Sketch for a Theory of the History of Philosophy

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My aims in this essay are two. First (§§1-4), I want to get clear on the very idea of a theory of the history of philosophy, the idea of an overarching account of the evolution of philosophical reflection since the inception of written philosophy. And secondly (§§5-8), I want to actually sketch such a global theory of the history of philosophy, which I call the *two-streams theory*.

I. On the Very Idea of A Theory of the History of Philosophy

1. History vs. Chronology

Let us start with the distinction between a history and a chronology. A chronology is an unstructured list of things that happened – or more accurately, a list structured only *temporally*, that is, by earlier-than, simultaneous-with, and later-than relations. Chronologies were prominent, for instance, in early Greek historiography of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (think of Herodotus' *Histories*). Especially when information is scarce, chronologies are extremely valuable. But the idea of a history connotes something that goes beyond a chronology. A history is not just a list of events, but an attempt at understanding longitudinal processes of development (evolution) and break or turning points (revolutions). Thus history goes beyond chronology in incorporating an element of theorization or interpretation – at bottom: an attempt at *sense-making*. To do so, it takes the (nearly) unstructured list of events and imposes some structure or organization on it. At the very least, it supplements the list's *temporal* structure with a *causal* structure.

One might think of a chronology of philosophy in a number of ways. It could be a list of all philosophers, a list of all philosophical ideas, or a list of all philosophical texts. In practice focus has been on philosophers as the standard nodes in

philosophical chronologies. This makes certain sense: philosophical texts are only interesting insofar as they express philosophical ideas, and fragmentary philosophical ideas coalesce into substantive philosophical conceptions, typically, in the intellects of individual thinkers. Demarcating what makes a given thinker a philosopher (or for that matter what makes an idea or text philosophical) is of course quite the chestnut, but let us bracket this question here. What I want to highlight at this point is only that a chronology of philosophy is the starting point for any history of philosophy. It gives us the material, the *data*, for historical theorizing.

In current historiography of (Western) philosophy, in practice this consists in two types of research, plus an outlier. The first type of research is work on the correct interpretation of an individual thinker: Was Boethius really a nominalist? What did Leibniz mean with his cryptic but foundational remark that the monads have no windows? What exactly was Russell's theory of judgment? The other line of research concerns the (re)discovery of unknown or lesser-known thinkers and interpretation of their ideas. The recent flourish of research into non-canonized thinkers, often female, falls within this line. Who was George Stout and what were his distinctive philosophical accomplishments? Who was Margaret Cavendish and what exactly was her position on the mind-body problem? Who was Gersonides and what was his distinctive contribution to Jewish Averroism? Answers to such questions constitute contributions toward an accurate chronology of philosophy. In addition, and this is more of an outlier in the historiography of philosophy, some historians occasionally attempt to synthesize others' interpretive work into something like a self-conscious chronology. In current research the gold standard for this is Peter Adamson's masterful series of books on the "history of philosophy without any gaps."

On the basis of chronologies devised and refined through these types of research, one may then go on to *theorize* about the unfolding over time of philosophical ideas. But what does "theorizing" on the history of philosophy consist in?

2. What is a Theory of the History of Philosophy?

Modeling again on general historiography, I wish to distinguish four main stages of potential theorizing in the historiography of philosophy. They correspond to (i) singular causation, (ii) processes, (iii) causal laws, and (iv) overall or "total" theory.

Given a complete chronology of things that happened, one might wish in the first instance to identify individual causal links between two particular events. This is singular causation: the throwing of the rock caused the shuttering of the window, the

crash caused the explosion, and so on. Identifying individual causal links is the first stage of historical sense-making. The second stage is the identification of certain *chains* of singular-causal links. We may think of sequences of such individual causal links that exhibit the right kind of internal cohesion as *processes*, leading non-accidentally from a start point to an end point. This is probably the level of analysis that characterizes most closely academic historians' research nowadays.

A third and more ambitious stage of historical theorizing, one that definitely does not characterize typical historiographic research these days, would attempt to identify *laws* of history. We move from singular causation to causal laws when we notice that token events exemplifying certain event-*types* tend to cause token events that exemplify other event-types. The causal law links the event types: the throwing of rocks *of such-and-such weight* tends to cause the shuttering of windows *of such-and-such density*. It is healthy, of course, to approach the history of humanity with a certain skepticism about the very existence of such laws; but arguably, it is with the introduction of such historical laws, if such there be, that history would earn its status as a *science* (on this, see Comte's *Cours*). Finally, we can envisage, even more speculatively, that there is a single unified structure to human history as a whole. This is what I called "total history." The best-known example of this is probably Hegel's dialectical theory of history in terms of the progress of the human spirit, embodied in the state, through three stages of ever increasing freedom: from the early Asian empires (notably China and Persia), where only the despot was free, through the Greco-Roman world where only the ruling elites were free, to the German world (what else?), where everybody is free. If it was healthy to approach with skepticism the notion of historical law, it is positively *un*healthy *not* to approach with skepticism the idea of an overall pattern in (or direction of) history; nonetheless a total theory represents the holy grail of historiography, parallel in some respects to the unification of quantum mechanics and relativity into a single overarching theory of fundamental physics.

As with general historiography, research in the historiography of philosophy is rife that targets individual causal links, in this case between individual thinkers. When we study Aristotle's influence on Aquinas, or Descartes' on Spinoza, or Carnap's on Quine, we conduct this type of research. Often the causal influence is acknowledged by the later thinker, but sometimes its extent is unclear prior to close analysis.

Rarer in current historiography of philosophy is research into *processes* in the history of philosophy. Nonetheless, we target such processes when we study the evolution of broadly Scholastic metaphysics from Aquinas in the 13th to Suarez in the 16th century (see, e.g., Robert Pasnau's *Metaphysical Themes: 1274-1671*); the

evolution of German Idealism from Kant to Hegel (see, e.g., Terry Pinkard's *German Philosophy 1760-1860*); or of analytic philosophy from Frege, Moore, and Russell to Quine, Davidson, and beyond (see, e.g., Scott Soames' *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy*).

In contrast, research focused on the search for "laws of history of philosophy" – whereby lawlike causal patterns governing the formation of new philosophical ideas recurring across different segments of the history of philosophy – is essentially nonexistent nowadays. Ditto, of course, for an explicitly articulated total theory of the history of philosophy (whereby a certain unity of "sense" is sought, perhaps encapsulating a directionality). This type of research has vanished from the historiography of philosophy just as much as it has from general historiography. It is an open question whether this reflects a metaphysical conviction that history *has* no laws and no unity; a more epistemological suspicion that even if there were such laws or such unity, we simply could not, with the evidence at our disposal, hope to pin down with any accuracy or precision anything resembling a general law; or just the kind of institutional pressure toward ever increasing specialization that characterizes just as much astrophysics and neurobiology, say.

In any case, it is worth noting that although contemporary historiography of philosophy does not feature research into recurrent patterns or laws of history, much less into a putative overarching unity or direction in the history of philosophy, nor does any work by historians of philosophy suggest a *refutation* of the ideas lawlike patterns or overarching unity. There is not even an explicit *statement* denying the fruitfulness of any research on such questions. The whole question is just completely off the radar in contemporary historiography of philosophy. In the absence of any considerations for or against the questions of historical laws or overarching unity, we may grant ourselves permission, I propose, to dabble in disciplined speculation on these matters.

We may think of this part of the historiography of philosophy as needing to make an initial determination as to the relative plausibility of three positions:

[Skepticism] There are no historical laws, much less an underlying unity, to be found in the history of philosophy.

[Optimism] There is no underlying unity in the history of philosophy, but there are recurrent laws we can identify and formulate.

[Exuberance] There are laws governing historical evolution of philosophical ideas, and a certain underlying unity they embody or exemplify.

Optimists may then divide depending on the kinds of historical laws they hypothesize, and the exuberant must come down on a particular account of the overarching unity in the history of philosophy. In the next section, we take a look at what is to my knowledge the most recent exuberant account of the history of philosophy, developed by Franz Brentano (he of "intentionality as the mark of the mental") in the last decade of the 19th century. It might be useful, I am thinking, to see how this sort of thing might look.

3. A Case Study

It is not part of Brentano's theory of the history of philosophy that it tends toward an endpoint. There is no direction of history here in the way Hegel and Marx claimed for human history in general. Moreover, for Brentano there is no linear progression in the history of philosophy of the sort we may observe in the history of the exact and natural sciences. Rather the history of philosophy resembles more art history, where phases of great creativity generating genuine value are followed by successive phases of decline.

In particular, claims Brentano, there are four phases of philosophical developments that repeat themselves in every era of philosophy. The first phase is the one that generates great philosophical value and carries the torch of philosophical progress. It is marked by two main characteristics: a purely theoretical impulse, grounded in true wonder at the world, and a naturalistic method that adapts itself to its subject matter. This first phase is then followed by three successive phases of ever grosser decline. In the second phase, a practical mindset substitutes the spirit of theoretical wonder, and in consequence, the applied methodology becomes looser and more approximative. This leads inevitably, thinks Brentano, to loss of faith in the advancement of philosophical understanding, and ultimately ushers in a third phase, characterized by skepticism. However, because such skepticism can never quench our inherent thirst for knowledge and understanding, it is soon replaced by a kind of mysterian or mystical inclination characterized by facile and unprincipled belief formation. In this fourth phase we linger until a new era of philosophy begins, studded with creative innovations fueled by purely theoretical interest and oiled by sound methodology.

Brentano's case for this recurring pattern is brief and consists in claiming a natural placing of some prominent figures in the history of philosophy in each phase of each era. The scheme is displayed in Table 1.

	theoretical phase	practical phase	skeptical phase	mysterian phase
Ancient Philosophy	Anaxagoras to Aristotle	Stoicism and Epicureanism	Pyrrhonian Skepticism	Neoplatonism
Medieval Philosophy	Aquinas (and Dominicans)	Scotus (and Franciscans)	Ockham (and nominalists)	Eckhart, Cusanus, etc.
Modern Philosophy	Francis Bacon and Descartes	The Enlightenment	Hume	Reid, Kant, and the Idealists

Table 1. Brentano's Interpretation of the History of Philosophy

The scheme naturally places Brentano's philosophical heroes – Aristotle, Aquinas, and Descartes – in the first, ascendant phases, and associates his nemeses Kant and Hegel with mystics such as Meister Eckhart. It also has the fortuitous if somewhat megalomaniac implication that with Brentano himself a fourth era of philosophical rejuvenation is about to start. But setting aside these problematic features, Brentano's scheme, if accepted, would have the great virtue of imposing a clear organization on the history of philosophy *in toto*, thus *making sense* of it. Instead of a long list of prominent thinkers, we would get a highly structured narrative.

In particular, Brentano's theory of the history of philosophy clearly provides us with *laws* of historical development. We can think of such statements as "a skeptical phase leads to a mysterian phase" as capturing a basic kind of law. In addition, however, we can see the statement "each era is characterized by the same progression through four phases" as a sort of supreme historical law, the law that captures, in a way, the deep uniformity in the history of philosophy.

One may quibble of course with the specifics of Brentano's theory. Why and how did Aquinas get to be the first Medieval philosopher, wondered Étienne Gilson, perhaps the greatest medievalist of the first half of the 20th century – do we not have over half a millennium of medieval philosophical reflection before him? Likewise, *we* may wonder whether Reid is really a mysterian. Brentano treats him so because Reid grounds all knowledge in otherwise ungrounded "commonsense beliefs." This seems a bit thin as a reason to lump Reid together with the likes of Plotinus and Hegel. In fact, the attachment to common sense seems, in temperament at least, all the opposite of the allure of mystical flights.

More deeply, I find it more than a little suspicious that the organization of chronologies into cycles featuring the battle of good versus evil, with eventual rebirth of the good to launch a new cycle – this abstract and somewhat cartoonish pattern –, is

such a recurring theme in many traditions' quasi-mythological histories. Even the number four seems to come up time and again in these systems, for instance in Hindu and Zoroastrian conceptions of history. Might there not be something about our cognitive hardwiring that pushes us to impose cyclical-cum-tetralogical order on the phenomena, instead of it being the phenomena themselves that recommend these four-phase cycles?

In addition, one may also raise an eyebrow about Brentano's dogmatic acceptance of the standard periodization of the history of philosophy in terms of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern eras. This periodization leaves much to be desired, as we will now discuss.

4. Periodization

Perhaps the most elementary way to impose initial structure on an otherwise unstructured list of events is through *periodization*: segmenting the list into more or less self-contained sub-lists. Although in itself a merely temporal specification, the choice of periodization reflects a certain conception of the causal coherence internal to each period, with passage to a new period indicating a break in normal processes of development. To that extent, the periodization we adopt of any history betrays a commitment to a bird's eye view analysis of the major streaks in that history.

The most standard periodization of human history, the one we all learned at school, starts history with the advent of historical records (dismissing everything prior to that as "pre-history") and dividing history into three main periods: the Ancient world, going roughly from the founding of Rome in the mid-8th century BCE to its collapse at the end of the 5th century CE; the Middle Ages, spanning roughly 500-1500; and Modernity, from "the age of discovery" circa 1500 to the present. Wherefrom came to our schools this particular periodization? The answer is not entirely clear. Early Renaissance thinkers, notably Petrarch and Leonardo Bruni, have already divided Western history into three important segments, in which the dark Middle Ages interrupted the intellectual and cultural growth of ideas in the Ancient Greco-Roman world, to be reborn, so to speak, with the Renaissance. This periodization was popularized in the 17th century by the German historian Christoph Keller (a.k.a. Cellarius). But the model became entrenched, and enriched with the concept of "prehistory," primarily through the German Enlightenment; the works of August Ludwig von Schlözer on "universal history" in the final third of the 18th century are representative here.

As we know, the standard periodization of the history of (Western) philosophy, inscribed in the academic curriculum, is essentially the same: we have (1) Ancient Philosophy, going from Thales in the 7th century BCE to circa 500; (2) Medieval Philosophy, going basically from 500 to 1600; and (3) Modern Philosophy, starting with Descartes in the early 17th century and still ongoing. Each of these mega-periods also admits of a more or less standard sub-periodization in the curriculum. Thus we divide Ancient Philosophy into (1.1) the Pre-Socratics (7th – 5th BCE), (1.2) Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, (1.3) Hellenistic philosophy (4th BCE – 3rd CE), and (1.4) Late Antiquity (3rd – 6th CE); Medieval Philosophy into (2.1) the Early Middle Ages (6th – 10th CE), (2.2) the High Middle Ages (11th – 13th), and, sometimes but not always set apart, (2.3) Renaissance Philosophy (14th – 16th); while Modern Philosophy we divide into (3.1) Early Modern (17th -18th, Descartes to Kant), (3.2) 19th-century philosophy, and (3.3) 20th century to the present (starting with Frege, Moore, and Russell for analytic philosophy, Husserl for phenomenology).

A curious feature of this standard periodization is that it is entirely derivative from the periodization of human history in general – it takes into account exactly nothing specific to the development of philosophical ideas. This is in truth very odd. Is there really a reason we should expect philosophical turning points to align so perfectly with turning points in the history of humanity more generally? Perhaps there is such a reason, say, as far as political philosophy is concerned. But when it comes to metaphysics, say, it would be very surprising if the rise and fall of Rome should coincide with the rise and fall of abstracta, or if the "age of discovery" that ushered in Modernity happened to coincide with the rise of idealism. At any rate, even if major events in human history did trigger important philosophical developments, why should the absence of major historical events encourage the absence of important philosophical developments? We might, on the contrary, expect long-term stability to provide the foundations for contemplative progress; or we might expect individual genius to show up in complete independence of historical context.

As soon as we take critical distance from this standard periodization of the history of philosophy, its flaws become instantly evident. I will name only two.

Arguably, the most important, most decisive century in the whole of (Western) philosophy is that from Plato's birth to Aristotle's death. Whitehead famously said that the philosophical tradition consists in a series of footnotes to Plato. As I will later suggest, Whitehead was half right and very wrong: it would be more accurate to say that *half* the philosophical tradition consists in footnotes to (i.e., elaborations of) Plato; the other half consists in footnotes to/elaborations of Aristotle. Yet this pivotal sub-period occurs in the *middle* of the standard period we call Ancient Philosophy. In a

proper periodization, I suggest, that fateful century would launch a new stage in the history of philosophy. This is an instance where a crucial juncture in the history of philosophy corresponds to no pivotal event in the larger history of human affairs.

Secondly (and conversely), when we look for a major philosophical turning point to accompany the fall of Rome in 476, and to signal a transition from the first to the second great supposed periods of Western philosophy, we come up blank. The best candidate is surely Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, as well as his earlier commentaries on Aristotle and Porphyry. But although Boethius was very influential in the Middle Ages, he is generally regarded as a relatively derivative thinker, mostly combining and modifying familiar Aristotelian, Neoplatonist, and Christian ideas. And it is noteworthy that most philosophy graduates today earn their B.A. without ever hearing of Boethius in the classroom – or indeed outside it. Clearly, then, we do not in fact designate Boethius as a crucial figure marking a turning point in the history of philosophy.

To be clear, I am personally a big fan of Boethius, whom I take to have a strong claim to being the first (Western) nominalist. But my point is once removed from the first-order question of the merit in Boethius' philosophical ideas. The question I am raising is rather this: since we do not in fact take Boethius to represent anything like the kind of turning point in the history of philosophy that we take the fall of the Roman Empire to be in Western history, why do we align the periodization of the history philosophy with that of the history of human affairs writ large? This alignment seems in truth entirely artificial.

Why, then, *do* we cut up the history of philosophy the way we do? One line of thought is that *any* periodization of the history of philosophy is bound to be arbitrary to some extent, so we might as well adopt an otherwise familiar framework for cutting it up. Now, in this form, the claim seems to me a tad too strong – surely some putative periodizations are better than others. Nonetheless, it is quite likely that a multiplicity of possible periodizations would prove equally good, at least from certain perspectives, and anyway there are probably no "facts of the matter" about the *correct* periodization. However, this point by itself does not quite justify uncritical acceptance of the standard periodization of the history of philosophy. In fact, it *encourages* the floating of alternative periodizations and their comparison with the standard one and with one another.

II. The Parallel-Streams Theory

5. Two Philosophical Temperaments

In the remainder of this paper I want to sketch the kind of theory of the history of philosophy that I find most initially appealing. Indeed I take this to be the most banal and undaring theory of the history of philosophy one might come up with. Its main virtue is just in *being* a theory – a theory of the history of philosophy as a whole.

I will start by sketching a portrait of two opposing philosophical temperaments. I will call them Temperament A and Temperament B to avoid any baggage that might come with more illuminating labels, though one would not be too far off the mark if instead one called them the Platonist and Aristotelian temperaments. I will then sketch a way to model the development of philosophical ideas in terms of the interaction of three forces feeding into individual thinkers' work, resulting in the parallel development toward the self-articulation, if you will, of a stable, maximally plausible A-type worldview and a stable, maximally plausible B-type worldview.

My portrait of the two temperaments, in Table 2, is in the style of caricature. I imagine that a single philosopher embodies *all* A-type temperamental characteristics and another embodies all B-type characteristics. In practice, the vast majority of philosophers are thankfully more complex intellectual personalities. But caricature has its expository virtues.

	Temperament A	**Temperament B**
in metaphysics,	a welcoming attitude toward all manners of abstracta and universals, seen not just as necessary concessions but as agreeable liberators from the dreariness of concrete reality;	a marked preference for nominalism and desert landscapes, not just as outputs of fair-minded evaluation of arguments but as a precondition for a serious attempt to make sense of the world;
in (the part of metaphysics we now call) philosophy of mind,	an anti-materialist instinct that spans the gamut of dualism, idealism, and other ways of recognizing something other than brute matter among the ungrounded grounds of reality;	a strong attachment to materialism (or " physicalism" in the newfangled jargon);
in epistemology,	a tendency toward rationalism and intuitionism, with a faith in a	an empiricist inclination to base all knowledge on observational

	priori principles as epistemic foundations from which the rest of our knowledge is deductively inferred;	encounter with particular facts – dated and localized occurrences – and inductive rather than deductive inference from them;
in moral philosophy,	a rationalist approach that seeks to derive commonly accepted moral precepts from a priori moral principles;	a more sentimentalist attempt to ground moral understanding in concrete emotional experience rather than pure reason;
in philosophical methodology,	a willingness to accept mysterian and sometimes even mystical elements in a complete picture of the world (footnote: for religious philosophers, enter *credo quia absurdum* etc.);	a naturalism that puts a premium on explanations that appeal only to posits internal to the spatiotemporal realm (footnote: for religious philosophers, substitute rational theism);
in meta-philosophical sensibility,	a tireless monism convinced that the plurality in appearance must belie an ultimate unity in noumenal reality, and indeed that reality only becomes fully intelligible when this unity is uncovered;	a skeptical attitude toward the monistic drive and a greater trust in pluralistic accounts that resist forcing unity on the phenomena;
in philosophical prose,	an emphasis on the literary and Humanistic qualities of presentation and an acknowledgement of the role of rhetoric in communicating ideas.	a dry and literal style that prizes clarity and precision above all and takes as its model science writing rather than literature.

Table 2. Caricature of Two Basic Philosophical Temperaments

A very similar opposition is proposed, incidentally, by William James in Chap. 1 of *Pragmatism*. James distinguishes between "two kinds of philosopher," one of whom he calls *tender-minded* and characterizes as "Rationalistic (going by 'principles'), Intellectualistic, Idealistic, Optimistic, Religious, Free-Willist, Monistic, Dogmatical"; the other he calls *tough-minded* and characterizes as "Empiricist (going by 'facts'), Sensationalistic, Materialistic, Pessimistic, Irreligious, Pluralistic, Sceptical." I bracket for present purposes the question of whether James' is in fact the *same* distinction, but with differences of emphasis due to different philosophical climate, or a similar but

slightly different distinction. I just mean to signal a certain precedent to the distinction I draw between Temperaments A and B.

As noted, it is natural to see Plato and Aristotle as prototypes of type-A and type-B philosophers. (Here I use "prototype" in the industrial sense of the term, so to speak; in the sense in which it is used in the cognitive psychology of concepts, to mean something like *paradigm*, the honors may go rather to Plotinus and Hume.) Plato's well-known metaphysics of a-spatial and a-temporal Forms as what is most real, his idealism and arguments for the incorporeality and immortality of the soul, as well as his account of knowledge as innate and only recalled (rather than acquired) with the aid of sense perception – all present already in the *Phaedo* – testify to his A temperament; and of course Plato's dialogues afford some of the greatest literary delights of all philosophical prose. Meanwhile, Aristotle's focus on the metaphysics of material objects and his understanding of *in re* universals as enclosed within spacetime, his integrated hylomorphist account of the mind-body relationship, his straightforward empiricist statement, in *De Anima* III, that "if we did not perceive anything, we would not learn or understand anything," and his appreciation for the variety and multiplicity of phenomena, perhaps most evident in his biological works, all stand in testimony to his B temperament; but no reader of the *Metaphysics* would accuse its author of excess lyricism, however awestruck we might be by his sheer brainpower.

6. Two Parallel Streams

It is useful for my proposed theory of the history of philosophy that Plato and Aristotle fit the A and B molds so well, because for almost two millennia following them, the history of philosophy was almost *self-consciously* the result of the ongoing competitive juxtaposition of a Platonist and an Aristotelian worldview, modulo the occasional dismissal of both as relics of dangerous paganism or their attempted synthesis into a single worldview of "the philosopher." All the way up to the Renaissance we find philosophers time and again designating *themselves* as Platonist or Aristotelian, or dedicating themselves to commentary or analysis of Platonic and/or Aristotelian texts. From my perspective, though, it is not Plato and Aristotle themselves that define the subsequent unfolding of the history of philosophy. Rather, they play the special roles they do only because they happen to offer early and near-perfect embodiments of Temperaments A and B.

Insofar as two thousand years of (Western) philosophy self-consciously lend themselves to modeling in terms of a competitive juxtaposition of early embodiments

of Temperament A and Temperament B, a model of the entire history of philosophy as organized around the parallel development and self-articulation of these two philosophical temperaments carries initial plausibility. It is mostly the extension of the model into Modern Philosophy that requires an element of "creativity" on the theory's part. But in truth the commonplace division of Modern philosophers into rationalists and empiricists maps relatively neatly onto Temperaments A and B as well (hence James' division of philosophers into Rationalist lovers of principles and Empiricist lovers of facts). My own view is that the standard classification of Descartes as a rationalist is something of a historiographical blunder, but bracketing the case of Descartes, it is not hard to appreciate how Spinoza, Kant, and 19th-century German and British Idealists partake in Temperament A, or how Temperament B is exemplified by the British Empiricists, 19th-century continental positivists like Auguste Comte and Ernst Mach, as well as Brentano and some of his followers, notably the "Polish logicians and nominalists," as Ernest Nagel called them in what is probably the first self-conscious use of the expression "analytic philosophy" – Nagel's 1936 paper "Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe."

With these remarks in place, let me now provide a sketch of two parallel streams in the history of philosophy, an A- and a B-stream. I issue a series of caveats immediately thereafter.

- Plato
- Speusippus, Xenocrates, and the Old Academy
- Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, and the other Middle Platonists
- Seneca, Epictetus, and most Stoics

- Plotinus
- Porphyry, Augustine, Boethius, and other Neoplatonists
- Eriugena
- Anselm
- Bonaventure

- Marsilio Ficino, Cusanus, and other Renaissance Humanists
- Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz

- Aristotle
- Peripatetics from Theophrastus through Alexander of Aphrodisias to Andronicus

- Epicureans from Epicurus to Lucretius

- Boethius

- Al-Farabi

- Averroes, Maimonides, Albert the Great, Aquinas, Ockham, other Averroists and Scholastics

- Suárez, Francis Bacon
- Descartes

- Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists
- Kant
- Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and other German as well as British Idealists
- Husserl and transcendental phenomenology, neo-Kantians
- G. E. Moore
- From Locke through Hume to Mill: three centuries of British Empiricism
- Comte and Mach (early positivism)
- Brentano and most parts of the Brentano School
- The Vienna Circle and Quine

Now to the caveats. First, note that the two streams are not exclusive. I have included Boethius and Descartes in both, because each seems to me to have initiated philosophical developments of the first significance within both streams. (I bracket here my reasons for saying this; the point is just that there is nothing inherently problematic in the notion of such dual contribution.) Secondly, my two streams are not exhaustive either: I am not sure, for instance, where if anywhere to place American Pragmatism, Husserl, or Wittgenstein. (The problem may be just epistemic, insofar as more sustained analysis would issue in *some* recommendation; but there may also be no fact of the matter about such things.) Thirdly, it is important to keep in mind, in any case, that most philosophers fit neither *caricature* very closely, and I am assigning them to one stream rather than another mostly because they *resemble* one caricature more than they do the other. Fourthly, obviously the choice of who to include on these lists reflects a certain view about who the important figures are in each era. Here I have not exercised any personal judgment but have simply placed canonical figures on the list. But a proper development of a theory of the history of philosophy *should* exercise judgment. Finally, and most importantly, it is perfectly possible to disagree about the proper classification of some of these thinkers. I can see the case, for instance, for denying Boethius a place in the B-stream, or according Al-Farabi a subsidiary assignment in the A-stream. However, to quarrel about the proper assignment of this or that figure in stream A or B is not itself to question the usefulness of organizing the history of philosophy along these two streams. As a tool for imposing structure on what is otherwise a brute chronology of philosophy, the division of the history of philosophy into developments in Temperament A's self-articulation and Temperament B's self-articulation may prove illuminating – that is, it may help us see real order and real patterns in the history of philosophy – even if it is not always immediately clear where an individual philosopher is best placed within this superstructure.

Is there a direction to the history of philosophy, if this is how we think of it? There certainly need not be, and perhaps owing to my own B-ish temperament, I am disinclined to think of history, philosophical or otherwise, in teleological terms. (I am with Ranke and Herzen against Hegel and Marx on this!) Nonetheless, it is certainly possible to imagine two natural "resting points" for the history of philosophy as modeled here. The first is the convergence on something resembling long-term consensus on what the stablest and most ultima facie plausible philosophical package deals are tailored to A-type antecedent sensibilities and B-type sensibilities. The second is the fashioning of the stablest and most ultima facie plausible synthesis of the two outlooks.

As duly promised, the above is almost banal as a theory of the history of philosophy. Much of it is generated by stitching together two dividing lines familiar from standard historiography of philosophy – the Platonist/Aristotelian line for Ancient and Medieval philosophy and the rationalist/empiricist line for Modern philosophy – to reconstruct two more or less continuous streams of unfolding philosophical developments. The distinctive claim here is mostly just that the underlying rationale for this organization has to do with a dichotomy between two opposing philosophical temperaments, namely, those caricatured above.

7. Mechanics of Progression

Given an organization of the history of philosophy along two parallel streams, how are we to understand the evolution of ideas within each stream? My suggestion is that an individual thinker's philosophical ideas are the resultants of three forces. The first is the influence of earlier thinkers of similar temperament. The second is *counter*-influence, so to speak, by challenges the thinker perceives as emerging from the opposing philosophical temperament. The third is the thinker's own intellectual impetus, imparting on his or her work the distinctive and unpredictable quality that makes the history of philosophy such a "live" process.

Different thinkers will exhibit different admixtures of these three forces in their philosophical "output." On the whole, we seem to designate as key figures in the history of philosophy those we take to (i) have a larger than usual portion of personal impetus in the formation of their ideas and (ii) exercise a larger than usual influence and/or counter-influence on subsequent thinkers. Philosophers we take to exhibit (i) but not (ii), or (ii) but not (i), tend to sit on the cusp of our pantheon – they are objects of intense scholarship but do not typically show up in the undergraduate curriculum (Brentano may fit the first profile, Averroes the second).

Among the philosophers we take to exhibit both (i) and (ii) – that is, high-impetus philosophers exercising considerable influence and counter-influence – certain further distinctions may be made. In particular, we might distinguish three profiles: (a) those thinkers who are themselves susceptible primarily to counter-influence (e.g., Kant, slumber-woken as he is by Hume), (b) those more susceptible to straightforward influence (e.g., Aquinas, drawing primarily on Aristotle), and (c) those appearing to form their philosophical ideas almost entirely from internal impetus (Descartes?). Here, too, of course, caricatures are useful in bringing out more sharply what in reality are much blurrier affairs.

Within the framework I am proposing, a history of (Western) philosophy would trace the development of ideas as a function of the forces of influence, counter-influence, and impetus swirling in each stream, the A stream originating in Plato and the B stream originating in Aristotle. Those streams develop at some periods in relative isolation from each other, at others through intense cross-fertilization or even partial merging, but most of the time somewhere in-between. It is very unusual, though, for developments in one stream to be comprehensible without *any* reference to preceding and roughly contemporaneous developments in the other. Full appreciation of the one is thus likely to require substantial appreciation of the other. Still, we may legitimately view each stream as seeking primarily its most plausible self-articulation given the challenges posed by the other stream.

What kind of historical laws, if any, should we expect in a parallel-stream model of the history of philosophy? We might hope to find, at a suitable level of descriptive abstraction, certain recurring patterns in the way individual philosophers build on predecessors to develop ever purer embodiments of one philosophical temperament; here the mini-histories of Late Scholasticism, British Empiricism, and German Idealism might provide fertile material. On the other hand, we might also hope to discover recurring patterns in the way individual philosophers develop breakthrough ideas in reaction to challenges they perceive from thinkers of the opposing philosophical temperament. Here we might think paradigmatically of Aristotle's reaction to Plato, Kant's reaction to Hume, and the two roughly simultaneous and broadly "analytic" reactions to 19th-century idealism: Moore and Russell's to British Idealism and Brentano's to German Idealism. If certain abstract regularities can be found across these cases, they might serve as prima facie hypotheses about historical laws. These would be putative *laws of influence* and putative *laws of counter-influence*. I personally suspect there are not also "laws of impetus" for us to seek: individuals' idiosyncratic intellectual impetus

is precisely what injects into the history of philosophy its contingent, accidental, unpredictable (in a word: Dionysian) dimension.

In addition to such laws of influence and counter-influence, we also have the "supreme law" that the history of philosophy progresses in two parallel streams, in which the stablest and most ultima facie plausible philosophical package deals are sought that would articulate Temperament A's and Temperament B's antecedent sensibilities. This is our counterpart to Brentano's law that each era in the history of philosophy is characterized by the same progression through four phases. It is what captures the most fundamental structure we are trying to impose on the chronology of philosophy.

8. Periodization Again

I want to close with some remarks on how periodization of the history of philosophy should be approached within the parallel-streams framework. But perhaps the most important upshot of the framework is that we approach the history of philosophy wrongly when we slice it "horizontally," along historical periods, and expect period-based academic specialization. We do the history of philosophy greater justice, in fact, when we slice it "vertically," along longitudinal segments of the two parallel streams I have sketched, and encourage specialization in the evolution of ideas across time within either stream. This kind of historian of philosophy does exist: for the A-stream, we have the work of Raymond Klibansky, who published on Plato, Proclus and other Neoplatonists, the reception of Platonic ideas in Byzantine and Islamic philosophy, and the continuity through the Middle Ages all the way to Cusanus in the Renaissance (see, e.g., Klibansky 1939); for the B-stream, see notably the work of Hamid Taieb, who has published on B-type thinkers from Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias though Aquinas and Peter Auriol to Brentano and Twardowski, *inter alia* (see, e.g., Taieb 2018). But the academic norm is clearly horizontal rather than vertical specialization. This makes a certain amount of professional sense. Vertical scholarship obviously requires non-trivial linguistic and historical competencies. Still, as noted it seems to me to do greater justice to the internal logic of the history of philosophy, and is more likely to bring us nearer a correct understanding of the overall history of philosophy.

That said, it is an independently interesting question how we should approach the periodization of the history of philosophy within the parallel-streams framework. Here two (entirely compatible) periodization projects suggest themselves to me.

The first project is to segment each stream separately into its own distinctive periods. What are the turning points in Temperament A's philosophical self-articulation, and what in Temperament B's? For A, we might for instance designate Plato to Plotinus as the first era, Plotinus to Kant as the second era, and post-Kantian A-type philosophy as the era we are still in; and for B, we might take Aristotle to Aquinas as the first era, Aquinas to Bacon as the second era, the half-millennium of predominantly Anglophone empiricism and positivism between Bacon and Quine as a third era, and post-Quinean B-type philosophy as a fourth era now in its infancy (see Table 3). I am proposing this periodization mostly for the sake of illustration. But there are several general points it serves to illustrate. First of all, the philosophical periodization need not align with the Schlözer-style periodization of Western history into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. Secondly, the periodizations of the A stream and B stream need not align *with each other*; in fact, there is little reason to expect them to. Thirdly, periods can vary greatly in their length – there is no reason to expect neat roughly millennium-long periods in the history of philosophy. And fourthly, we may find that one stream naturally segments more fine-grainedly than the other; again, there is no a priori reason to expect anything else.

• Plato (370 BCE) • Plotinus (250 CE) • Kant (1790)	• Aristotle (340 BCE) • Aquinas (1270) • Bacon (1600) • Quine (1950)

Table 3. A Possible Two-Stream Periodization of the History of Philosophy

A second periodization project within the parallel-streams framework would seek to segment the overall history of (Western) philosophy by the relative long-term dominance of Temperament A or Temperament B in the philosophical landscape. Three types of *possible* periods might be distinguished: when Temperament A is dominant, when Temperament B is dominant, and when neither dominates. Thus, we might designate the period between Plato and Plotinus as a first era of no-dominance; the period between Plotinus and Averroes/Aquinas as a

second era, dominated by Temperament A; the period from Aquinas to Spinoza as dominated by the B temperament; and thereafter a fourth period of renewed no-dominance.

• Plato/Aristotle (350 BCE) • Plotinus (250 CE)	No dominance
• Aquinas (1270)	A-dominance
• Descartes (1640)	B-dominance
	No dominance

Table 4. A Possible Single Periodization

I close with four general notes on these two periodization projects. First, both projects invite *sub*-periodizations as well. Thus, even if the current, fourth stage in our single overall periodization is characterized by no-dominance, it might seem natural to view the half century from Descartes to Locke as A-accented, the following century – from Locke to Kant – as B-accented, and the following century as A-accented again. It is just with a coarser-grained look that we see the larger period as more balanced.

Second, if we start our two historical streams with Plato and Aristotle, we are effectively confining Socrates and his predecessors to the pre-history of philosophy, somewhat as Schlözer sent pre-Roman humanity into the *Dunkle* of pre-history. This seems to me in truth quite justified, if only because we have essentially no written material from these thinkers, only quotations and testimonies by others (much of what we know about the pre-Socratics comes originally from Aristotle and Theophrastus, and almost everything we know about Socrates' philosophy comes from Plato).

Third, as noted I do not expect there to be theory-independent facts of the matter that rationally *compel* us to accept one possible periodization over all others. The idea of 'natural joints' in the history of philosophy, which it is the historian's aim to correctly identify, has little purchase on us as we survey the mass of

philosophical works that constitute the history of philosophy. This raises difficult methodological questions around the evaluation of proposed periodizations, and raises the specter of possible cohabitation of several of periodizations co-accepted in parallel. I bracket these questions here, since anyway I am floating the periodizations in Tables 3 and 4 mostly for illustrative purposes.

Fourth, there will be a temptation for contemporary philosophers to ask how certain living philosophical giants – say, Saul Kripke or Kit Fine – might fit into the various schemes I have put forward here. Such questions are fun to play with, but in truth I think we should resist the temptation to speculate on the historical significance of the Kripkes and Fines of the world, as we simply lack the distance to evaluate their influence and counter-influence on the evolution of philosophical ideas on the timescales relevant to a history of philosophy. This point extends to recently deceased giants (say, David Lewis) as well. Although this is often not the case today, traditionally academics in history department have worked with a moving wall of half a century to a century when it comes to defining what *is* history. This perfectly reasonable rule of thumb would recommend silence for now on the historical place of the likes of Lewis, Kripke, and Fine.

8. Conclusion, with Coda on Non-Western Philosophy

In a way, my main aim in this paper has been to invite a more critical approach to the branch of philosophy we call history of philosophy: more critical both regarding its official aims and regarding some of its deepest, most institutionalized assumptions, notably around periodization. I have floated an expanded agenda for the historiography of philosophy that includes more global concerns with the overall structure of the history of philosophy, and have also recommended a more philosophically based approaches to the periodization of the history of philosophy.

In a more speculative vein, I have also sketched first-order proposals regarding both the overall structure of the history of philosophy (i.e., in terms of the parallel developments of two opposing philosophical temperaments' search for their best articulation) and fruitful periodizations in light of that basic structure (i.e., the ones captured in Tables 3 and 4).

In various places, I have indicated parenthetically that my subject matter is restricted to "Western" philosophy, which designation typically covers European civilization and its Modern extension in the Americas. But in truth geography has little to do with our subject matter. Any thinker whose work has the same *aim* as

what we call philosophy, and who exemplifies to an extent Temperament A or B, would belong to the history of philosophy as conceived here. This applies *obviously* to such figures as Iamblicus the Syrian Neoplatonist, Avicenna the Persian Aristotelian, and Amo the African Cartesian. But it may perfectly well apply to thinkers who did not engage the philosophical tradition of the West at all, so long as these thinkers' intellectual concerns and aims overlap sufficiently with those of the figures mentioned above, especially if their pursuit of these aims manifests elements of Temperament A and/or B. From this perspective, there is absolutely no reason not to include, say, the 6th/7th-century Indian philosopher Dharmakīrti in our B-stream, given his apparent nominalism and empiricism.

It is an open question, of course, just what the proprietary aim of philosophy exactly is. Different people will have different views on this (see my "Philosophy as Total Axiomatics" for my own views). But whatever one's view, it should make it possible for a historical figure entirely insulated from the European philosophical tradition to show up in the same history of philosophy. Such a figure would not, of course, participate in the same causal web of influence and counter-influence. Dharmakīrti's nominalism was not influenced by Boethius' and did not influence Ockham's. But they may yet participate in a separate web (Dharmakīrti is a highly influential figure in Indian philosophy, and was himself strongly influenced by Dignāga), and anyway sufficiently bizarre circumstances could lead some European thinker, too, to be causally insulated in this way. From this perspective there is no reason why non-Western thinkers could not be placed within a single global history of philosophy.

At the same time, presumably some intellectual pursuits, including ones no less valuable than philosophy, would not qualify as philosophical on any minimally substantive characterization of philosophy's distinctive intellectual aims. And some of these pursuits could be labeled "philosophy" despite their dissimilarity to the pursuit shared by the thinkers we have mentioned here. In that case, all sides may be generous in allowing everybody to use the label, but it would be useful to keep in mind the fact that different things are being talked about. Almost half a century ago now, Kwasi Wiredu argued that much of what is discussed under the banner of African Philosophy is in fact not philosophy at all: often the gambit is to draw out broadly philosophical or cosmological propositions implicit in collective myths and oral traditions specific to African ethnicities, whereas philosophical reflection is characterized precisely by the rigorous and analytic *making explicit* of ideas of some universal import. Of course Wiredu allows for the possibility of African philosophy in the sense pertinent to us here, but for him it is simply good old-fashioned philosophy that happens to be done by Africans. Compare: when we speak of

European architecture versus Asian architecture, we have in mind a significant distinction between two *kinds* of architecture; but when we speak of European tomatoes and Asian tomatoes, we assume that tomatoes are tomatoes are tomatoes and we are simply keeping track, for whatever reason, of where some of them come from. The history of "Western" philosophy is more like a history of Western tomatoes than a history of Western architecture.

The point – the point I am adopting here from Wiredu, that is – is that, at bottom, philosophy is *one* – even if it is interesting, for whatever reason, to keep track of where in the world that one thing is done. Again, we do not object to the polysemous use of "philosophy" to designate other intellectual pursuits. We only insist that, in the sense in which the term "philosophy" is used here, there is no meaningful distinction between the history of Western philosophy and histories of non-Western philosophies. Since philosophy is one, the *history* of philosophy is also one.[1]

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