination of his natural properties, then there is no possible world in which someone is naturally indiscernible from Hitler but is not depraved. But this observation alone will hardly satisfy the moral skeptic who wonders why we should think that moral properties like depravity exist in the first place.)

Chapter 4 also includes an assessment of broad naturalist attempts at preserving objective values. G&T begin by noting that the most common naturalist account of values “appeals to the concept of evolution” (p. 86). This is followed immediately by a consideration of the views of Michael Ruse and Edward Wilson who have maintained that our sense of moral obligation is “an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes in order to get us to cooperate.” Their discussion also takes in the likes of Richard Dawkins and Darwin himself. One might have expected here a discussion of various contemporary ethical naturalists, such as the so-called “Cornell Realists,” who have argued that moral properties are either identical to or supervenient upon natural properties. I, for one, think that the naturalist’s commitment to evolutionary theory poses an undercutting defeater for our moral beliefs in general, but such an argument meets some stiff resistance from ethical naturalists, who would likely agree with Daniel Dennett that Ruse and Wilson are guilty of “greedy reductionism” in their assumption that the explanation for human morality is essentially genetic in nature. With Philip Kitcher, they might suggest that evolution has simply equipped us with the rational faculties necessary for moral discovery.

The final chapter, “Beyond Naturalism,” is given to a defense of the coherence of theism against a variety of naturalist critiques. Not the least of these is the suggestion that the very notion of an immaterial conscious

mind that interacts with the created cosmos is incoherent. G&T assess such critiques and argue persuasively that the charges of incoherence are either just overstated (as no problems of a strictly logical nature are evident) or involve an illicit assumption of naturalist or physicalist tenets.

An appendix to the volume briefly develops and defends the so-called "Argument From Reason"—a perhaps more rigorous heir of the argument presented by C. S. Lewis and others—with the conclusion that naturalism is ultimately self-defeating since the view has implications that would undermine the very arguments that might otherwise support it.

Overall, Goetz and Taliaferro have managed to explain and assess naturalism in a way that is at once concise, careful, and clear. I know of no other work engaging metaphysical naturalism that matches this one for these virtues. They allow leading naturalists to speak for themselves, sometimes at length, but mere "cut-and-paste" is avoided by skillful editing and lively interaction with the views discussed. The result is that the reader is likely to come away with a better understanding of the worldview itself as well as the most significant difficulties that confront it. And the book is a model of careful philosophical argumentation and worldview assessment. It should appeal to a wide audience that includes professional philosophers, undergraduates and graduate students, seminar-ians, pastors, and interested laypersons. And it should serve as a fine text for a number of courses, including introduction to philosophy, philosophy of religion, and apologetics. I have, for many years, taught a course titled Major Worldviews, which features naturalism and theism, among other views. This book should become a staple for such a course.

Essays in the Philosophy of Religion, by Philip L. Quinn. Edited by Christian Miller. Clarendon Press, 2006. Pp. 315. \$49.95 (paper)

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This posthumously published collection of essays is the best of books and the worst of books. It is the best of books: Philip L. Quinn's influential and thought-provoking essays provide a scintillating tour de force of some of the most important topics in philosophy of religion in the past four decades. It is the worst of books: It hauntingly reminds us that he is no longer with us to help us think through these important issues. Despite reminding us of our loss, this volume furnishes us with a golden opportunity to consider the breadth and depth of Quinn's omnifarious interests in the philosophy of religion.

The book begins with a memorably poignant foreword by Eleonore Stump. Editor Christian B. Miller, a former Quinn student, next offers a fine survey of Quinn's life and work as well as the essays in the volume. The book reprints fourteen essays, divided into six sections that provide