Early Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology: Common Roots, Related Results

Abstract

In this paper we shall open a perspective from which the relatedness between the early analytic philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology is so close that we can call the two programs with one name: "rigorous philosophy", or "theory of forms". Moreover, we shall show that the close relatedness between the two most influential philosophical movements of the 20th century has its roots in their common history. At the end of the paper we shall try to answer the question why being rather related at the beginning, their ways parted in the subsequent years.

1. Introduction

In what follows, we are going to use the results we have achieved in our investigation of the relatedness and difference between Husserl's and Russell's philosophy in another paper (cf. Milkov 2016a) in order to outline the relatedness between Husserl's phenomenology and the early analytic philosophy in general—two movements that dominated the philosophy of the twentieth century. We shall try to set out why they were closely related, pointing at their common theoretical roots and common ancestors, and also why did they develop in different directions. Moreover, we shall try to formulate their common denominator, in particular as developed immediately after 1917–18 by the later Husserl and the later Russell, but also by the first generation of their acolytes.

2. Common roots: the German logocentrism in philosophy

The first point we would like to underline discussing this problem is that there was one common theoretical source of the early analytic philosophy and phenomenology and it was the movement of logicization of philosophy that started in Germany with Leibniz, was continued by Christian Wolff, J. H. Lambert and Kant,[1] and was further elaborated by Herbart, Trendelenburg and Hermann Lotze.[2] We can call this development, together with Hans Johann

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[1] Cf. Milkov (2013).

[2] Incidentally, Hegel, too, saw logic as *prima philosophia*.

Glock, *German logocentrism in philosophy*.[3] This is what made German philosophy different from British and French phiosophy.

Main achievement of the German logocentrism was the invention of a method of treating philosophical problems in logical terms. We can illustrate this approach pointing at the introduction of values into logic by Hermann Lotze.[4] It prepared the ground both for Frege's and for Husserl's anti-psychologism in philosophy (cf. Husserl 1939, p. 128 f.),[5] as well as for Frege's philosophy of language, based on the differentiating and radical opposing of sense and (truth-) value. Another fruit of this trend was the exploration of the problem of intentionality with logical means by Franz Brentano.[6]

The early Cambridge analytic philosophy and phenomenology of the 1900s–1910s can be seen as two alternative—and competing—expressions of the tendency to logicize philosophy. In the light of this interpretation, we maintain that analytic philosophy and phenomenology were not theoretical achievements of individual philosophical programs but a result of a long development of philosophy in this direction.

One outcome of this development was that for the first time in the history of philosophy, philosophical *movements*—not philosophical *schools—*were brought to life,[7] the names of which were not necessarily connected with their founders.[8] Until that point in time, the world had heard about Platonists, Aristotelians, Thomists, Cartesians and (neo-) Kantians. Now a new, proper-nameless philosophy appeared on the scene: phenomenology and analytic philosophy.

This point is confirmed by the fact that after Husserl initiated the phenomenological movement in his *Logical Investigations* (1900/1), it started its own life. So much so that when Husserl took his "transcendental turn" of 1905–7, some young phenomenologists (above all,

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[3] Cf. Glock (1999), pp. 142 ff. (2008).

[4] Cf. Milkov (2013), § 3.

[5] The German philosophical logocentrism was partly developed in defense of the autonomy of philosophy as a discipline. We can call this development a philosophical *Kulturkampf* that should be called for the better "a fight for philosophical logocentrism". Cf. Milkov (2013), § 5.1.

[6] On the influence of Hermann Lotze on Franz Brentano see E. W. Orth (1997), pp. 13–29; idem, pp. 15–30.

[7] In regard of phenomenology, this point found expression first in Herbert Spiegelberg, (1960). On the other hand, it is widely accepted today that analytic philosophy is a movement rather than a school.

[8] For Kevin Mulligan, this is a main characteristic of analytic philosophy, in opposition to continental philosophy: " 'Ask me what I'm working on, I'll reply with the name of a problem', the Analytic Philosopher will proudly say, 'ask them, and they'll reply with a proper name'." Cf. Mulligan (1991), p. 115.

the so called "realist phenomenologists" Johannes Daubert and Alexander Pfänder[9]) refused to follow their master. The same happened in the early analytic philosophy. Wittgenstein was the first to strongly criticize his teachers Russell and Frege already in the *Tractatus* (1921). After Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in 1929, his critique become even more radical. In the 1950s, Quine and Wilfrid Sellars the USA made career deconstructing theories of their analytic teachers Carnap and Russell, respectively. They practiced analytic philosophy beyond that of their teachers.

The adoption of the logocentric approach made the philosophical theories elaborated this way was very fruitful indeed. Apparently, main reason for this was that, because connected with logic, they were rigorous. Because of this, they succeeded in achieving, what Russell had named, "solid results" in philosophy that potentially have great explanatory and systematizing power. This explains, among other things, why the two logocentric movements, phenomenology and analytic philosophy, dominated the philosophy of the twentieth century. Secondly, similarly to the philosophy of Aristotle and Kant, they were concentrated on the *prima philosophia* or on what Russell have called philosophical "fundamentals". In fact, this is the main characteristic that makes them different from what today is known as "continental philosophy".

Unfortunately, the advantageous rigor of the two philosophical movements had also its flip side. It increased the danger of rampant grow of conceptions and arguments, achieved with the help of their logical method, that have no clear connection with the real world. That is why they were often accused of "scholasticism". In respect of analytic philosophy, the danger of scholasticism was first noticed by Frank Ramsey;[10] in respect of Husserl's phenomenology first to criticize it was Wilhelm Wundt in his review of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.[11]

3. Common Ancestors

We have already noted that one of the founding fathers of the new, rigorous philosophy was Hermann Lotze. He influenced both analytic philosophers (in particular, via Thomas

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[9] Cf. Smith (1997), p. 586.

[10] Quite recently, powerful arguments against the scholasticism of analytic philosophy are suggested in Simons–Smith–Mulligan (2008).

[11] Cf. Wilhelm Wundt, "Psychologismus und Logizismus", in: idem, *Kleine Schriften*, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1910.

Green, Bernard Bosanquet, John McTaggart and other British Neo-Hegelians),[12] as well as the Brentanists[13] and also Husserl.[14]

Its grandfather was surely Kant, who successfully married logic to philosophy in systematic way.[15] Kant also introduced the strict discrimination between natural sciences and the logicized by him philosophy—a discrimination that played a central role by the making of both phenomenology and analytic philosophy. G. E. Moore, for example, reformulated Kant's insistence that intrinsic value and natural law are logically different, into the conception of naturalistic fallacy which is to be avoided in order to eliminate conceptual confusions in ethics.[16] Russell, on his side, claimed that "Philosophy does not become scientific by making use of other sciences. … Philosophy is a study apart from the other sciences."[17]

The great-grand father of the two philosophical movements was obviously Leibniz with his idea of *lingua characterica* (developed further by Frege in his *Begriffschrift* and in Russell's symbolic logic), related to the program for *mathesus universalis*,[18] developed further by Husserl.

Important point is that the early analytic philosophy and the beginning phenomenology followed, in different proportions, and not exclusively, two opposite methods of logicizing philosophy: that of Kant and that of Brentano. Roughly, whereas Kant adopted Newton's abstract scientific method and the analytic approach of the British empiricists (above all of David Hume), Brentano was oriented towards neo-Aristotelian a priori topological investigations of any suggested subject. And whereas Russell was, like Kant and Hume, atomist and constructivist,[19] Husserl, in contrast, followed the method of topology.

As already noted, this divide was not absolute. Typical example in this respect shows Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* that closely followed the topological approach (cf. Milkov 2001;

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[12] Green and Bosanquet brought to life the English translation of Lotze's *System of Philosophy*. Cf. Milkov (2000), § 1.

[13] Cf. n. 6. Lotze was instrumental in granting Franz Berntano the philosophy professorship at the University of Vienna in 1874. Later Lotze became the *Doktorfather* of Brentano's students Carl Stumpf and Anthon Marty.

[14] Cf. Hauser (2003).

[15] Cf. Milkov (2013).

[16] Cf. Milkov (2003), p. 21.

[17] Cf. Russell (1914), p. 240. Cf. Milkov (2013), § 5.2.

[18] Cf. Milkov (2006).

[19] Cf. Pears (1967).

1999b) without, however, to abandon the atomism of Russell–Hume. Clearly topological was also Frege's conception of analysis.[20]

4. Related results: theory of particular forms

Based on the similarities between Husserl's phenomenology and Russell's analytic philosophy we discussed in Milkov (2016a), we can call phenomenology and analytic philosophy with one name: *theory of forms*.[21] To be sure, Russell explicitly called his philosophy "theory of forms", and Husserl's "eidology"—the discipline that searches for, contemplates and describes essences—in fact means the same in Ancient Greek. We prefer the name "theory of forms", however, since the alternative names "philosophical logic" or "mathesis universalis", which also seem appropriate, have idiosyncratic use: logic is interested in truth, whereas formal ontology in mereological, topological etc. extensive relations.

It deserves notice, however, that the name "theory of forms" is appropriate, above all, when we want to denote the *subject-matter* of the two philosophical movements. As regards the common *method* they follow, they can be also called "rigorous philosophy", or "philosophy as rigorous science".

It is clear that here we speak of theory of forms not in the sense of Plato, who understood under this name a theory of general *laws* from which we can make deductions about the particulars. Instead, we speak of *theory of particular* or specific *forms* which supplies "a priori (which is to say: non-inductive) knowledge relating to certain fundamental structures in a wide range of different spheres of objects (for example, colors, tones, values, shapes)." (Smith 1997, p. 586) We mean here forms of everything: of mental attitudes, of objects, of propositions, of intentions, of scientific theories. Importantly enough, the knowledge of particular forms is not only a priori but also synthetic in the sense that these forms are first to be discovered in a process of analysis.

Both early analytic philosophy and phenomenology lay stress on describing such forms. We can express this point saying that they showed "a concern with ontological structure".[22] What was at stake, however, were not only ontological or logical forms but also

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[20] Cf. Milkov (1999a). The roots of this dualism are to be sought in Hermann Lotze who directly communicated the topological approach to Frege and Wittgenstein and at the same time to Brentano. Cf. Milkov (2016b).

[21] Barry Smith, for example, claimed that Brentano and his pupils had "a special relation to the a priori". Smith (1994), p. 3.

[22] Ibidem.

epistemological, propositional and objects' forms.[23] Most importantly, the logical forms early analytic philosophy and phenomenology suggest can serve as *models* constructed for better understanding also of specific regions (realms) of reality.[24]

Russell tried to develop the program for investigating a priori structures especially clearly in his, unfortunately, unfinished paper "What Is Logic?", composed in a period of his philosophical development in which he was most creative (October 1912). There he set out that "logic is the study of the forms of complexes. ... 'True' and 'false' are extra-logical."[25] What was misguided in this programmatic claim was the name of this discipline—it was surely not *logic*. Here Russell continued to speak about "*logical* forms" when he, in fact, meant *forms* in the sense of a priori (non-inductive) models. They are a priori in sense of generally valid principles which, however, are not eternally valid—they can change with the movement of the achievements of human knowledge (of science, in particular).

Exactly in this sense, Russell's analytic philosophy discusses the "fundamentals" and Husserl's phenomenology explores the proto-given (*das Urgegebenheit*).[26] Rigorous philosophy is a fundamental discipline because the forms it discovers are a priori in the sense that they are generally valid for particular (specific) regions. It is also an autonomous discipline, different from both science and humanities.

Being a synthetic a priori discipline that advances logical forms for particular regions, rigorous philosophy suggests ever new forms, figuratively speaking logical forms, can be collected in a tool-box. We can pick out from such a tool-box theoretical instruments (appropriate forms) for dealing with specific problems in science, mathematics, aesthetics, ethics, psychology, and also social sciences and political philosophy.

In a similar sense, Wittgenstein spoke about language as a "tool-box" of language-games.[27] When we speak, or understand pieces of language, we pick up from our tool-box different "instruments" (different language-games), according to the language-situation in which we are put. Our point here is that we can see all these language-games as particular forms in our sense. The Vienna Circle maintained that "we have to fashion intellectual tools for everyday life, for the daily life of scholars" and others.[28]

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[23] Cf. Milkov (2003), pp. 71–5.

[24] Cf. Milkov (2006), § 3.1.

[25] Russell (1912b), p. 55.

[26] Cf. Tugendhat (1970), p. 194 ff.

[27] Cf. Wittgenstein (1953), § 11.

[28] Neurath (1929), p. .

Important characteristic of the early analytic philosophy and phenomenology of the early and the middle Husserl was that they were both piecemeal and extensional. This means that they did not progress cumulatively. Even if a part of such a philosophical theory proves wrong, we can throw it away, at the same time retaining its sound kernel, or its sound parts, around which we can build up the theory further. Russell considered this a main characteristic of analytic philosophy.[29] In contrast, the theories of continental philosophy are typically holistic, logically following from one principle, so that if one of its theses proved wrong, then the whole theory collapses.

It deserves notice, however, that, as regards Husserl, this was characteristic, above all, for his *Logical Investigations* (1900/1). These are six logical studies without palpable connection between them. Unfortunately in the subsequent years, Husserl progressively embraced the cumulative method of doing philosophy.[30] But it became prominent in his works only after 1918, when he started to develop his "genetic phenomenology".

5. Differences between the early analytic philosophy and phenomenology

But if our suggestion that phenomenology and analytic philosophy followed related programs that can even be called by one name—"theory of forms", or "rigorous philosophy"—is correct, then the question arises: Why was phenomenology considered for decades the kernel of the continental, i.e. of anti-analytic philosophy? Our answer is: because later, the two related programs were developed in alternative ways. In other words, they had different subsequent histories which explicated the initial models—the early analytic philosophy and the phenomenology of the early and middle Husserl—differently.

What follows is an attempt to shortly explain why early analytic philosophy and phenomenology developed differently, despite the fact that they started from platforms that were closely related:

(i) The particular forms of the rigorous philosophy can be validly discovered in two different ways:

- Subjectively—this way was followed by both existential phenomenology and by hermeneutic phenomenology. Importantly enough, Husserl's discussion of the

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[29] Cf. Russell (1918), p. 85.

[30] This was connected with the fact that he followed the topological method, cf. §3 above.

particular forms only in terms of intentionality (in particular, after 1905) made them prone to slip into subjectivism.

- Objectively. This venue was explored by the realistic phenomenology as well as by the early analytic philosophers Moore and Russell and also by the cognitive science of today.[31]

(ii) Phenomenology and early analytic philosophy were also different in style and, as we have already noted (in § 2) this was partly determined by their history. Indeed, Russell's (and Carnap's in his *Aufbau*) objective was to advance a scheme, a skeleton (a hypothesis) that outlines the model (the form) of relations of the subject under exploration. After the skeleton is constructed (advanced), it can be fleshed out with the matter of the subject. Russell would say that we can produce different models or hypotheses that will help to treat our subject better. Husserl, in contrast, especially the later Husserl, explored the one and only, according to him, a priori world of particular forms layer after layer[32]. Unfortunately, as we have already noted (in §4), making continuous studies, Husserl's phenomenology was prone to digress into cumulative studies.[33]

This was a continuous task *ad libitum*. It was not selective, like that of Russell who was free to apply appropriate models ("logical forms") for selected regions of philosophy, or science.

The outcome of this practice was that towards the end of Husserl's career, this tendency brought him to the quixotic project (developed in his *The Crisis of European Science*, 1936) to reform the whole existing science. Husserl argued that the later disregards the numerous layers of the "life-world". In fact, science has its roots and is dependent on knowledge we accumulate in ordinary life.[34] In this sense, Husserl pled for a new science that is based not only on "facts". Unfortunately, the mainstream science disregards this perspective and this led it to fundamental crisis.

6. Epilogue

Michael Dummett made once the now famous remark that, similarly to Danube and Rhine, analytic philosophy and phenomenology went in parallel at the beginning of their

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[31] On different types of phenomenology see the corresponding chapters in Embree (1997), (1998).

[32] Cf. Milkov (2012).

[33] This is exactly what idealistic philosophy is doing.

[34] Some philosophers of science of Husserl's times—for example, the logical empiricist Walter Dubislav (cf. Milkov 2016b)—underlined the same without to make Husserl's radical inferences.

development only to radically depart in opposite direction with the years. Unfortunately, this metaphor is not without its problems. Above all, whereas two rivers flew compactly, each one in its own riverbed and in one direction, analytical and the phenomenological movements were rather diffuse formations from the very beginning. The consequence was that whereas in the later years many philosophers of the two movements were really opposed to one another, there were also their members that did their work—consciously or not—in close relatedness with fellows of the rival movement. Typical examples here are the two founding fathers of the speech-act theory, the phenomenologist Adolf Reinach and the analytic philosopher J. L. Austin. There were, too, a number of analytic philosophers (John Searle, for example) that felt phenomenology close to their inspirations while there were phenomenologists (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for example) that were also analytic philosophers.

All this suggests that a parallel, complementary pursue of the two philosophical methods can be more than useful.

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