publizierten Artikel mit dem Titel "The Coming Anarchy" einen tendenziell negativen Ausblick auf die weitere Menschheitsentwicklung geliefert hat. Der Autor Robert D. Kaplan ist, verallgemeinernd gesprochen, auch in der Tradition eines – um ein deutsches Beispiel zu nennen – Peter Scholl-Latour zu sehen; eines investigativen Journalisten und politischen Kommentators also, dessen jahre- und jahrzehntelange Kenntnis bestimmter Weltregionen ihn inspiriert, Schlussfolgerungen zu ziehen, die sich von denjenigen, die Politiker anlassorientiert ziehen, deutlich unterscheiden können. Während jedoch Scholl-Latours Expertise von der deutschen politischen Administration kaum zu Rate gezogen wurde (siehe den Russland/Ukraine-Konflikt), war Kaplan u. a. von 2009 bis 2011 im Defense Policy Board des Pentagon im direkten Auftrag des damaligen US-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates tätig. Das vorliegende Buch gibt einen veritablen Einblick aus US-amerikanischer Sicht in die gegenwärtigen und möglichen zukünftigen politischen Entwicklungen in einer Region, die sich im Umbruch befindet.

Hermann Mückler

Kitcher, Philip: Life after Faith. The Case for Secular Humanism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 175 pp. ISBN 978-0-300-20343-1. Price: $ 25.00

Plurality is seen today as the quintessence of modern secular societies (Ch. Taylor). They are characterized by the coexistence of a variety of worldviews (religious and not religious) and normative perspectives helping individuals to find orientation in their lives. But even if the religious perspective is no longer the default option in most Western European societies, it is still religion that arouses the deepest divisions within and among individuals and nations. The main question of Philip Kitcher's recent book, "Life after Faith. The Case for Secular Humanism," is precisely the problem how and where – outside of organized religious life and without the aid of traditional religious institutions – could people in our contemporary global and pluralistic society attain a satisfying moral orientation. Kitcher realizes that the loss of a traditional religious worldview can be disorienting not only to someone's beliefs, but also to his way of orienting himself in the world and making sense of how to live. He advocates – in harmony with Dewey's account of religion – an ethical conception of secularism and of religious faith. He places his doctrine of religion between the views of traditional religious believers (theistic humanism) and contemporary atheists (secular humanism).

Philip Kitcher (*1947; <http://philosophy.columbia.edu/directories/faculty/philip-kitcher>), today professor of philosophy at the Columbia University, started with interest in philosophy of mathematics and general philosophy of science. He became concerned with the philosophy of biology, which led him to investigate conceptual and methodological issues in biology and then questions about the relations of biological research to society and politics. During the 1990s his interests broadened further to embrace the role of scientific inquiry in democratic societies. With reference to pragmatism of John Dewey and William James he developed lately a program for naturalistic ethics and neo-Deweyan "reconstruction" of religious faith. He is regarded as an eminent exponent of American pragmatism which is proved by his earlier collection of essays, "Preludes to Pragmatism. Toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy" (Oxford 2012).

Suspicious of the philosophical idea of a special "ethical point of view" and the idea that all ethical issues can have a final solution, Kitcher, nevertheless, thinks that secularists can rehabilitate the egalitarian notion of ethical truth by defending a set of core ethical truths, available in principle to all human beings with each human perspective as an essential part of the negotiation. Progressive ethical change happens in solving problems through a collective construction of an improved ethical code which, however, remains a never ending human endeavor. As many Western intellectuals Kitcher subscribes to a secular humanism (opposed to theistic humanism), origins of which are in the Enlightenment, as a distinctive feature of the secularized mentality of the modern West. With other secular humanists he believes that human beings can spare traditional religions. He envisages a progressive future, not one in which religion necessarily disappears, but one in which it changes into secular humanism. Ancient religious texts could still be read, but their significance should be limited to presentation of important ethical truths, appreciated independently of any religious claim. Thus, he resists a religion that consists of bodies of doctrine about the existence and attributes of special kinds of beings (deities) who deserve worship and service. First, doctrines to be believed by a devotee are not central to all forms of religion. Secondly, not all of the many religious practices of human cultures are centered on deities: some focus on spirits, or ancestors, or even on impersonal "forces," important for religious people. But Kitcher's humanism is not simply opposed to religion because he modifies somehow the concept of religion itself. Since the mass of the faithful, he argues, is not much focused on the search for (religious) knowledge, we should give up the idea that religious faith is primarily a matter of belief. Kitcher reduces accordingly religion to its ethical dimension treating it only as a source of inspiration for solving intellectual and practical (moral) problems. At the heart of the religious attitude he places faith, which he defines as a belief that outruns the evidence available to relevant believer. He conceives religious faith primarily in terms of an orientation, by which he means "a complex of psychological states: of valuing, desires, intentions, emotions, and commitments".

The reviewed book is organized into a "Preface" and five chapters. In "Preface" Kitcher outlines autobiographically his way of departure from religion: as a boy and teenager singing in the church choir to the adult who loses his faith and abandons the Anglican Church. The introductory chapter 1, "Doubt Delineated," explains his rejection of all kinds of traditional religion even if he still appreciates the central role religions play in the lives of many people. His main purpose here is to show that a secular outlook (secular humanism) can fulfill many functions and goals of a traditional religion and that ethical

values are not necessarily subordinated to any religious doctrine. He portrays his departure from religious belief to atheism. He feels a strong need to justify his atheistic attitude and develops skeptical arguments against the existence of the deity (or deities). At the same time, he discusses the situation and the analogy between the argumentation in religion and science, in faith and in the mundane knowledge. He tries to repudiate the objection that his critique of religion does not touch the real faith. Asking what exactly religion is, or what counts as "a religion," he conceives traditional religions primarily as bodies of doctrine with the central question of the "transcendent". In chapter 2, "Values Vindicated," Kitcher considers the traditional connections between religion and ethics (morality). He recognizes that a secular outlook has some problems in offering an adequate account of moral values that will not reduce them to the expression of subjective attitudes to avoid the objection of ethical relativism. Considering himself a Darwinist, Kitcher, typically for secular humanists, argues for a naturalistic approach to values. Ethical rules (and moral obligation) do not originate in anything like a divine command but have evolved over the centuries as a way to avoid functional conflicts and to promote of harmony in a society. At the same time, he tries to show that secularists can obtain a clearer and more convincing account of ethical values than any religion in its traditional forms can provide. Chapter 3, "Religion Refined," considers a refined secularized version of religion which primary function is to orient life by recognizing important values. Kitcher distinguishes "two versions of refined religion, the 'straightforward' one that identifies the transcendent as the source of values, and a 'modest' alternative that views faith in the transcendent as deepening commitment and confidence with respect to independently grounded values." Not doctrinal statements about the transcendent "but a commitment to values that are external to (independent of) the believer, and indeed to all human beings" is the essence of religion in the spirit of neo-Deweyan, because having a religious orientation does not presuppose holding any religious beliefs or assenting to any religious doctrines. Although sympathetic to religious concerns and to the enlightened versions of religion, Kitcher rejects in the end the refined religion as not going far enough. To develop the sense of identity and community – traditionally fostered by religion – "contemporary secularists (should) borrow their ideas from poets and film makers, musicians, artists, and scientists, cultivating social institutions." The chapter 4, "Mortality and Meaning," discusses the question how a secular outlook can confer meaning upon one's life similarly to traditional religions. Kitcher's suggestions seem here somehow heroic. He reminds the reader of the classic recommendation, which sees the fear of decaying and dying as being inappropriate, as this belongs to the usual anxieties of life: "with death comes the end of pain, of suffering, of frustrated striving." "Mattering to others is what counts in conferring meaning." The last chapter, "Depth and Depravity," ends with a warning to secular humanism for missing the depth to human lives. Kitcher looks briefly at two literary masterpieces challenging the picture of the depravity of human nature: "King Lear" by Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky's "Brothers Karamazov." Both discussed works adopt a similarly bleak vision of the human condition and of the fragility of life without God. Kitcher admits that a purely negative atheism ignores important aspects of people's lives and seems, alas, sometimes inadequate for grounding claims that some things are moral, and that others should be prohibited.

Although Kitcher begins in doubt by reviewing the most powerful reasons for secularist skepticism, his intention is positive: to construct a purely secular perspective, concerned with the value of human lives in a thoroughly natural world. The erstwhile Enlightenment's secularism, if it is really going to have a chance of replacing religion, needs to be transmuted into secular humanism, taking over the traditional functions of religion, which it played in providing an ethical orientation in life. Like traditional religions secular humanism has to cope with chief human existential challenges, but here Kitcher loyally admits that mortality and meaning still raise a serious problem for secular humanism as it does not satisfy every psychological need for instance to promise comparable to traditional religions a personal, continuation *post mortem* to which mundane life would be only a prelude (to offer comfort in the face of death and give hope of life after death).

Contrary to contemporary militant atheists (D. C. Dennett) for whom religion is the root of all evil, Kitcher resists the dominant atheist idea that "religion is noxious rubbish to be buried as deeply, as thoroughly, and as quickly as possible." On the contrary, for many reasons Kitcher is respectful of traditional religions and sympathetic to many religious ideas. Although he sees religious doctrines as a kind of poetry, which became today incredible, he sees other valuable aspects of religion. He acknowledges religion as a significant agent that fortifies the human spirit in the face of death and against other evils destroying individuals and societies. Critical of the new atheists for misunderstanding the social and ethical function of religions, he admires the Catholic Church for defending Christian culture. After the rejection of religious commitment that leaves a vacuum demanding to be filled, his central purpose is to provide a secular and naturalistic alternative to religion. The secular world is not something to be frightened of, and the secular perspective can successfully replace the religious one.

Kitcher's naturalistic secularism first and foremost is an ontological view with sociopolitical consequences. He places human beings at the center of reality and value and conceives them as both creators and *loci* of value. His naturalism entails a "soft atheism" (a non-theistic "religion"), that admits no supernatural entities even though acknowledges the bare possibility of the transcendent, though regards the present assertions of any such aspect of reality as entirely unwarranted. Abraham religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are for Kitcher prime examples of religion. A faith in God remains only an existential, personal choice without any substantial arguments, known from science. Therefore, it is not so much religion itself as the theistic thesis ("core challenge of secularism"), which raises Kitcher's decisive objections: there are no

adequate reasons for the existence of a transcendent being (a creative intelligence) radically different in kind from any mundane (physical) reality, and accessible *via* the scientific methods used to investigate other aspects of our world. Kitcher's atheistic (or more properly agnostic) stance, however, does not consist in an active disbelief. He proposes to see both science and religion as equally progressive, developing factually superior descriptions and explanations as well as enhanced ways of responding to the human condition. A secularist – remembering the history of inquiries into the natural world – should remain open to the theistic thesis because our inquiry, "even at its most rigorous, is fallible. Future generations may revise claims we take to be firmly established." A secularist should not categorically deny the possibility of the transcendent because he cannot exclude the possibility that some future extension of methods, recognized today as reliable, will disclose a type of entity different from other aspects of reality that will entail a conceptual revision of our thinking about the world.

Kitcher's arguments for atheism (against the theistic thesis) call to mind the conflicting diversity of opinions about the transcendent being and the cultural origin of religious beliefs. Bringing to mind the epistemic rule of W. K. Clifford that "it is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on the basis of insufficient evidence," Kitcher concludes: processes that generate specific beliefs about the transcendent are so unreliable that all of the conflicting specific religious doctrines are, almost certainly, false. Although the canons of good explanations are various, none of them sanctions the idea of a transcendent creative mind as an explanatory hypothesis. Against the justificatory force of the theistic thesis, Kitcher develops what he somewhat unclear calls an "argument from symmetry." As the main doubt regarding the existence of God he names an astounding variety and widespread inconsistency and contradiction of religious doctrines, disagreement in doctrine of different (Christian) denominations, disagreement about cogent modes of religious argument, a radical contrast with beliefs on the basis of evidence, lack of progress in settling divergent opinions, the dependance of religious doctrines from prevalent culture and society, i.e., their culture-boundness. Likewise, from a secular perspective, there seems to be no way to guarantee the objectiveness of moral values and the existence of an independent ethical order. For secularists, missing an "external" objective standard (a transcendent realm, Platonic or religious), prior to and independent of human choices and decisions, there remains a cluster of philosophical accounts that divorce the ethical standards from the natural world. Kitcher is not, however, a radical scientist: even if scientific knowledge (natural sciences) and scientific methods remain for him a "natural" point of reference, he recognizes that science is not infallible and not always a body of demonstrated truths.

It is not easy to name and to discuss in detail the many and complex subjects and problems of Kitcher's monograph, origins of which are in the author's (he started as a religious person) personal experience how to live in the secularized world after the rejection of the religious faith. Many of Kitcher's ideas about religion, theism, and atheism are not new. His doubts and arguments against religion and the theistic thesis have been discussed many times before but even if some of the relevant topics are well-known, their vivid discussion engages the reader. He is not very original when he stresses the social value of religion in the public sphere. One of the strengths of Kitcher's partially essayist analyses, placed in the tradition of the American pragmatism (Clifford, Dewey, James), is their precision even there where he calls to mind poetry and literature. Because the author is an expert on contemporary (Anglican) Christian theology and disputed there questions, the monograph deserves more than a hasty lecture. It presupposes some sophisticated knowledge of the contemporary literature and the discussions on atheism and theism. Kitcher's argumentation in favor of the atheistic stance and against the theistic thesis is not, however, in every case successful, not only because he expresses his point of view cautiously ("almost certainly false, almost certainly inadequate"). The argument from the diversity of beliefs as such does not prove much because a variety of religious beliefs does not necessarily exclude the possibility that some particular beliefs could be true, as in case of the thesis about the existence of God on which all theistic religions agree. Also arguments in favor of atheism from the origin and dependence of religious beliefs to cultural circumstances seem weak because the way of propagation of some beliefs does not simply involve their falsity founded after all on certain states of affairs. One of the weaknesses of Kitcher's intellectually appealing defense of atheism is also that he, unfortunately, ignores to discuss the multiple serious works and objections by theologians, philosophers, and scientists over the last few years in defense of traditional forms of religious faith. Let me add that also a native speaker may have some problems with the nuanced terminology and idiomatic expressions ("human predicament, pragmatic constraint, religious aptness, enduring human purposes") not always found in the index.

I conclude with a personal remark: religious faith is always accompanied by disbelief and disbelief is always associated with proportional belief. A person who would try to accept the theistic thesis removing earlier all theoretical and practical obstacles would also not be able to make a single step in everyday life. Our life depends simply on many – better or worse and many times on not at all justified – beliefs. Any model of secular (refined) religion presents itself faintly in comparison to traditional (monotheistic) religion, where the believer in prayer addresses a personal God directly, "affirming a fatherly creator, whose perfect goodness combines with omnipotence and omniscience."

Andrzej Bronk

Kohn, Eduardo: How Forests Think. Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. 267 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-27611-6. Price: £ 19.95

In "How Forests Think," Eduardo Kohn examines many occasions where Amazonian Kichwa people (Runa)