Review of: Bergmann, Gustav, *Collected Works Vol. I*

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Logical Positivism, the Linguistic Turn, and the Reconstruction of the Questions of Ontology

Bergmann, Gustav, *Collected Works Vol. I: Selected Papers I,* edited by E. Tegtmeier, Frankfurt/Lancaster: Ontos-Verlag, 2003. ISBN 3-937202-17-X, pp. 350, hardcover € 99,00 (€ 67,00 subscription).

This volume makes available 17 papers published by Gustav Bergmann (1906 – 1987) during the years 1946 – 1958. The edition of Bergmann's works in three volumes by the publisher "Ontos-Verlag" (www.ontos-verlag.de) is now complete. Volume II contains papers from 1960 – 1981, volume III contains Bergmann's book *Realism* from 1967.

Bergmann was born in Vienna (Austria) in 1906. When he received his doctorate in mathematics from the University of Vienna in 1928, he had already been invited to join the Vienna Circle, where he was especially influenced by Schlick, Waismann, and Carnap. He went to Berlin to work as an assistant to Albert Einstein and then returned to Vienna. In 1938 he left Austria as a Jewish refugee from the Nazi era. He soon obtained a position at the University of Iowa, where he was a member of both the philosophy and the psychology department for more than forty years.

In this volume we find Bergmann's great programmatic essay of 1953 "Logical Positivism, Language, and the Reconstruction of Metaphysics", which lays out the core doctrines of logical positivism. Bergmann explains what branches of the movement there are and what is own position is. All logical positivists, says Bergmann, accept the linguistic turn which Wittgenstein had initiated in the *Tractatus*. They pursue "linguistic philosophy or philosophy of language" (146), they philosophize "by means of" language. Philosophy, employing linguistic analysis, has "the task of elucidating common sense, and not of either proving or disproving it". That is, it does not attempt to develop and defend true theories about the world, say about properties or about the human mind, or at least it does so only through investigating our language.

According to Bergmann, the logical positivists fall into two groups, the ideal linguists and the analysts of ordinary usage. Among the ideal linguists there are formalists, like Carnap, and reconstructionists, like Bergmann himself. "What the reconstructionists hope to reconstruct in the new style is the old metaphysics." (147) Bergmann finds that philosophers use language in a peculiar way, saying things like that there are no physical objects, which taken in their ordinary sense are absurd. One reaction

to this would be to say that philosophers should stop saying such things. For Bergmann, however, this difference between ordinary discourse (including the discourse of science) and philosophical discourse is part of his philosophical program. According to his philosophical method, the reconstructionist linguistic turn, *philosophical discourse is ordinary, or commonsensical, discourse about an ideal language* (151). By contrast, the method of the ordinary language analyst is ordinary discourse about ordinary language, and the formalist's method is just to develop the ideal language.

"The ideal language is an interpreted syntactical schema" (155), that is "an idealization of our natural language" (84). It must fulfil two conditions. First, it must be complete in that it accounts "for all areas of our experience" (155). For example, it must contain the way in which scientific behaviourists speak about mental contents, but also the way in which one speaks about one's own experience. Secondly, it must be such that, "by means of ordinary discourse about it" (155), "all philosophical problems" can be solved. Bergman believes that there is such an ideal language. He believes that, for example, we can discover the categorial structure of the world through discourse about an ideal language because he believes "that the categorial features of the world reflect themselves in the structural properties of the ideal language" (84).

As a reconstructionist Bergmann differs from the other logical positivists in that he does not hold that the old questions of philosophy, or their answers, are meaningless. He does not reject metaphysics and ontology but reconstructs the old questions, such as whether properties are universals or whether ordinary things persist through time, and answers them with his new method. So he agrees with the other positivists in that classical philosophy is to be rejected, but he differs from them in that he thinks that the old questions can be reconstructed in the spirit of the linguistic turn. One view on Bergmann's project is that through his "reconstruction" he clarifies the old questions and brings out what they should be getting at. Another view is that Bergmann proposes new philosophical questions which look in a certain way similar to the old ones, calling the

new ones the "reconstruction" of the old ones, and that he fails to answer the old ones. For example, Bergmann reconstructs the old question whether there are universals, that is, whether things in themselves have ontological constituents of a certain type, as the question whether "the ideal language contains no undefined descriptive signs except proper names" (155). To illustrate, this is the sort of philosophical method which David Armstrong in his book *Nominalism and Realism* (1978) rejects when he writes: "[T]he identification of universals with meanings (connotations, intensions) […] has been a disaster for the theory of universals. A thoroughgoing separation of the theory of universals from the theory of the semantics of general terms is in fact required." (xiv)

This volume helps us to understand the difference between philosophy before and after the linguistic turn, and it helps to see the relation between the linguistic turn and the methods used in today's philosophy. The editor, Erwin Tegtmeier, writes enthusiastically in the Introduction: "Bergmann's positions are diametrically opposed to those of mainstream analytical philosophy, especially to materialism and nominalism. […] There will occur no renewal of ontology proper and on a par with the old ontology before the writings of Gustav Bergmann are studied more closely." (13) From another point of view, however, it appears that Bergmann was not so different from the other logical positivists because he too rejected "classical philosophy" (178) and made the linguistic turn, although he differs from them through his claim that we need to do ontology. So if you are a metaphysician influenced by the linguistic turn, then you will benefit from reading Bergmann because you have much in common with Bergmann and he has contributed much to the kind of ontology you might be looking for. If, on the other hand, you are (like me) an anti-linguistic-turn philosopher, then you will benefit from reading Bergmann because it will help you to understand the method of mainstream contemporary metaphysics and the influences of the linguistic turn.

Here is a survey over the papers contained in this volume. The first two papers try to show how positivism can preserve the common sense core

of epistemological realism. Bergmann wants to "reconstruct realistic common sense within a positivistic frame of reference" (39). The first paper, "Remarks on Realism" (1946), argues against some positivists that experience has to be founded on existence. For this purpose Bergmann defends a meaning criterion that assumes, against other positivists, that something is verifiable because it is meaningful, rather than vice versa. In the second paper, "Sense Data, Linguistic Conventions, and Existence" (1947), Bergmann criticizes A.J. Ayer's suggestion that existence is to be defined in terms of direct apprehension and that thus "esse" is a synonym of "percipi". For this he uses arguments G.E. Moore stated in his "Refutation of Idealism".

In the article "Russell on Particulars" (1947) Bergmann discusses sense data analyses. By a sense data analysis he means "an attempt to describe all percepts […] by means of a language whose simplest or basic sentences are of the kind exemplified by 'this is green' or 'this is later than that', where the descriptive universals 'green' and 'later' have their ordinary (phenomenal) meanings, and where the referents of 'this' and 'that' are objects of the sort many philosophers call simple momentary givennesses or sense data" (63). He criticises Russell's sense data analysis, which avoids reference to particulars and refers only to universals. Russell analyzes ordinary things (or rather the percepts corresponding to them) in terms of bundles of universals.

"On Non-perceptual Intuition" (1949) is a short, interesting argument against nonanalytical necessity statements. Is (1) "Everything that is green is extended" adequately transcribed as (2) "For all x, x is green → x is extended"? Bergmann considers whether (1) is to be transcribed, alternatively, as (3) C(gr, ext), where "C" stands for "essentially connected" or "necessarily coinherent". He argues, however, that transcribing (1) by (3) leads to the same difficulty as transcribing (1) by (2). The difficulty Bergmann means is that as (1) is certain the proponent of (3) has to maintain that it is *certain* that (3) → (1), in the way in which analytic statements are certain. But this is not certain because only analytic statements and statements containing only names of particulars and simple predications

(such as "gr(a)") where we are "acquainted with what they express" (81) are certain. Bergmann indicates that there is a similar argument against causal connections. Remarkable about this paper is its assumption that (1) is certain (in the sense in which analytic statements are certain) and that (3) if it were a transcription of (1) would have to be certain too. This invites the objection that there is no need for the defender of (3) to assume that (1) and (3) are certain.

Next, we find in this volume a "Note on Ontology" (1950), comparing Bergmann's conception of the ideal language with Quine's.

"Bodies, Minds, and Acts" (1952) and "Intentionality" (1955) discuss the mind-body problem. In order to solve it Bergmann investigates which "descriptive inventory of the ideal language" (107) is needed with regard to the mental.

In "Two Types of Linguistic Philosophy" (1952) Bergmann compares the formalist linguistic philosophy, as represented by Carnap's "Logischer Aufbau der Welt" and Goodman's "Structure of Appearance", and the antiformalist linguistic philosophy, as represented by British analysts like Ryle. He agrees with both parties "that all philosophical problems are verbal" (112), but criticises the formalists for playing mathematical games that are philosophically irrelevant, and the antiformalists for being too much occupied with idiom.

One of Bergmann's main themes is sameness and diversity. In "The Identity of Indiscernibles and the Formalist Definition of 'Identity'" (1953). The problem is in his view not whether the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is true but whether it is analytic. Here he offers only an analysis of the principle.

"Particularity and the New Nominalism" (1954) criticises Quine's and Goodman's nominalism. The claim of "Some Remarks on the Ontology of Ockham" (1954) is that for Ockham a thing's qualities are particulars, "tropes" as we call them nowadays. In "Professor Quine on Analyticity" (1951) Bergmann criticises Quine for overestimating the relevance of science for philosophy. Russell's reconstruction of Leibniz's ontology is dis-

cussed in "Russell's Examination of Leibniz Examined" (1956). In "The Revolt Against Logical Atomism" (1957) Bergmann defends, against Urmson, Logical Atomism, i.e. the doctrine consisting of the picture theory of language and the verification theory of meaning combined with the philosophical method of "reductive analysis by means of an ideal language" (293). "Frege's Hidden Nominalism" (1958) criticises Frege for not recognising the full ontological status of functions. In the last paper of this volume, "Sameness, Meaning, and Identity" (1959), Bergmann distinguishes two ordinary uses of "same". First, the basic use, where "it makes no sense to search for a criterion by which to decide whether or not two existents are the same" (346). Secondly, "same" is applied to words and phrases and their meanings in the sense of "analytically equivalent". Sameness in both senses is different from identity, which is defined through Leibniz's formula "two things are identical if and only if whatever can be said of the one can be said *salva veritate* of the other" (346).

Gustav Bergmann had a major impact on contemporary philosophy as well as the philosophy and methodology of psychology. From 1967-68 he served as president of the American Philosophical Association (Western Division) and in 1972 he was awarded the first University of Iowa's named professorship in the College of Liberal Arts University of Iowa's as Carver Professor. Bergmann died in 1987. In the first of a planned three-volume collection, Bergmann emphasizes the framework of a comprehensive ontology, a complete categorical inventory of the world. The issues with which he grapples inclu Cite this chapter as: von Wachter D. (2006) Bergmann, Gustav, Collected Works Vol. I: Selected Papers I, edited by E. Tegtmeier, Frankfurt/Lancaster: Ontos-Verlag, 2003. In: Galavotti M.C. (eds) Cambridge and Vienna. Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook [2004], vol 12. Springer, Dordrecht. DOI https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4101-2_15. Publisher Name Springer, Dordrecht.