

Uwe Meixner · Albert Newen (eds.)

# Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy

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## Philosophiegeschichte und logische Analyse

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Emotionen oder die ethisch-politischen Themen der Rhetorik, in die aristotelische Dialektik eingebettet und vor diesem Hintergrund zu genießen.

Dr. Jörg Hardy, Freie Universität Berlin

Owen Gingerich: *God's Universe*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2006. ISBN: 978-0674023703; £ 10.95, \$ 16.95, EUR 17.47 (hardback); 160 pages

Owen Gingerich is a Harvard professor emeritus of astronomy and of the history of science. By theistic confession he is a Mennonite. *God's Universe* is another of his attempts to argue for a reconciliation of Christian faith in a creator (71, 96) and science. The book's three chapters are based on public lectures Gingerich gave at Harvard University. The three chapters are framed by a foreword by Peter J. Gomes, a prologue and an epilogue. The book's overall argument runs as follows: (1) Intelligent Design (ID) is not science; (2) the question whether or not God is the designer of the universe is not a scientific question but a metaphysical one; (3) the notion of design used by adherents of ID needs qualification: "There may be no architect with a plan for the final product, but there is the designer of the set of little interlocking pattern parts" (37); (4) science cannot rule out divine intervention; and (5) some scientific discoveries render the universe miraculous, like the fine-tuning of the universe to enable life on earth. This motivates us to link science and Christian faith in a metaphysical framework. The argument concludes thus: (6) it is reasonable to believe in a God who created the world. I will comment on each step in this order.

I agree that ID is not science. Gingerich is right in claiming that adherents of ID fail to establish ID as a serious alternative to Darwinian evolution theory. This is no news.

I also agree that it is a metaphysical question whether or not God has anything to do with the universe in its current outlook. But Gingerich apparently fails to see that metaphysics has changed since the scientific revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The essay's overall argument requires a very strict distinction between metaphysics and science. Gingerich repeatedly makes the point that science is based on methodological atheism and that scientific facts could in principle be taken into account by any kind of metaphysics. But this is not correct (anymore). Let us consider only the debate over free will. The traditional metaphysical notion of free will has been ruled out by scientific evidence. We know today that any notion of free will which rests on the idea of mental causation is incompatible with current scientific evidence. This is not to say that we did not have philosophical evidence previously. We have long known that something is wrong with a concept of free will which implies mental causation; scientific evidence is but the tip of the iceberg. Still, scientific evidence has been revolutionizing our way of thinking about ourselves as free agents. Of course there are still some metaphysicians out there who tell the opposite concerning free will. But I dare say that these metaphysicians have the same understanding of metaphysics as Gingerich.

I would like to challenge this way of doing metaphysics, since science has gained competence in questions which traditionally have been reserved for metaphysics. I have highlighted one example. But I have more reasons to challenge Gingerich's notion of metaphysics. A theological argument challenges the sharp distinction between science and metaphysics which disables Gingerich from reconciling the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature as two independent ways to understand God. Scripture does not deal only with the metaphysical questions Gingerich has in mind, like why is there anything rather than nothing, or why we exist at all. Scripture also teaches ethics, and, as such, is very ambiguous. To settle concrete ethical problems moral theology must also rely on scientific evidence. For example,

regarding the question concerning homosexuality, today's scientific evidence points to an understanding of homosexuality in terms of sexual orientation. This is a concept scripture cannot tell us anything about that sheds new light on scripture's understanding of human sexuality. It would be foolish to argue that scripture's metaphysics of human sexuality counts regardless of any scientific insights into human sexuality.

Concerning Gingerich's qualification of the notion of design one cannot but get the feeling that it has Deism written all over it. As such it hardly qualifies as helpful to reconcile Christian faith and science. According to Christian theology, God has been creating everything continuously and did not only create the prerequisites of the universe in its current outlook.

I agree with Gingerich that science cannot rule out divine intervention. But this is not because scientific evidence cannot advance an argument wherein divine intervention is rendered highly implausible. Instead, the problem with the notion of divine intervention is its relationship to causality. And the notion of causality is a metaphysical notion, not a scientific one. So we come back to the relation between science and metaphysics. Besides Gingerich's unacceptable concept of metaphysics, he conceals the absence of a widely accepted notion of causality among philosophers which allows for divine intervention. There are only two metaphysicians I can think of who are aware of this problem for theism: Uwe Meixner and Daniel von Wachter. The first presents a metaphysical theory of causality which appears hardly reconcilable with science, as it allows for double causation. This partly explains Meixner's defense of substance dualism in his discussion of the mind-body problem. Wachter's notion, however, looks promising as he tries to defend a tendency theory of causation. But I am afraid that even such a theory would not be of any help to support Gingerich's theistic understanding of the universe.

This brings me directly to step five of his overall argument. The fact that the universe generates awe as it appears miraculous is hardly evidence in support for Christian faith in creation. The crucial question is whether or not a natural explanation of the universe can be expressed sufficiently in terms of our best current scientific theories. I myself happen to think that the answer is yes. What cannot be answered, however, is questions like why is there anything rather than nothing, or why is there good, or why is there evil, etc. Christian faith answers this question by claiming that everything is due to God's love. The way he created us, one might argue in consequence, is intelligible in a scientific framework. This implies that God created us by natural selection. However, this in turn gives rise to the question of why a good God decided to create us in such a cruel way. But Gingerich does not make it to this level of debate over the rationality of Christian faith. He suggests that the scientific framework is not sufficient. The fine tuning of the universe can hardly be explained scientifically, he suggests. There are transitions in evolution which cannot be explained by evolution theory, he claims. These gaps in knowledge are filled with divine intervention. This is not only a bad performance of the God-of-the-Gaps theology, it is also a contradictory way to use open scientific questions in favor of theism. Gingerich tries to provide scientific evidence for a metaphysical claim, but his notion of metaphysics does not allow this strategic move.

To summarize my impression of Gingerich's overall argument. I do agree with his defense of methodological naturalism in science against adherents of ID (73). I disagree, however, with his notion that the big questions of the existence of the universe is part of a free-floating metaphysical inquiry (70). The bottom-up metaphysics I prefer enables philosophers of religion to take into greater account the scientific evidence in support of metaphysical claims. This is not to deny that the crucial questions are metaphysical questions and that there is no unequivocal way from scientific facts to atheism. But Gingerich has failed to show us any plausible way from scientific facts to theism. The conclusion he eventually

draws that Christian faith in a creator is reasonable is true, I believe. But not because of the reasons Gingerich offers.

Prof. Yiftach J. H. Fehige, University of Toronto

Mark Textor (Ed.): *The Austrian Contribution to Analytic Philosophy*. (London Studies in the History of Philosophy). London, New York: Routledge 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0415404051; £ 60.00, \$ 100.00 (hardback); 336 pages

A growing interest in the origins and developments of the tradition of thoughts of so-called “Analytic Philosophy” (which dominated philosophy in the Northern hemisphere during the last decades) is to be acknowledged for the period since the end of the Second World War. Defining distinctive characteristics of this philosophical tradition presents a problem *per se* which can not be dealt with in these review pages. Furthermore, it is questionable whether it is possible (and if it makes sense at all) to give an exact definition of categories such as “Analytic” or “Continental Philosophy”. In this respect we read in the introduction of “The Austrian Contribution to Analytic Philosophy” (quoted here as ACAP): “Well, what is Analytic Philosophy? [...] Do you have a good definition up your sleeve?” No, but I don’t need one. Analytic Philosophy is a tradition held together by the use of a distinctive family of concepts, acceptance of specific assumptions, problems and methods for their solution” (ACAP 1). In consequence, the best approach to the history of Analytic Philosophy consists in dealing with (the history of) its peculiar family of concepts, with its specific assumptions as well as with its problems and methods for solutions. Notoriously enough, this thematic context has been developed by authors such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, George E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein and others since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By far the largest part of the studies regarding the history of the theoretical framework investigates the role of these thinkers as founders of the tradition of “Analytic Philosophy”.

A second genealogical line for Analytic Philosophy must indeed be mentioned, though its authentic exploration started only within the last decades. According to this additional lineage, several characteristic aspects of Analytic Philosophy should be traced back to so-called “Austrian Philosophy”. Here two major problems arise. Firstly, a gap exists between this general statement and its justification: In other words, if Austrian Philosophy should be considered as a (possibly major) source of inspiration for the Analytic tradition, then we must ask: *Which* are the concepts, the assumptions or the problems that Analytic Philosophy inherited from Austrian Philosophy? In this respect, historians of philosophy have acknowledged “connections” as for instance the following ones: The dispute between Alexius Meinong and Bertrand Russell about non-existing objects, the discussion between Edmund Husserl and Gottlob Frege about psychologism and semantics, the relations of the *Lviv* (Polish: *Lwów*; German: *Lemberg*) School of Logic with the Brentano School (particularly through Husserl, Meinong, Kazimierz Twardowski) are better-known cases. However, in order to support the strong thesis of a (quasi-) affiliation between Analytic and Austrian Philosophy, the contacts mentioned remain too episodic if not sporadic. We will see that one robust aim of ACAP is to corroborate the existence of such an additional lineage by reconstructing further important binding ties which have been underestimated, if not completely overseen, in the literature.

In addition we face a (second major) problem of meaning: What does “Austrian Philosophy” denote? This term, obviously, is as problematic as “Analytic Philosophy”: “Analytic” seems to refer to a mere philosophical attribute, whereas “Austrian” as such, notoriously, is a geographic and a political characterization. Thus, at first glance we could understand “Austrian Philosophy” as denoting a kind of philosophy which is typical for Austria in