

## Book Reviews

Harriet A. Harris, Christopher J. Insole (eds.), *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Aldershot 2005, VII + 201 pp., ISBN 0754631419.

*Faith and Philosophical Analysis* is a collection of essays discussing the impact of analytic philosophy on the contemporary philosophy of religion. As it is impossible to review all of them here in any detail, I will focus on some of the arguments which concern the all important question of what is the way forward for philosophers of religion today.

The very titles of the essays give an idea of the diversity of attitudes towards the issue under consideration: "Staking a claim for metaphysics", by Basil Mitchell; "The value and Christian roots of analytical philosophy of religion", by Richard Swinburne; "Transforming metaphysics? Revisioning Christianity in the light of analytical philosophy", by Elizabeth Burns; "The Wittgensteinian revolution", by the late Cyril Barrett S.J.; "The God's eye point of view: A divine ethic", by Charles Taliaferro; "What's wrong with the God's eye point of view: A constructive feminist critique of the ideal observer theory", by Pamela Sue Anderson; "Does analytical philosophy clip our wings? Reformed epistemology as a test case", by Harriet A. Harris; "Analytical Thought and the Myth of Anglo-American Philosophy", by G. W. Kimura; "Philosophy of Religion: Its Relation to Theology", by Ann Loades; "Modernism and the minimal God: on the empty spirituality of the God of the philosophers" by Giles Fraser; and "Political liberalism, analytical philosophy of religion and the forgetting of history", by Christopher Insole.

Most of the contributors to the volume evaluate analytic philosophy of religion by focusing on its history, but they also manage to communicate, more or less explicitly, their convictions concerning the way philosophy of religion should be done in the future. Although the papers in the volume highlight different lessons to be learned from the development of analytic philosophy of religion, hardly any of the authors comes across as an uncritical enthusiast of analytical philosophy. The collection may be almost evenly divided into three groups of authors, representing various approaches to analytical philosophy. Some of them (namely Pamela Sue Anderson, Greg Kimura, Giles Fraser), come out

with what is more of a critique of analytical philosophy of religion from the viewpoint of continental philosophy, rather than a suggestion how the analytic approach might be supplemented. They strongly question the desirability of what they take to be the characteristic aspirations of analytical philosophy of religion which, in their opinion, leads ultimately to distortion, alienation, and reduction of religious faith. Other authors (e.g. Harriet Harris, Elizabeth Burns and Christopher Insole) are more ambivalent, appreciating certain aspects of the analytical approach to philosophy of religion, while also voicing their worries about its limitations.

The most distinguished contributors to the volume, the nestor of British philosophers of religion, Basil Mitchell, and his successor as the Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford, Richard Swinburne, give a generally positive answer to the question about the impact of analytical philosophy on the practice of philosophy of religion. However, even Mitchell and Swinburne, who would be considered by many the archetypal analytical philosophers of religion, present themselves as appreciating many of the characteristics associated with analytical philosophy, while distancing themselves from any sectarian attachment to the analytical movement. They appear to put “analytical” in front of “philosophy” as nothing more than equivalent to putting “good” in front of it. They are also more than aware that it is a gross exaggeration to hold that what is “good” in the analytical tradition can be found exclusively in 20th-century anglophone philosophy. Understanding analytical philosophy as just good philosophy, Swinburne traces its history back to antiquity, and he sees the origins of analytical philosophy of *religion* in the writings of the Church Fathers (!).

Swinburne’s reflections on the subject matter seem to imply that after learning some valuable lessons from the successes and failures of analytical philosophy, we would do better if we bracketed the term “analytical” and simply practiced the best philosophy of religion we can, using the best available tools. Although it cannot be said that Swinburne values the contributions to the philosophy of religion made by feminist writers (represented in the volume by Pamela Sue Anderson) or by the enthusiasts of the “Wittgensteinian revolution” (like Cyrill Barrett), and although in the present book he expresses an obvious contempt for Kant and all post-Kantian philosophy, he does recommend drawing on what is best in various philosophical traditions of the past and present. This is a proposal which the author of the present review would gladly embrace.

Still one needs to ask what are the “good things” to be learned from analytical philosophers? What are these excellent tools which,

according to Mitchell, Swinburne and Taliaferro, a philosopher of religion can borrow from the analytical tradition? The following defining characteristics of analytical philosophy are highlighted in the book by most authors: close attention to the nuances of language and an expressed allegiance to clarity in the choice of words; conceptual clarity helping to eschew ambiguities; precision in argumentation and the use of logical techniques (whether or not employing formal logic); respect for the discoveries of modern science; and, perhaps most distinctively (and most controversially), the dissection of sentence structures and the investigation of language as the best means of investigating concepts. The focus on language and meaning is grounded in the presumption, taken for granted by many analytic philosophers, that there is no better way of discovering the truth about ourselves and the world than by investigating what we think, and in turn the best way of understanding what we think is by analysing what we say. Analytical philosophers, as also the present volume shows, like to consider individual beliefs in isolation, breaking arguments down step by step. This style, no doubt, helps to clarify our thinking and to avoid reasoning which is ultimately unsound. However, the question arises whether this method suits well the philosophy of *religion*?

It seems that, on the one hand, the criticism found in Anderson and Fraser, that analytical philosophy can offer us only a thin diet of logical analysis of minute philosophical issues, is unfounded. It suffices to look into a contemporary handbook of philosophy of religion by an anglophone author to realize that it is simply not true that analytical philosophy is by nature unable to address the ultimate concerns of the human mind, such as the sense of life, the problem of suffering and evil, human freedom, religious experience, and so on. As the example of Basil Mitchell, and especially of Richard Swinburne, teaches, a philosopher who uses many of the typical analytical tools in his work and is always concerned with the justification of beliefs, probability and proof, can at the same time focus not just on the meaning of words, but on grand metaphysical questions, such as the immortality of the human soul, miracles, Revelation, Atonement, the Trinity, or even the Resurrection of Christ. Similarly, the case of the Reformed Epistemology discussed in the volume by Kimura, Harris, and Insole makes it clear that a philosopher can discuss traditional religious issues, even without trying to bracket his religious faith, while remaining analytical (Alvin Plantinga is a good example). In addition, as Ann Loades points out in her essay on the relationship between analytical philosophy and theology, in recent decades some analytical philosophers of religion, like Eleonore Stump or Norman Kretzman, managed to redeploy in their work key theological authors of the Christian tradition such as

Augustine, Anselm or Aquinas, and these thinkers can hardly be accused of dealing mainly with issues irrelevant to religious individuals.

However, from the fact that contemporary analytical philosophy of religion showed its ability to address central religious issues, does not follow that it has *all* the best methodological tools and resources to deal with these issues. Here we touch on perhaps the most interesting debate which runs through the whole book and is joined in a more or less explicit way by most of the contributors. It is the question of the desirability and possibility of bridging the analytical/continental divide in the contemporary philosophy of religion. Even though all the authors represent anglophone philosophy, and indeed nearly all of them are British (which no doubt constitutes one of the main weaknesses of the volume), the non-analytical perspectives on the philosophy of religion are given quite a prominent place. At least half of the chapters include extensive reflections on whether and how analytical philosophy of religion could be supplemented by what other strands of contemporary philosophy of religion can provide.

Greg Kimura provides perhaps the most convincing criticism of the claim often voiced by anglophone philosophers that analytical philosophy is synonymous with “good philosophy”. First of all, Kimura argues forcefully that the term “Anglo-American philosophy” is hardly synonymous with the term “analytical philosophy”, given the fact that there exists a vibrant tradition running from British Romanticism, through American transcendentalism and contemporary neopragmatism, which in some important respects has more similarities with continental philosophy than with analytical philosophy. Kimura points to Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty as the most influential representatives of this non-analytical Anglo-American philosophy, and recommends using current reconstructions of neopragmatism with their “autobiographical” aspects absent in analytical philosophy as a valuable resource in the philosophy of religion.

Pamela Sue Anderson’s criticism of the deficiencies of analytical philosophy of religion focuses on the concerns she shares with other feminist philosophers of religion, that the “God’s eye point of view” theory (often assumed by analytical philosophers to be desirable and defended in this volume by Charles Taliaferro) carries with itself the danger of the “masculinization” of the concept of God. She argues that the theistic God pictured in the works of analytical philosophers (like Swinburne), defined in terms of power, knowledge, detachment and invulnerability is a God construed in man’s image. Anderson points out that analytical philosophy of religion fails to incorporate the acknowledgement that knowledge claims bear the marks of the knower, because knowledge-production is a social practice, engaged in by embodied,

gendered, historically and culturally located and conditioned knowers. She argues rather convincingly that analytical philosophy of religion suffers if it is built around the notion of rational subject constructed as an ahistorical, asocial and disembodied individual.

Giles Fraser makes a somewhat similar point, showing that analytical philosophy of religion tends to eliminate the way in which the experience of a religious person is always embedded within a particular context, as all experience is necessarily the experience of a particular person, in a particular place and time. Fraser criticises analytical philosophers of Swinburne's kind for focusing on the search for a common theistic core, which leads to a picture of God as a somewhat abstract Divinity. However, this criticism seems completely unfounded, as Swinburne does not confine himself to establishing a general theistic position, but in a number of books (especially in *The Christian God*) comes up with a fully developed Christian doctrine of God, which is anything but "abstract". Fraser's criticism would be even less convincing when applied to Alvin Plantinga, who argues for the rationality of all the specific Christian beliefs about God, not just the belief in some "common core" Ultimate Reality.

Christopher Insole provides a cogent argument for the claim which is in striking contrast with Fraser's (and to some extent Anderson's). He sees it as an "egalitarian" (and so desirable) tendency of the analytical philosophy that it attempts to bracket the forms of our historical conditioning and authority, which in practice often lead to intolerance, violence and mutual incomprehension. Thus the tendency characteristic of analytical philosophy to construe their arguments in a way that makes them as independent of cultural and historical positioning as possible is understood by Insole as a voluntary and magnanimous disempowering on the side of analytical philosophers.

Even if Insole is right, still the effort to bridge the analytic/continental divide, recommended by a number of contributors to *Faith and Philosophical Analysis*, is worth making, as it should result in mutual enrichment. All in all, *Faith and Philosophical Analysis* is an extremely interesting and thought-provoking collection of essays, one that makes one think that perhaps we are moving towards some kind of "post-analytical philosophy of religion", which would incorporate some achievements of continental philosophy of religion and of neopragmatism.

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Mark Rowlands, *Externalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again*,  
Acumen, Chesham, UK 2003, X + 246 pp.,  
ISBN 0773526501.

Mark Rowlands has written a book that is of much use to any philosopher interested in the internalism/externalism debate, regardless of the state of his prior knowledge concerning the subject. The book is a good (and much needed) guide to the current state of the discussion, and hence it is an invaluable source for any one who wants to start working with the subject and strives to make his way through the profusion of articles and cross-references that constitute the present state of the debate. On the other hand, it also presents an interesting, nonstandard view of the problem of externalism, and hence should seize the attention of a more experienced audience, as well.

Rowland's *Externalism* is composed of twelve thematic chapters. The opening ones are designed to play an introductory role. Rowlands tackles there the issues which jointly form the background and the inspiration for externalism. He begins with the Cartesian tradition. The Idealist doctrine is analyzed next as a reaction to the problems set up by Decartes and his followers; Idealism is of special importance to the discussion, for (Rowlands claims) it is in direct opposition to the solution advocated by a certain influential brand of externalism (content externalism). The next two chapters deal with two independent attempts to solve the Cartesian puzzle, which can be dubbed *prehistoric*-externalism; the first can be attributed to J.P. Sartre, the second to L. Wittgenstein. Chapters 6 and 7 concern the discussion of content externalism; the former is, for the most part, an exposition of the established arguments of H. Putnam and T. Burge; in the latter the author discusses the limitations of the type of externalism that comes about as a consequence of those arguments. In the next chapter, Rowlands discusses the relation between the externalist stance and the first person authority problem. The remaining part of the book contains most of Rowlands' own work. Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to the issue of the vehicle externalism. Rowlands begins by demonstrating the difference between the positions of content externalism and vehicle externalism. He claims vehicle externalism to be the stronger philosophical claim, but shows that content externalism is logically independent of it. In particular, it is possible to be a supporter of content externalism, and to remain an internalist with respect to the vehicles of cognition. Rowlands then argues in favor of an externalist position that combines content externalism with vehicle externalism, as a more plausible option than the combination of externalism with respect to

the content of the mental and internalism with respect to the vehicles of cognition. In the next two chapters of the book, the author advocates certain applications of this doctrine to issues of the philosophy of mind (with consciousness as a central issue), and to axiology. The last chapter contains closing remarks and a recapitulation of the turning points of the argument's strategy.

Rowlands sees the inspiration for externalism to be a form of intellectual reaction to the Cartesian heritage. As such, the externalist position is determined by a negation of two important claims that constitute Cartesian epistemology. The first of the two has to do with the location of particular mental states. Decartes held that all mental phenomena are located inside the appropriate agent. Hence, the negation of this position constitutes the first aspect of externalism:

**The Location Claim:** at least some mental phenomena are not spatially located inside the boundaries of the subject, *S*, that has or undergoes them.

Second, in the Cartesian tradition it is assumed that the ascription of a given kind of mental state to a subject is something that can be decided without any reference to factors external to him. Consequently, the second aspect of externalism is:

**The Possession Claim:** the possession of at least some mental phenomena by a subject *S* depends on features that are external to the boundaries of *S*.

Discriminating between the two is crucial to Rowlands' argument, as the position one holds towards each of them determines the type of externalism one represents.

The well-known arguments of H. Putnam and T. Burge support the Possession Claim. They are meant to demonstrate how, by manipulating certain aspects of the external environment, one can bring about change in the content of a mental state. Since mental states are individuated with respect to their contents, it turns out that by introducing changes into the external environment of the subject, we can influence the content of his mental states. Therefore, the Burge and Putnam cases support only a certain type of externalism (content externalism). Two conclusions are eminent here. First, content externalism (of the Burge/Putnam type) presents a serious alternative only to Idealism, and not to the whole of the Cartesian tradition. The latter is characterized by two distinct claims, and content externalism requires that we negate only one of them (the internalist counterpart to the Possession Claim). Second, the arguments alone do not suffice to sustain the

Location Claim (so, even if Putnam was right, meanings still could turn out to be in the head after all). Indeed, there are many philosophers who accept the externalist Possession Claim and abstain from the Location Claim altogether.

Rowlands, on the other hand, claims that the only viable form of externalism requires that one accept both the Location and Possession Claims. His argumentative strategy is twofold. He begins by showing how certain cognitive tasks could be accomplished by systems that are not internal to any rational agent (he employs arguments advanced by A. Clark and D. Chalmers).<sup>1</sup> Next, he constructs an evolutionary argument to the effect that systems which contain both external and internal components are *in fact* evolutionarily favorable to purely internal ones. Rowlands concludes by daring the internalist to explain why we should accept that the actual cognitive architecture is an example of a strategy that has fewer evolutionary merits.

Rowlands devotes an entire chapter of his book to the particular case of externalism that he associates with Sartre's concept of intentionality. However, it should be pointed out that the particular aspect of Sartre's solution which draws Rowland's attention had been mentioned much earlier by K. Twardowski. The distinction between an intentional content and an intentional object as external to the mental act was introduced by Twardowski as early as 1894.<sup>2</sup> Of course, this does nothing to undermine the originality of Sartre's work; it only shows that the idea of a cognitive act as dependent on an external factor (the object of an act) was being argued for very early on in the history of modern epistemology.

*Externalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again* is a very useful book for anyone interested in the problem of externalism. It offers a solid review of the contemporary condition of the debate that is very useful for beginners, and pairs it with an appealing presentation of Rowland's own arguments, which pose enough of a challenge to make it interesting reading.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Clark, D. Chalmers, "The Extended Mind", *Analysis* 58, 1998, pp. 7–19.

<sup>2</sup> K. Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen*, habilitation thesis 1894.

Anna-Sofia Maurin, *If Tropes* (*Synthese Library*, vol. 308), Kluwer Academic Publisher, Dordrecht 2002, 184 pp., ISBN 1-4020-0656-X.

According to the Trope Theory, tropes are basic entities, “the very alphabet of being”. Everything that exists consists of tropes. Hence, an appropriate theory must show how universals and concrete particulars are made up of tropes. Anna-Sofia Maurin’s book shows that trope ontology is able to give an account of the way that tropes build the universe. She does not provide any arguments for the theory (or against its rivals), but considers what is to be done *if* tropes exist. That explains the strange title *If Tropes*. A.-S. Maurin’s book summarizes half a century of trope theory—it was published almost on the anniversary of D. C. Williams classic paper “On the Elements of Being” (1953). However, it is not just a survey of existing approaches, but rather an attempt—which I find successful—to develop the theory.

Maurin’s book is divided into three main parts. The first (ch. 1–4) is devoted to the concept of the trope, some methodological problems and an analysis of truthmaking. The second concerns the analysis of universals (ch. 5), the third—concrete particulars (ch. 6).

Maurin defines tropes as simple, particular and abstract entities and takes these to be primitive facts about tropes. Usually, the trope definition includes particularity and abstractness conditions, but not simplicity. Tropes are simple in the sense that they have no constituents—e.g. tropes, substrates, universals. Maurin insists on simplicity to anticipate critics (such as J.P. Moreland and C. Daly), who could say that tropes are entities built up from substrates and universals, so that the one-category ontology fails. If the simplicity of tropes is a primitive fact, such a criticism is stopped.

The analysis of truthmaking leads Maurin to formulate the main topic of her book. If there are only tropes, they must serve as truthmakers. Some of our propositions involve universals and concrete things. This means that Trope Theory should show how abstract and particular entities may make such propositions true, that is, it must provide a reductive analysis of universals and concrete things. The general answer is that universals are sets of similar tropes, and concrete things are sets of compresent tropes. This account is usually taken to be vulnerable to some famous regression arguments. One of the most valuable parts of Maurin’s book is devoted to a detailed analysis of these arguments. It also includes an important discussion on internal and external relations and a critical analysis of K. Campbell’s and P. Simon’s views. I will focus on Maurin’s solutions to two crucial problems of Trope Theory: universalization and thing-construction.

(1) Trope Theory usually considers universals as sets of exactly similar tropes. The standard charge, which follows Russell's argument against Resemblance Nominalism, is this: if the similarity relation is universal, the project of trope-only ontology must be given up; if it is a particular relation-instance, it leads to the well-known vicious regress, since only the next similarity instance may unite similar instances of similarity.

Maurin shows that the objection can be answered if we recognize that there is no need to take the relation of exact similarity as a real entity. Exact similarity is an *external* relation and *founded* on the nature of the terms. This means that tropes are necessarily bounded by similarity. If a trope stopped being similar to other tropes, it would mean that its nature changed, which is impossible, since tropes are unchangeable. Tropes cannot change, they can only disappear. Then, since the relation is founded, similarity is nothing more, and beyond similar tropes; this follows from the nature of similar tropes. So we are not committed to the existence of a robust relation taken as an additional entity between similar tropes. Exact similarity supervenes on its own terms; it is—using D. M. Armstrong's phrase—an “ontological free lunch”, a “pseudo-addition” and is “as insubstantial as a shadow” (p. 109). The relation of exact similarity does not lead to a vicious regress, since “a regress of non-existent, pseudo-additional relations is extremely innocent and, therefore, obviously virtuous” (p. 111).

(2) Concrete things are taken to be sets of compresent tropes. Such an answer raises the following question: are the compresence relations universals, relation instances or “pseudo-additions”? In this case we cannot just repeat the solution given in the case of universals. The relation which builds things must be *external*—for tropes, this means that they must be contingent. No definite trope is needed to build a thing with other definite tropes. Otherwise, change would be impossible, since changing one trope in a bundle would result in changing all of the tropes. Maurin says—contrary to K. Campbell—that compresence *cannot also* be a *founded* relation, since if it were founded, tropes could change, which is impossible. So, compresence must be an external unfounded relation. It does not flow from the nature of tropes, nor does it supervene on tropes, nor is it a “pseudo-addition”, but an entity in its own right. Since we do not want to abandon the one-category ontology, it cannot be a universal, so it must be taken as a property-instance. But then, how to avoid the Bradleyan regress: what unites compresent tropes in a bundle with the trope of compresence?

The solution provided by Maurin is very smart and simple. She shows that the relation-instance of compresence has a twofold nature. Firstly, for uniting tropes it is an external relation, not founded on their

own nature. They may, but need not stand in this relation. Secondly, it is necessary for the trope of compresence itself to bind exactly those tropes—it cannot not bind the tropes which it really binds. Therefore, there is a one side dependency: tropes in bundles need not have *this* relation-instance of compresence, but *this* relation of compresence requires *these* tropes. As Maurin put it, “the relation of compresence is external to the tropes it relates, but, simultaneously, the related tropes are internal to the relation of compresence” (p. 164). The regress cannot start on this ground, because the relation between the compresence trope and other tropes is internal for compresence; therefore, as in the case of exact similarity, it is only a “pseudo-addition”. To put it in different words, the relation of compresence is internal enough to avoid regress, but simultaneously external enough to contingently bind tropes into a concrete thing.

Maurin does succeed in showing that trope theory can avoid two general objections connected with regresses. The first argument she advances is an extension of arguments already available in published literature, whereas the second is her own invention. Overall, I found the book very interesting and insightful.

For the rest of the review I will confine my remarks to the concept of trope given by Maurin, explaining why I think that it should not include the simplicity condition. Maurin insists that tropes are not only abstract and particular, but also *primitive* simple entities. However, it seems to me that the kind of simplicity which is really needed for trope theory is given by trope abstractness, whereas the kind of simplicity which Maurin tries to provide is not needed at all. It seems that the simplicity of tropes boils down to their abstractness. Something is abstract when it inheres in some other entity and nothing inheres in it. The concept of abstractness is derivative from the concept of inherence. A trope is simple in that no entity inheres in it: it has no properties considered as inhering entities and is not composed of different tropes. Such simplicity is essential for a trope. However, inherence-simplicity does not exclude complexity in other dimensions. There is no doubt—contrary to Maurin’s view—that tropes may be considered as objects which have constituents. Such non-inhering constituents may be, for example, particularity, simplicity, redness, colourness or even substrate. They are all constituents, but not inherence-constituents of a trope. Thus, it seems that the requirement that tropes not have any constituents is too strong. The metaphysician who develops a trope-only ontology with absolutely simple tropes need not worry about complexity. If he or she succeeds, the ontology would be much simpler

than others. The *onus probandi* would lie on the side of the supporters of the *complexity view*.

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