

Projektbeschreibung

Workshop: "Naturalism and Social Philosophy"

In everyday discourse, social science and social philosophy, a "naturalistic" vocabulary of social critique is a common place: Social entities are critically characterized as "alienated," "petrified," "dead" or "ill." "Social pathology" seems to have taken on the role of an umbrella term for such social states. In addition, a peculiar feature of social philosophy is that it often, particularly when it attempts to distinguish itself from "merely" moral and political philosophy, articulates its method and subject matter in naturalistic terms: It "diagnoses" or even "cures" the "pathology," "anomie," or "alienation" of "the social organism," "social life" or "second nature."

However, whereas in other philosophical disciplines, such as philosophy of science, ethics and metaphysics, there are numerous debates about naturalism, in social philosophy "naturalism" is not generally regarded as a position. In ethics, (neo-Aristotelian) naturalism re-describes normativity as our "second nature" by relying on a quietism about the habits and customs of our life-form (Foot, McDowell, Thompson, Lovibond etc.). In philosophy of science, (scientific) naturalism inverts the traditional hierarchy of a superior a priori philosophical knowledge and an inferior empirical knowledge (of, paradigmatically, natural science) by relying on a quietism about science (Quine etc.). In metaphysics, (pragmatic) naturalism constructs a continuity of higher and lower forms of life, of nature and culture, and rejects quietism altogether (Dewey, Whitehead, Randall etc.).

As the "naturalistic" vocabulary plays such a crucial role in the practice of social criticism, it is surprising that social philosophers have not been more invested in inquiring the naturalistic commitments of their discipline. After all, it might be that the naturalistic vocabulary of social criticism would turn out to be not merely metaphorical: Perhaps those notions and methods carry its critical weight? Is the evaluative approach to social reality favored by social philosophers dependent upon some conception of the nature of society, of social life, of second nature? Philosophical social criticisms would, then, turn out to be naturalistically committed in one way or another. This workshop aspires to take a step towards making sense of those commitments.

To this workshop, we have invited international scholars to discuss what a naturalism in social philosophy would and could be. Is social-philosophical naturalism an extension of ethical

naturalism, as Lovibond's conception of social critique in the last part of her groundbreaking book *Ethical Formation* seems to suggest? Is social philosophy then committed to some sort of quietism (about common sense or empirical science) as the naturalisms in ethics and philosophy of science? Or is social-philosophical naturalism entailed in the idea of an organicistic ontology of the social as Axel Honneth and Franck Fischbach have recently suggested? Then perhaps social philosophy has its own distinct tradition of naturalism dating back to French organicists such as Durkheim, Comte, Maistre and Bonald? Or should social philosophy be conducted against the background assumptions of a naturalistic metaphysics that delivers determinate significance to the concepts of "pathology," "life" and "growth" as in the later works of John Dewey and generally in process ontologies drawing on Whitehead or Spinoza? Would that mean an end to all post-metaphysical aspirations of social philosophy? Or should the "naturalistic" vocabulary, on the contrary, be regarded as wholly "metaphorical," in the sense that it were translatable into normative claims of justice and legitimacy as articulated by moral and political philosophers? But would then social philosophy lose its claim to constitute a philosophical discipline in its own right?

The workshop, then, entails presentations that articulate various connections between social philosophy and some tradition of philosophical naturalism (be it ethical, scientific, metaphysical etc.) and conceptualize the implications of naturalism in social philosophy (such as might be found in ideas such as "second nature," "life-form," "social pathology," "social life" or "social organism"). The workshop will take place in Lucerne, Switzerland, 6-7 April 2018. The Department of Philosophy, University of Lucerne, and the research project "A Diagnosis of Social Pathologies? Variations of Naturalism in Social Philosophy," financed by Swiss National Science Foundation, will host the event. We have succeeded in bringing 12 internationally distinguished experts on social philosophy and naturalism to Lucerne in order to discuss in a relatively small circle of local researchers and advanced students. We will reserve one hour for each talk (including discussion).