

Julian Baggini, Jeremy Stangroom (eds.): *New British Philosophy. The Interviews*¹

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The following reflections have been prompted by reading a most interesting book *New British Philosophy. The Interviews*, edited by Julian Baggini and Jeremy Stangroom, and published by Routledge in 2002. The editors interviewed 16 British philosophers, and the book consists of edited versions of these interviews together with an introduction, an appendix, and sundry remarks by the editors themselves. Baggini and Stangroom are not the first to produce a work of this sort, as the interview format in philosophy has been used by Bryan Magee and others. However the present book has one very original feature. Instead of interviewing the generation of philosophers approaching the end of their careers, Baggini and Stangroom decided to interview British philosophers in their thirties and forties, who are as they put it (p. 287):² „... the younger generation ... which will lead the subject in the years to come ...” The result of their interviews is a fascinating and very readable book, which has implications not just for the present of British philosophy but for its future.

The quality of exposition and argument shown by all the philosophers who are interviewed leaves no doubt as to their talent. However it might be questioned whether the editors have chosen a representative sample, or whether they might inadvertently have been influenced by their own predilections in favour of some subjects or approaches and against others. The editors are aware of this problem, and write in their introduction (p. 6):

„Of course, this does not provide a comprehensive selection of all that is going on in the subject. There are no interviews on the philosophy of science, ancient philosophy or the history of philosophy, for instance.”

It is something of a pity that there are no interviews on the history of philosophy, but, if the intention is to illuminate what is going on at the moment, this choice is understandable. It is perhaps more surprising that philosophy of science has been omitted, and this is a point to which we shall return later. However, my overall opinion is that the editors have provided a representa-

¹ All page references are to the book: *New British Philosophy* unless another specification is given.

² Of course there is a literary reference here, but not to an author who is likely to be one of Simon Critchley's favourites.

tive sample of the main stream of new British philosophy today, and that by analysing the interviews we can form a good impression of the character of this current of thought. I will now attempt such an analysis and it will emerge that new British philosophy is more novel, more of a break with the philosophical traditions of this country, than might at first appear.

Two main themes: (i) ethics and aesthetics

Let us begin by seeing whether by studying the subject matter of the various interviews we can pick out what are the principal themes of new British philosophy. In fact there seem to be two main themes. The first is 'ethics and aesthetics' which constitute the principal subjects in chapters 2 to 6, a total of 85 pages or 31% of the whole. The second main theme could be described as 'analytic versus continental'. This is the principal subject of chapters 8, and 11 - 14, again making a total of 85 pages or 31% of the whole. In this section, I will consider the first main theme in more detail, and I will deal with the second main theme in the next section. Some of the other minor themes which appear in the other chapters will be mentioned as we go along.

In chapter 2, Roger Crisp gives a general survey of ethical theory. Chapter 3, however, deals with political philosophy, and it might therefore seem that we should add politics to ethics and aesthetics in our general characterisation. However, Jonathan Wolff, who deals with political philosophy, adopts a definitely ethical approach to the subject. Thus he says (p. 54): „I've been working on disability. What this has brought home to me is the idea that we have to be more sensitive about the issue of rectification of injustice, the rectification of wrong.”

The interesting interview with Miranda Fricker in chapter 5 (Power, Knowledge and Injustice) again shows the dominance of ethical interests, for Fricker is concerned with how ethics may affect epistemology. She illustrates what she has in mind as follows (p. 82):

Let me give a concrete example of this from Harper Lee's novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The novel is set in Alabama in the late 1930s. There is a trial of a black man, who has been falsely accused, as the reader knows, of sexually assaulting a woman. It is clear that the all-white jury don't believe his testimony, even though the evidence shows he is telling the truth. So here is an extreme example - from literature, but you can find the same thing in history - of how certain sorts of hatred, prejudice and inequality can actually lead to a situation where a person's testimony is genuinely not believed by a whole group of people who carry authority. ... What gets revealed here is a special kind of injustice, what I call epistemic injustice.

This passage from Fricker is an example of another characteristic of new British philosophers, namely a considerable involvement with literature. Of course it is not just literature but music and the visual arts, so that aesthetics figures as part of our first main theme along with ethics. Aaron Ridley's interview in chapter 4 deals specifically with Aesthetics and Music, but there are many other references to aesthetic issues throughout the volume.

Ethics, as handled by the new British philosophers, is not just general theory but involves discussing specific issues. We saw that Jonathan Wolff was concerned with the disabled, while the subject of Rae Langton's interview is Feminism and Pornography. Chapter 16 (Philosophy and the Public) contains an interview with Nigel Warburton about getting philosophy across to the general reader – an activity at which Warburton has been notably successful. However Warburton's own research is described as being (p. 272) in „aesthetics and applied ethics“, while at the end of the interview, Warburton himself says (p. 286) that he is writing a book: „*The Art Question*, which is about philosophical attempts to define art“ and also „a biography of the modernist architect, Ernö Goldfinger“. Warburton's research interests are thus an excellent further illustration of the first of our two main themes in new British philosophy. Let us now turn to the second.

Two main themes: (ii) analytic versus continental

It is usually supposed that one school of philosophy (analytic philosophy) dominates in the English-speaking world, whereas another (continental philosophy) dominates in continental Europe. So one of the surprising discoveries is that there has been a definite shift among new British philosophers away from the traditionally British analytic philosophy and towards continental philosophy. One way of assessing the magnitude of the shift is to consider the number of references to individual philosophers as recorded in the index to the book. Let us start with a list of 6 well-known 20th century analytic philosophers. After their names I will put the number of references to them in the book. The results are as follows:

Ayer (10), Kripke (1), Quine (3), Russell (17), Ryle (2), Strawson (3) Total: 36

A similar list of 6 well-known 20th century continental philosophers gives the following results:

Derrida (12), Foucault (7), Heidegger (12), Husserl (7), Merleau-Ponty (4), Sartre (10) Total: 52

So there are over 40% more references to the continental philosophers than to the analytic philosophers. I have omitted Wittgenstein from either list,

since, almost uniquely, he seems to be appreciated and studied by both analytic and continental philosophers. Perhaps as a result there are more references to him than to any other philosopher (24).

Even allowing for possible biases in the selection of philosophers for the volume, the shift towards continental philosophy seems undeniable, and we should seek to explain why it has occurred and to evaluate its significance. One philosopher Simon Glendinning in his interview in chapter 12 puts forward the view that the difference between analytic and continental philosophy is not an important one. As he says (p. 204): „... the analytic and continental distinction ... ultimately lacks any deep philosophical significance.” However this view is not shared by any of the other philosophers who discuss the matter, and who assume there is a very significant difference between the two approaches to philosophy. The shift to continental philosophy is seen by them as a very significant change arising out of a feeling of disillusion with analytic philosophy.

Ray Monk gives an excellent account of this feeling of dissatisfaction with establishment analytic philosophy in this description of an episode during his time as a student at Oxford (p. 13):

I'm talking now about the early 1980s, when I think British analytic philosophy was at its most arid. I went to a series of seminars in which the problem of adverbial predication was being discussed. This went on for about eight weeks, and the issue being discussed was this: if you say 'John walked up the hill slowly' it follows that John walked up the hill. If you say 'John walked up the hill quickly' it also follows that John walked up the hill. However, 'John walked up the hill slowly' implies not 'John walked up the hill quickly', and the problem was to devise a way of preserving those inferential relations. Well, what interest does this have? I found myself thinking that the pleasure one derives from those kinds of problems has no more depth to it than the pleasure one derives from a crossword puzzle.

This type of analytic philosophy could be called 'logico-linguistic' philosophy, since it concerns itself with the linguistic analysis of propositions using the techniques of formal logic. This kind of philosophy does not seem to be very popular among new British philosophers, but it has not disappeared altogether. Its representative in the book is Timothy Williamson. In his interview in chapter 9, entitled 'On Vagueness', he considers the question of whether a proposition like 'John is thin' has a definite truth-value so that classical logic can be applied to it. He also gives the following account of some of his current research work (p. 162):

To give an example of the kind of problem that I'm interested in, we can say that J.F.Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe could have had a child, and the issue

arises of whether one can say that there is such a thing as a possible child of JFK and Marilyn Monroe. If so, what sort of thing is it? This is an area which is susceptible of quite rigorous logical analysis...

Williamson is also one of the few philosophers in the book to make some quite critical remarks about continental philosophy. This is what he says (p. 151):

I don't want to give the impression that I think nothing of value is done under the aegis of continental philosophy. That would be far too crude a view. But certain advances in philosophical standards have been made within analytic philosophy, and for anyone who has taken those to heart, there would be a serious loss of integrity involved in abandoning them in the way that would be required to participate in continental philosophy as currently practised.

It is very interesting to compare Williamson's attitudes and philosophical interests with those of some of the defenders of continental philosophy. Let us start with Simon Critchley whose interview in chapter 11 is entitled 'Continental Philosophy and Emancipation'. Critchley begins by giving some rather interesting auto-biographical details (pp. 185 - 6):

Yes, I came to the University of Essex in 1982 to do English and European literature, because at the time I was obsessed with modernism and aspired to be a poet. The problem was that I wasn't a very good poet. ... I had a Penguin modern classics education! So I read Nietzsche extensively, and then heaps of moody modernist fiction. Sartre, Camus and Kafka were hugely important for me (Kafka still is), as were Joyce, Beckett and Flann O'Brien. And I developed a very early interest in existentialism.

At this point Critchley decides to take up philosophy, and reads the standard introductions to analytic philosophy. As he says (p. 186):

I began to read the inevitable - you know, Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*, Ayer's *Central Questions of Philosophy*. If I'm honest, I didn't really get an enormous amount out of them.

However if analytic philosophy was not to his taste, things were quite different regarding continental philosophy, and, of course, the later Wittgenstein (p. 186).

For me philosophy has to address the question of existential commitment, and the fact that the person who is philosophising is a flesh and blood human being. It also has to address historical, social and political questions. It always seemed to me from early on that what I learnt to call continental philosophy seemed to fit those concerns much better than Anglo-American phi-

losophy. Of course there are some exceptions. The later Wittgenstein has been an abiding interest of mine ...

A similar picture emerges in the interview in chapter 15 with another enthusiast for continental philosophy: Keith Ansell Pearson, who writes (pp. 255 – 257):

Well actually, I went to University to study history. ... I had this overwhelming sense of being completely alienated from society. ... I was interested in Marxian thought – Marcuse was my hero as a young person and his *One Dimensional-Man* was the text through which I saw the world ... I was into what I would call ‘outsider literature’ – the usual suspects, such as Dostoyevsky and company. I was reading Nietzsche at this time but not in an academic context. ... I came from ... a 1970s background of a working class kid heavily into the alternative music scene of the time and very much a disaffected youth. ... It’s in this context that I encountered a collection of thinkers I could readily identify with: Marcuse, Adorno, Bataille, Deleuze, Foucault, ... Yes, definitely. ‘Continental’ philosophy, as it became called, had a radicality about it that appealed to me. It allowed you to intimately connect your philosophical practice with other crucial aspects of your existence. For me the feeling was that philosophy could contribute to what used to be called ‘the revolution of everyday life’.

The contrast between Timothy Williamson and Keith Ansell Pearson is indeed striking. On the one hand we have Timothy Williamson concerned with how formal logic might be applied to propositions like: ‘John is thin’. On the other hand we have Keith Ansell Pearson alienated and into alternative music concerned to find a philosophy which relates to his human condition and can be the basis for radical political practice. This does illustrate the variety to be found in new British philosophy.

So far I have compared contemporary continental philosophy with contemporary analytic philosophy, but it will be helpful to look at the matter in a broader historical context, and, in particular, to examine what could be called the classic period of analytic philosophy. This will be done in the next section.

A comparison with the classic period of analytic philosophy

By the classic period of analytic philosophy, I mean the period from the publication of Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* in 1879 to the assassination of Schlick in 1936 – an event which led to the dispersion of the Vienna Circle. It was during this period that analytic philosophy was created by its ‘founding fathers’ – Frege, Russell, the early Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle. What

were the characteristics of the new philosophy introduced by these founding fathers? Certainly one principal feature of their philosophy was its very close links with mathematics and science. Frege and Russell were deeply involved in mathematics, and nearly all their philosophical activity was concerned with developing a theory about the nature of mathematics (logicism). Wittgenstein was trained as an engineer, and, while designing an aeroplane propeller became intrigued by philosophical questions concerned with the mathematics he was using. This led him to visit Frege and Russell, and to become Russell's student. The Vienna Circle continued this interest in the philosophy of mathematics, but extended their activities to include an analysis of the philosophical problems concerned with the new physics – relativity and quantum mechanics. The manifesto of the Vienna Circle, written by Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Otto Neurath was significantly entitled: *The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle*. Indeed the main aim of the Vienna Circle was to elaborate and advocate a scientific conception of the world.

So in the analytic philosophy of this period, the principal concern was with the analysis of mathematics and science. To avoid lengthy phrases, I think it will be useful to take the word 'science' to include not just the natural sciences but also mathematics and technologies based on mathematics and the natural sciences. I will not however extend the word 'science' to include psychology for, although some thinkers hold that psychology can become one of the natural sciences, this is a highly contentious matter. The Vienna circle were concerned with the analysis of science in this broad sense, but what about ethics and aesthetics? Regarding these subjects, Wittgenstein has this to say in his *Tractatus* of 1921:

- 6.42 And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics.
Propositions can express nothing that is higher.
- 6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words.
Ethics is transcendental.
(Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)"

Wittgenstein of course thought that ethics and aesthetics were of great importance, but, since they could not be put into words, ethical and aesthetic judgements had to be formed on the basis of mystical intuitions of what was of value. There was no real possibility of philosophical discussions of ethics and aesthetics. Not all members of the Vienna Circle agreed that all propositions of ethics and aesthetics were meaningless; but discussions of ethics and aesthetics played a very minor role in the philosophical activity of the Vienna Circle.

It will now be clear that there is a remarkable contrast between the Vienna Circle and new British philosophers. As we have seen, ethics and aesthetics are perhaps the main areas of philosophical discussion of the latter group. This is perhaps connected with the fact that a great number of new British philosophers express a great interest in literature, and came into philosophy from an earlier study of literature. We have seen that this was the case with Simon Critchley, and several other new British philosophers have a similar tale to tell. Thus Christina Howells says (p. 221): „Indeed, I read French and English at university. And then my Ph. D. was on Sartre’s theory of literature.” Rae Langton says (p. 97 – 98): „At university, I got into philosophy by accident. The plan was to do English Literature, and I’m afraid philosophy was my fourth choice ... But it gradually came to be what I loved best.” Miranda Fricker says (p. 79): „My first degree was actually in philosophy and French literature. The two were studied quite separately, and really my first love was much more literature than philosophy. I’m basically interested in people and life – if that doesn’t sound too absurd! – and literature allows one to speak directly about such things through a concern with character and story.”

All this suggests the following account of what has happened. A new generation of British philosophers have come into the subject from an interest in literature and human problems. Their training in British universities was in a philosophical tradition (analytic philosophy) whose founding fathers were involved almost exclusively with science and had little concern with ethics and aesthetics. Such a tradition was hardly very suitable for this new generation, given their interests, and so a transition to an alternative philosophical approach (continental philosophy) which had always been concerned with literature and human problems was a natural development.

I think there is some truth in this account, but it is very far from being the whole story. What it leaves out is the fact that analytic philosophy, despite originating from a group of philosophers who were very strongly involved with science, has moved away from a concern with science and now occupies itself largely with other matters – particularly linguistics and psychology. There thus seems to be some general force driving philosophy in Britain away from an involvement with science. An indication of this is to be found in the autobiographical remarks of Aaron Ridley who started out from science and ended up working on the aesthetics of music. He says (p. 61): „When I was at school, I was a natural sciences and maths kind of person, for reasons which I now never really quite understand.” Consequently his first plan was to study geology at university. However, realising one day that he had no interest in geology, he decided to change to philosophy. He continues (p. 62):

Actually, the move away from my interest in maths and the natural sciences was rather gradual, so when I first started doing philosophy I was terribly contemptuous of the soft, floppy, artsy side of it. I was terribly keen on logic, the philosophy of science, anything with loads of symbols in it. So for the majority of my undergraduate career, I tended to gravitate towards the more tough-nosed end of things.

And then, of course, the penny began to drop, that what I was actually interested in, what really turned me on about philosophy, wasn't that kind of thing at all. In the background to all this, my main leisure-time interests had always been to do with the arts. I was fantastically dogged – but entirely giftless – pianist, and a passionate listener to music. So, by the time I graduated, it was clear to me that far from doing geology, or then logic and the philosophy of science, what I really wanted to do was philosophy of art.

In the next section I will argue that this move away from science is not a personal idiosyncrasy of Aaron Ridley but a general trend in new British philosophy – analytic and continental alike. Then in the final section (section 6), I will consider some questions raised by this move away from science.

The move away from science

Let me begin with another example of the move away from science. This concerns a topic which we have not considered so far, but to which one of the interviews is devoted. This is chapter 10 (The Rebirth of Metaphysics), and the philosopher interviewed is Robin Le Poidevin. The very title of this chapter indicates once again a divergence from the founding fathers of analytic philosophy who held metaphysics in very low esteem. The classic text on this subject is Carnap's (1931) „The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language“. Carnap states his position very clearly as follows (pp. 60 – 1): „In the domain of *metaphysics*, including all philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result *that the alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless.*“ To illustrate this thesis Carnap chooses a passage from Heidegger's (1929) *Was ist Metaphysik?* A selection runs as follows (Carnap, 1931, p. 69. The italics, as Carnap states, are in the original.):

Where do we seek the Nothing? How do we find the Nothing. ... We know the Nothing. ... *Anxiety reveals the Nothing.* ... That for which and because of which we were anxious, was 'really' – nothing. Indeed: the Nothing itself – as such – was present. ... *What about this Nothing? – The Nothing itself nothings.*

This passage has a certain resonance, but Carnap's view that it is meaningless is not at all implausible. Carnap thinks that most of the sentences are

senseless for at least one and sometimes two reasons. First of all there is the mistake of supposing that 'nothing' is a noun used as a name. To illustrate what Carnap has in mind here, let us take as an example: 'Nothing delights me'. This appears to have the same form as the sentence: 'Venice delights me'. So, as 'Venice' names a town, we might suppose that 'Nothing' names some curious metaphysical entity. This, according to Carnap, is the mistake which Heidegger makes, and which leads him to produce meaningless questions such as: „Where do we seek the Nothing?“ An analysis of the sentence 'Nothing delights me', however, reveals that its logical form is more correctly expressed by 'It is not the case that there is an x such that x delights me' or, in symbols, ' $\neg(\text{Ex})(x \text{ delights me})$ '. In these formulations, the word 'nothing' has disappeared. So, once we realise this, we are no longer tempted to think of 'nothing' as a name, and Heidegger's generation of nonsense can be avoided. As regards the last of the sentences quoted from Heidegger, Carnap gives a second reason why it is senseless, namely (1931, p. 71): „... the fabrication of the meaningless word 'to nothing.'“ This analysis has a particular interest in that it shows the criticism of one of the founding fathers of continental philosophy by one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy.

Carnap's view that all metaphysics is meaningless was criticized by Popper who gave the example of Greek atomism as a theory which was undoubtedly metaphysical, but which was nonetheless perfectly meaningful and which indeed has a beneficial effect on science. Of course Carnap could still be right in thinking that some metaphysics, and, in particular, some of the writings of Heidegger were meaningless, but his general view that all metaphysics was meaningless was shown to be incorrect.

Popper's view suggests that metaphysics might be studied in relation to science. Thus some metaphysical ideas such as atomism could be helpful in constructing scientific theories, while some scientific theories, e.g. Newtonian mechanics might suggest metaphysical positions, e.g. Laplace's universal determinism. Turning now to Le Poidevin's treatment of metaphysics in chapter 10, one is struck by the fact that he discusses metaphysics without any reference to science at all. Thus he deals with the metaphysics of time, the A-theory, the B-theory, etc. In this context one would naturally expect some discussion of Einstein and relativity, but neither is even mentioned.

Let me now return to the point that the editors of *New British Philosophy* do not include anything about philosophy of science. In one sense this is misleading because there is a whole community of philosophers of science working in Britain today. Indeed the study of philosophy of science must necessarily continue since it is an essential part of the enterprise of scientific research which is carried out on quite a large scale in Britain and must itself

continue in order to underpin Britain's science-based economy. However, in another sense, I think the editors were right, for, although philosophy of science does exist, it has little or no impact on mainstream philosophy in Britain. Its status is that of a minority speciality, like Egyptology, which does not have any effect on the thinking of most British philosophers. Indeed much philosophy of science does not even go on in philosophy departments but is segregated into departments of history and philosophy of science, or even into science departments. The lack of impact of philosophy of science on the mainstream of British philosophy is easily demonstrated from the present collection. Earlier, at the beginning of section 3, we considered both a list of 6 leading 20th century continental philosophers who clocked up 52 references, and also a list of 6 leading 20th analytic philosophers who only managed 36 references. The result for a list of 6 leading 20th century philosophers of science is as follows.

Duhem (0), Feyerabend (0), Kuhn (1), Lakatos (0), Poincaré (0), Popper (2) Total: 3.

There can be little doubt that new British philosophers are not taking much notice of philosophy of science. There is also in the interviews no mention at all of science except in two cases which we will now consider. The first case is Ray Monk who says (p. 24):

I'm going to write ... a book about Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics. But the next biography I'm going to write is of a scientist, Robert Oppenheimer.

These plans clearly indicate a strong interest in mathematics and science, but, in this respect, Ray Monk seems to be going against the general trend in new British philosophy.

The second case appears also to be an exception to this general trend, but turns out not to be one after all. In Keith Ansell Pearson's interview (*A Post-Human Hell*, Ch. 15), he considers the very interesting question of how the rise of robotics is going to affect human beings. Unfortunately Ansell Pearson's main authority for the present state and future of robotics appears to be (p. 261): „Kevin Warwick, who runs the cybernetics unit at Reading University.“ The trouble here is that Kevin Warwick's views are regarded as absurd by the overwhelming majority of researchers in the field of robotics. This can be easily be verified by even a superficial reading of the AISB (Artificial Intelligence & the Simulation of Behaviour) Quarterly. There is hardly an issue which does not contain a joke at Kevin Warwick's expense. I certainly do not want to discourage Ansell Pearson from pursuing this line of

research, but, if he wants to do so in a serious fashion, then he ought to find out more about what the real situation is regarding research in robotics. Actually this is a very interesting field to study. Particularly to be recommended are the works of one of its leading figures Rodney Brooks, famous for his design of spider robots and his witty article: „Elephants don't play chess" (Brooks, 1990). I feel that the study of Brooks and other genuine experts on robotics would lead Ansell Pearson to revise considerably his views about the impact of robotics on human life. This study might also make a pleasant change from reading e.g. Nietzsche.

Let me now elaborate a little on the claim that analytic philosophy has moved away from science. It is in many ways very surprising that this should have occurred considering the enormous involvement with science and mathematics of the founding fathers of the analytic movement. Nonetheless this development has occurred. Perhaps a key figure in the change has been Quine. In his youth Quine went to Austria to study with the Vienna Circle. His collection: *From a Logical Point of View*, published in 1953 contains a great deal about mathematics and also his formulation of what is known as the 'Duhem-Quine thesis' – a thesis which is central to philosophy of science. His book: *Word and Object*, published in 1960 is, by contrast and as the title suggests, concerned almost exclusively with linguistics. Quine can be regarded as one of the pioneers of what we earlier called 'logico-linguistic philosophy'. One of the sections §32, pp. 151 – 6 is entitled: 'Opacity in Certain Verbs'. Here Quine gives a long and elaborate logico-linguistic analysis of the sentence: 'Ernest is hunting lions'.² Six different analyses of this sentence are suggested, and we can give something of their flavour by quoting the last one (Quine, 1960, p. 155):

Ernest is endeavoring (-to-cause) himself and a (certain) lion to be related as shooter and shot.

From 1960 on, Quine devoted the rest of his long and active philosophical life almost exclusively to linguistics and psychology. There was no return to mathematics and the natural sciences. In this respect he has been followed by most analytic philosophers, including those in *New British Philosophy*, but this picture must be qualified by saying that a few analytic philosophers have continued the original Vienna Circle tradition of maintaining a close involvement with science. One example is Wesley Salmon who obtained his PhD under Hans Reichenbach in 1950, and continued writing on scientific topics up to his unlucky death in a road accident in 2001. However, analytic philosophers like Salmon have now become very much the minority – especially in Britain.

The history of philosophy studied in British philosophy departments usually begins with the Pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle, continues with the 'modern' philosophers between Bacon/Descartes and Kant, and then jumps to the founding fathers of analytic philosophy: Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein, with perhaps one or two texts from the Vienna Circle and their associates. If we study this list of philosophers, it becomes clear that nearly all of them had very close involvement with mathematics and/or the natural sciences. Plato, influenced by the Pythagorean school, made the study of mathematics a prerequisite for the study of philosophy in his Academy. Aristotle with his pupils carried out extensive empirical investigations in the field of biology, as well as writing treatises on physics and astronomy. Most of the philosophers of the modern period were also scientific researchers, and some played quite a major part in the scientific revolution. We have already seen that the founding fathers of analytic philosophy all had a very close involvement with mathematics and/or science. Thus the entire historical tradition studied in British philosophy departments is one in which mathematics and science play a major part. So in turning away from science, the new British philosophers are in fact making a revolutionary break with their tradition. This is surprising in itself, but even more surprising in view of the fact that this change is occurring at a time when science, in the broad sense of the word, i.e. including mathematics and technologies based on science and mathematics, has come to influence British society perhaps more than in any previous historical period. How is this strange intellectual development to be explained? I will consider some possible answers to this question in the next, and final, section.

Questions raised by the move away from science

One possible answer to the question of why philosophy in Britain has moved away from science is that science has become just too difficult to be understood except by a small handful of experts, so that the average philosopher cannot be expected to know any science. However this answer is not really very plausible. Those who describe the extreme difficulty of science are probably thinking of branches of science like quantum field theory which must indeed remain opaque to all but a few specialists who have received a long training in the necessary mathematical techniques. However, quantum field theory, far from being typical of science, is in fact rather untypical. One good way to acquire an understanding of science is through reading history of science, and here an interested philosopher is spoiled for choice regarding material that describes important scientific developments which are not so mathematical as to be incomprehensible to the non-specialist.

There are excellent works on the Copernican revolution, the chemical revolution, Pasteur, Darwin, the discovery of antibiotics, and so on. Moreover the most important current scientific developments are in the biomedical sciences (genetics, etc.), and many of them are very much easier to understand than e.g. relativity and quantum mechanics. As a matter of fact, I have no doubt that acquiring a reasonably broad scientific culture requires considerably less effort than e.g. mastering the philosophical works of Derrida, Heidegger, and Sartre, or indeed those of Quine and Wittgenstein. The favourite authors of new British philosophers do not suggest that as a group they shy away from works of considerable intellectual difficulty. If therefore they do not study science, it cannot be because science presents any exceptional intellectual difficulties. It must be from a lack of inclination – perhaps because science is not seen as being of any very great relevance to philosophy.

Another possible answer is that new British philosophers are more concerned with problems of human life and the human condition rather than with the more abstract problems posed by science. But is science really irrelevant to human life and the human condition in contemporary Britain? Typical Britons as they munch their corn flakes at breakfast may well wonder whether they are made with genetically modified maize, and whether the consumption of such maize could have surprising and undesirable consequences. After the long struggle to work, they will no doubt find a computer on their desk, and are quite likely to make use of all sorts of artificial intelligence programs in the course of the day's toil. If they are unfortunate enough to fall ill, they will, characteristically after considerable delays, have a series of scans and blood tests, and, in the light of these, the doctor will pronounce their fate. And so it goes on. One can hardly say that science is irrelevant here.

Much the same applies if we consider one of the favourite subjects of new British philosophy – namely ethics. Surely many, if not most, of the ethical questions which come up in Britain are connected with science in the broad sense. First of all there are a whole series of issues concerned with whether and how we should use newly invented techniques. Should we clone humans? Should we allow the production of genetically modified animals and crops? If so, what controls should there be? Then there are questions about whether practices should still be allowed in the light of scientific evidence that they have harmful indirect effects. Should high levels of carbon emissions be tolerated given that they are almost certainly causing global warming and disruption of the climate? Should food companies be allowed to continue producing and advertising products high in saturated fats given that these almost certainly cause obesity, heart disease, and dia-

betes? Note that in such cases the ethical issues are inextricably intertwined with philosophy of science questions concerning scientific epistemology, e.g. does the evidence really establish that carbon emissions are causing global warming, or that fast food chains are causing the rise of obesity in Britain?

Let me then conclude by raising two questions concerning the move away from science on the part of new British philosophers. First of all why has it occurred at a time when science is exerting such a great influence on society in Britain and indeed in the rest of the world? Secondly how relevant can a philosophy be which ignores such a crucial aspect of life in the early 21st century.

Donald Gillies

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Rudolf Carnap: Význam a nevyhnutnosť¹

Preložil Richard Cedzo. Kalligram, Bratislava 2005, 380 s.

V řadě překladů pozoruhodných filosofických děl „Filosofia do vrecka“ vyšel v roce 2005 také překlad stěžejního díla Rudolfa Carnapa z roku 1947, respektive jeho druhého vydání z roku 1956, *Význam a nevyhnutnosť* (v originále *Meaning and Necessity*, The University of Chicago Press, 1947, 1956). Překlad je velice zdařilý, pokud mohu posoudit na základě své jazykové intuice, neboť slovenština není můj mateřský jazyk. Snad jen několik málo poznámek k formální stránce vydání. Především, bylo by vhodné alespoň v poznámce pod čarou uvádět některé důležité termíny i v originále, např.

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