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# The Great Divide

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Franca D'Agostini 1997 *Analitici e continentali. Guida alla filosofia degli ultimi trent'anni*, Milan: Raffaello Cortina Editore, ISBN 88-7078-424-X

Pascal Engel 1997 *La Dispute. Une Introduction a la philosophie analytique*, Paris: Minuit, ISBN 2-7073-1610-5

Manuel García-Carpintero 1997 *Las palabras, las ideas y las cosas. Una presentación de la filosofia del lenguaje*, Barcelona: Editorial Ariel

José A. Díez & C. Ulises Moulines 1997 *Fundamentos de Filosofía de la Ciencia*, Barcelona: Editorial Ariel

eds. Anat Biletzki & Anat Matar 1998 *The Story of Analytic Philosophy. Plots and Heroes*, London & New York: Routledge, ISBN 0-415-16251-3.

eds. Keith Lehrer & Johann Christian Marek 1997 *Austrian Philosophy Past and Present*. Essays in Honour of Rudolf Haller, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Dordrecht: Kluwer, ISBN 0-7923-4347-6

At the turn of the century, Russell, Husserl and Couturat singled out Leibniz the logician as an important precursor of the way they thought philosophy should be done. Like their most gifted contemporaries they conceived of philosophy as essentially argumentative and - as Russell put it in a 1911 talk in French - analytic. Unsurprisingly, the search for the best arguments and analyses meant that good philosophy was cosmopolitan. William James and Ernst Mach were read everywhere. James studied Mach and the pupils of Brentano, whom Stout introduced to Cambridge. Moore recognised the deep kinship between his work on ethics and that of Brentano. Russell was influenced by Peano, used and criticised Meinong and was attacked by Poincaré. Pragmatism was subjected to a series of criticisms by realists in German and in English but gradually began to win adherents, for example in Italy, where Vailati and Calderoni introduced both pragmatism and Austrian philosophy of mind.

Philosophy at the end of the century presents a very different aspect. Two very different complex (families of) philosophical traditions occupy the scene - Analytic and Continental philosophy. The terminology is neither happy nor stable. John Searle likens distinguishing between philosophies in this way to the claim that America has two parts, Kansas and business; Bernard Williams compares it to the distinction between cars which are Japanese and those with front-wheel drive. Members of the first tradition hesitate between "analytic" and "analytical" and many of their heroes were in fact from the continent. A short list of such heroes would include the names of Russell and Moore, Wittgenstein, Carnap and Tarski, Quine, Davidson, Kripke, Lewis, Putnam, Nozick and Rawls, Strawson, Armstrong, Dummett, Wiggins, Williams and Evans. Behind them stands the tradition's grandfather, the great German logician and philosopher Gottlob Frege. Among Frege's earliest readers were Couturat and Russell - who immediately proclaimed his importance - and Husserl - who maintained a strange silence on the subject.

The heroes of Continental philosophy are Heidegger, Adorno, Bachelard, Kojève, Gadamer, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Lévinas, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Vattimo, Severino, Apel and Habermas. Among the tradition's grandparents are Marx, Nietzsche, Dilthey, the later Husserl and Bergson; more distant ancestors are the German idealists.

Analytic philosophy is international; it is the dominant tradition in the English speaking world, in Poland and in Scandinavia and forms a large minority in, for example, Germany and Spain. Continental philosophy, like the Belgian Empire, is by and large a Franco-German creation, but its readership and influence are thoroughly international. The term "Continental philosophy" seems to have been invented in North America and both there and around the globe Continental philosophy has put a very firm mark on most of the humanities."A dead hand" say many analytic philosophers. "*Ressentiment* !" retort the friends of "Theory". Analytic philosophy, after all, has left no comparable mark on the humanities.

Analytic philosophers spend their time doing very much what Husserl, Couturat and Russell urged philosophers to do at the turn of the century - arguing for and against or elucidating some proposition, analysing and describing, drawing distinctions and constructing theories. Continental philosophers spend their time creating concepts and conceptual poetry, subverting, suspecting, unmasking, decoding, deconstructing and intuiting (for example, listening to) entities that are rarely as manageable as some particular thesis or theory and more often of the order of magnitude of this or that feature of the entire Western tradition or, indeed, Being tout court. Analytic philosophers, of course, also deconstruct and subvert but they tend to assume that it is better to subvert via argument or analysis than otherwise. Continental philosophers, on the other hand, invariably deconstruct and construct through the medium of commentary and exegesis; they present their views via readings of the great philosophical texts of the tradition; their attitude is what Barry Smith has called "textual deference". Although such a near identification between philosophy and its history is foreign to the analytic tradition, an important minority of analytic philosophers do philosophy by arguing with past philosophers, just as Husserl, Couturat and Russell did.

Although certain problems and preoccupations have been more important than others within analytic philosophy - the philosophy of language, for example, loomed large until the 1980's - it is difficult to think of a philosophical position that has not been defended by some analytical philosopher. Similarly, although this was not always the case, there are now few areas of philosophy which have failed to stimulate analytic appetites. There is analytic philosophy of music, analytic Marxism, analytic Thomism, analytic feminism, analytic phenomenology; even Freud has been analysed. And analytic metaphysics and ontology once again occupy the position they enjoyed at the beginning of analytic philosophy.

Continental philosophy also exhibits a wide variety of positions or, rather, stances, but a more limited variety. One or other form of anti-realism is widespread. There is little interest in the philosophy of the hard sciences. German Idealism is invariably taken very seriously indeed. And, unlike analytic philosophy, Continental philosophy has political allures, which are often on display in the media.

One of the stranger features of the analytic-continental divide is the fact that the often violently negative reactions to be found in the oral traditions on each side so rarely manifest themselves in published form. There are exceptions to the rule: Popper on the Frankfurt school, Albert on hermeneutics, Searle on Derrida and "Theory", Tugendhat on Husserl and

Heidegger; and some journal numbers have been devoted to the divide. There are, of course, also influential bridge-builders, such as Ricoeur, Habermas and Rorty. But many analytic philosophers - particularly young analytic philosophers on the continent who have first-hand experience of Continental philosophy - react to bridge-building much as Peirce did on learning of James' attempt to connect up his compatriot and Bergson: "The only thing I have striven to do in philosophy has been to analyse sundry concepts with exactitude...It is not very grateful to my feelings to be classed along with Bergson who seems to be doing his prettiest to muddle all distinctions". When Heidegger says that the time of distinctions is past young analytic philosophers in Spain and Slovenia disagree. Intellectual and political bridge-building are, after all, like intellectual and political tolerance, two different things.

It is clear enough that, at some suitably high level of abstraction, similarities can indeed be found between, say, Heidegger or Derrida and Wittgenstein or Davidson (Heidegger and Wittgenstein did not think of themselves as contributing to any theoretical philosophical enterprise but as destroyers; Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's account of ideal meanings and of inner perception resembles Wittgenstein's rejection of Fregean senses and of observation of one's own mental states etc.). But what, to use a metaphor dear to James, Husserl and analytic philosophers, is the cash-value of such similarities ? A question all the more pressing in a discipline such as philosophy in which so many of the positions and conclusions are already familiar and in which what counts is the path to these conclusions.

Continental philosophy attracted more critical discussion before the Second World War than after. Members of nearly every philosophical tradition still attached to argument, analysis and clarity, including for example the future member of the Vienna Circle, Otto Neurath, published detailed criticisms of Spengler's *Decline of the West*. A little later, another member of the Vienna Circle, Rudolf Carnap, and a pupil of Brentano's, Oskar Kraus, deconstructed Heidegger's pronouncement "Nothing noths". Sydney Hook's 1930 impressions of contemporary German philosophy describe a horrifying philosophical milieu ("almost everyone proclaims *Sein und Zeit* to be an epoch-making book, but [no]one can say why") in very much the same accents later employed by Jacques Bouveresse in his appraisals of recent Parisian philosophy (*Le philosophe chez les autophages*, *Rationalité et cynisme*).

The publication of Pascal Engel's *La dispute. Une Introduction à la philosophie analytique* and of Franca D'Agostini's *Analitici e continentali. Guida alla filosofia degli ultimi trent'anni* marks a new stage in the relations between the two traditions. In Engel's witty and often racy dialogues and correspondence between Philoconte, Mésothète and Analyphron the latter presents a history of analytic philosophy and an outline of a number of debates within it. More importantly, Philoconte "articulates" what is perhaps the greatest number of critical reactions to analytic philosophy ever assembled in print, reactions that are familiar enough to analytic philosophers on the continent. Thus analytic philosophy is accused of being scholastic, naive, pre-Kantian, a logical tyranny, a form of scientism, blind to the "closure of western metaphysics as established by Heidegger", of lacking the depth and systematicity of the German idealists, of being a typical Anglo-Saxon club. The metaphor already mentioned, "the cash value of an argument", simply exemplifies "the reign of technical thought" in all its vulgar splendour. Analyphron's list of some 70 paradoxes, puzzles and thought experiments leads Philoconte to accuse analytic philosophy of failing to see that its "timeless problems" are indissociable from a historic context and that philosophy must proceed historically and of ignorance of Kant's demonstration of the impossibility of metaphysics.

D'Agostini's remarkable 550 page survey of the last thirty years of philosophy, analytic and continental, with many glances further back, is perhaps the first history of twentieth century philosophy to be built around the distinction. A best-seller in Italy, it has provoked lively discussions in newspapers such as *Il Sole-24 Ore* and on the Web, some of which are now available in the last number of the *Rivista di Estetica*. She sets out five philosophical and metaphilosophical debates - about the end of philosophy, the analytic-continental divide, the subject, the turn from metaphysics to language, and relativism - and gives a learned, thoroughly documented (except for the absence of an index of proper names) and wide-ranging history of analytic philosophy, hermeneutics, critical theory, poststructuralism and postmodernism and of the philosophy of science.

Engel and D'Agostini succeed in getting their protagonists to actually engage about historical and metaphilosophical questions, such as the end and ends of philosophy, rather than about first-order philosophical questions. Each displays a rare mastery of the history of the debates dealt with (although they perhaps underestimate the amount of interaction between recent analytic philosophy and cognitive science). A sure grasp of a field as a whole is, indeed, a feature of many recent books by analytic philosophers on the continent and one which distinguishes these from many better known books written by anglophones. The new surveys of the philosophy of language, by Manuel García-Carpintero, and of the philosophy of science, by José Díez and Ulises Moulines, are, in this respect and others, exemplary.

The upsurge of discussions of Continental philosophy by analytic philosophers and of analytic philosophy by Continental philosophers is not unconnected with the changing institutional face of analytic philosophy on the continent, in particular the creation of a European Society for Analytic Philosophy, of its large Central European Section, and of national societies in Germany, Italy, France, Spain and elswhere. The creation of such societies has recently been condemned by Hilary Putnam who finds these societies "exclusionary". The only legitimate function for movements in philosophy, he suggests, is to gain attention and recognition for neglected ideas; analytic philosophy, however, as one of the dominant currents in world philosophy, is not in this category. But while analytic philosophy is certainly *known of* on the Continent the widespread assumption there that every analytic philosopher is a positivist, a philosopher of language or a (would-be) Anglo-Saxon suggests that it is not well-known. Whatever one may think of the melodramatic features of logical positivism or of positivism as a philosophy, some of the reasons given by the members of the Vienna Circle when they launched their movement 70 years ago are just as compelling today for those who see contemporary Franco-German philosophy as the development of German philosophy in the 1920's.

Interest in the history of analytic philosophy has grown considerably since the publication of Michael Dummett's *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*. A recent contribution to the genre, *The Story of Analytic Philosophy*, edited by Anat Biletzhi and Anat Matar, contains rather more philosophy than actual history, thus reflecting a habit most analytic philosophers find hard to shake off. One fine contribution to the volume, by Peter Hylton, traces some of the different conceptions and views of analysis within analytic philosophy. But the entire Polish contribution to analytic philosophy and logic, for example, is barely mentioned in the pieces collected. The Polish tradition was itself an off-shoot of philosophy in Austria-Hungary (and its predecessor and successor states). From Bolzano to Brentano and Mach this tradition was one of the most important precursors of analytic philosophy and then, thanks to Wittgenstein, Gödel and the Vienna Circle, an integral part thereof. *Austrian Philosophy Past and Present*, a Festschrift for Rudolf Haller who, together with Roderick Chisholm, has done

so much to show that Austrian philosophy is not German philosophy, brings together a number of important reevaluations of claims by Haller and others, such as Neurath, the first historian of analytic philosophy, and Scheler, about Austrian philosophy.

It is above all Continental philosophers who believe that history will set us free. Thus it is all the more surprising that, in milieux where the history of philosophy in German from Kant to Nietzsche and from Dilthey, the later Husserl and Heidegger onwards is so assiduously studied, the origins of an important part of Continental Philosophy, the phenomenological legacy, are so little known.

Consider, for example, the following philosophical topics: the nature of the nondescriptive, singular reference effected by proper names and demonstratives; the consequences of thought-experiments about Twin-Earth for a theory of reference; the structure of speech acts such as promises and orders; the role of a speaker's intentions in a theory of meaning; the nature of defeasible, non-inductive justification; the role of make-believe in aesthetics and logic; non-conceptual perceptual content and the distinction between veridical perception and hallucinations; the connexions between perception, action and bodily awareness; the relation between an ethical and political psychology which allows an important place for shame and ressentiment, on the one hand, and the morality systems of Kant or utilitarianism, on the other hand.

These topics have a number of interesting properties. First, they are familiar to analytic philosophers as problems that have been intensively discussed within their tradition. Secondly, they were also the problems discussed in German before and after the First World War by the heirs of Brentano, in particular by Husserl and his first pupils. These pupils were attracted by the realist, Austrian Husserl who, at the turn of the century, was engaged in developing the ideas of Bolzano, Brentano and Mach. But, thirdly, as phenomenology was slowly transformed, by Husserl's turn towards a windy form of German Idealism (a development that dismayed Husserl's first pupils) and then by Heidegger, phenomenologists lost all interest in these problems. Indeed, the analysing, descriptive way of doing phenomenology went out of fashion and was all but dead by 1934. Fourthly, as philosophical topics go, these topics are all relative new-comers. It is difficult to find analyses of these matters, as detailed and as argued as those given by Brentano's heirs and by analytic philosophers, before the end of the last century. (Although medieval philosophy is always good for the odd surprise). Finally, as far as I can tell, this intriguing part of the history of philosophy on the continent was completely forgotten. Perhaps philosophy on the continent is going through the process Continental philosophers are wont to call the return of the repressed.

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