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In search of analytic philosophy

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1. Analytic philosophy, along with phenomenology, was the leading philosophical trend in twentieth-century European philosophy. Arguably, analytic philosophy is still alive today (this is not entirely uncontroversial, though), and the division between analytic and continental philosophy is still a valid one as an institutional matter of fact. The question what analytic philosophy is and what it has been, has cultural significance, and it may have philosophical significance as well. For instance, if one thinks that analytic philosophers have made some important discoveries and that these discoveries and insights are now in danger of being lost, then one way to resist this development would be by articulating what was characteristic of analytic philosophy. The question may be significant for one's self-understanding, too. Both these motives are present in different degrees in Georg Henrik von Wright's contributions to the topic, for instance (von Wright 1993, 2000).

The question "What is analytic philosophy?" became a topic of debate in the early 1990s. This was largely due to the appearance of Michael Dummett's book *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Dummett 1993). The debate is no longer as active as it used to be, but the topic has not become defunct, either, and new branches have grown into it, such as the question of the identity of analytic philosophy vis-à-vis continental philosophy.

The single most important factor behind the original debate was the phenomenon known as the *historical turn in philosophy* (Beaney 2013, Reck 2013). Analytic philosophy had enjoyed the reputation of being "philosophy without history", and analytic philosophers had enjoyed the reputation of being *ahistorical* or even *antihistorical* philosophers, who "think for themselves" and do not lean on history and tradition

Korhonen, A. (2025). In search of analytic philosophy. In A. Laitinen, M. Keinänen, J. Reinikainen & A. Honkasalo (eds.) *Language, Truth, and Reality*. Tampere University Press. (pp. 29–48).
https://doi.org/10.61201/h5fbdk64

(unlike they distant, continental cousins). Now, this topical and timeless orientation did not disappear, of course; but there arose a marked interest in the roots and origins, of analytic philosophy, and a completely new discipline was created within academic analytic philosophy: *early analytic philosophy* (Sluga (1980) and Hylton (1990) were two important early landmarks here). Of course, the historical turn itself didn't come out of nothing. An easy and quick partial diagnosis would refer to an *identity-crisis:* ever since the early 1960s, analytic philosophy had grown more and more heterogeneous and diffuse, and philosophers' self-image was becoming less clear and distinct. Not everyone cared about this, but many did, and one reaction was "to subject analytic philosophy to a historico-critical scrutiny" (von Wright 1993, 26).

My own interest in the question is related to the historical turn. The analytical tradition in philosophy is a philosophically and historically exciting phenomenon. I also think that the best way to *introduce analytic philosophy* is through its history. To explain what analytic philosophy is, we may turn to contemporary work in the discipline. But even this perspective is difficult to understand without considering the developments of, say, the past fifty years (it seems though that the border between "this is contemporary and, therefore, relevant" and "this is past and, therefore, of historical interest only" is continually moving closer and closer to us). On the other hand, a case can be made that that our philosophical understanding *is* partly historical and that, therefore, the study of philosophical past is "of more than historical interest". Personally, for what it's worth, I am inclined to think that this is, indeed, so; but quite apart from that, the study of past philosophy ought to be pursued on its own as well.

2. My aim here is to say something constructive about the twin-question, *what analytic philosophy is and what it has been.* I try to explain, at a relatively general level, what in my view is the best – the most reasonable and fruitful – approach to the twin-question. The following two points will serve as starting-points. They may appear as self-evident; but as we will see, they are not quite that:

I) Analytic philosophy is a genuine and distinctly recognizable *philosophical* and *historical* phenomenon, whose identity differs from that of, say, phenomenology and the phenomenological tradition.

II) Analytic philosophy as a historical phenomenon I shall refer to as 'analytic tradition' and shall identify it in a way that is entirely uncontroversial. First, it is a key tradition in twentieth century western or (if you prefer) European thought. Second, the tradition has existed for at least one hundred and twenty years, maybe over a hundred and forty years. The question which philosophers belong in this tradition, has been answered differently by different participants in the debate over the identity of analytic philosophy. Since we are not trying to define a previously unknown phenomenon, we must accept as our starting point a more or less agreed upon understanding. A handy ostensive definition is given by Sluga:

> Following common practice, I take analytic philosophy here as originating in the work of Frege, Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein, as encompassing the logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle, English ordinary language phi-

> losophy of the post-war period, American mainstream philosophy of recent decades, as well as other worldwide affiliates and descendants. (Sluga 1997, 17fn.)

3. An intuitive starting-point, such as the one by Sluga, is inevitably imprecise. Unhappy about this, some scholars have adopted the radical measure and have, in fact, *rejected* the entire category of "analytic philosophy", arguing either that no genuine analytic tradition has ever existed or, else, that it is nothing but an arbitrary construction, or imposition, created by misinterpreting such allegedly analytic philosophers as Russell and Moore.[1] Usually, the complaint has been that the term "analytic philosophy" *cannot be given an analytic definition:*

> Analytic $=_{df}$ *philosophy* that…

Here one is looking for a distinctive characteristic (more likely: a class of such characteristics) with which to distinguish *analytic* from *non-analytic* philosophy (or philosopher). An analytic definition is reminiscent of an Aristotelian definition *per genus et differentiam*, although no one is likely to think of real definitions here. Rather than definitions, we may simply speak about *necessary* and *sufficient conditions*: a philosophy (or philosopher) is analytic if and only if…

There is a legion of such distinctive characteristics that could be used here. They are quite familiar, and commentary would be superfluous here:

> Conceptual analysis, linguistic turn, use of formal logic, anti-psychologism, rejection of metaphysics, rejection of philosophical systems, rejection of history of philosophy, scientism, naturalism, argumentation, pursuit of inner clarity, pursuit of rigour.

This list could easily be expanded. The idea that 'analytic philosophy' or 'analytic philosopher' could be defined by means of such distinctive marks runs into an evident difficulty. For every such list, whatever its members, will inevitably exclude philosophers that we would, with good reason, like to classify as 'analytic'. Another likely consequence is that our chosen list of marks picks up a philosopher whom we do *not* wish to classify as a philosopher, and again with good reason. To put the point simply: the analytic tradition is much too heterogeneous or diverse to permit an analytic definition in the above sense.[2] Therefore, the very idea that a satisfactory analytic definition could be framed is likely to appear very much like a stillborn venture. What are we to do in this situation?

4. Three strategies are available here: first, we could *stipulate* a meaning for the term, if we believed that the introduction of 'analytic philosophy' into discourse as if

[1] Cf. Preston (2017).

[2] For an elaboration, see Raatikainen (2001, 191–197).

it were a fresh technical term served some useful purpose; second, we could *dismiss* putative analytic definitions, if we believed that looking for necessary and sufficient conditions for 'analytic philosophy' is a misguided enterprise; third, we could formulate a *revisionary* definition, if we believed that a partial revision of 'analytic philosophy' helped us to gain some insight into the analytic tradition (the dividing line between the stipulative and revisionary strategies is not very sharp).

Michael Dummett's well-known definition of analytic philosophy includes a significant stipulative element. He used 'linguistic turn' for the purpose: 'analytic philosophy' (or 'analytical philosophy', as Dummett liked to call it) is distinguished from other philosophical schools by two beliefs: first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language; secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained (Dummett 1993, 4–5). Its first clear manifestation is to be found in Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic*, but the decisive step was taken by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (*ibid.*, 127–128). It follows from Dummett's definition, for example, that Russell and Moore were not really analytic philosophers at all, no matter how much they may have contributed to the formation of the tradition. This goes against the established use and what we think we know about the analytic tradition. Most of us would have believed that Russell and Moore were among "the founding giants of analytic philosophy" (Soames 2014), but now it turns out that they were not really analytic philosophers at all, but were at best its uncles or great-uncles, while Frege qualifies as its grandfather (Dummett 1993, 171).

Note that Dummett's definition is primarily *stipulative and normative and not classificatory at all*. In his view, Frege's philosophy was an important step in the right direction, which is the insight that a philosophical study of language (philosophy of language, theory of meaning) ought to be the foundation of all philosophizing. If considered as a piece of serious historiography, Dummett's definition must have struck many as downright bizarre. Once we take into account his real intentions, however, we see how different they were from those of an ordinary, down-to-earth historian of philosophy.[3]

For us who take the historical turn seriously, the concern is with real history and not with a stipulative and normative use of past philosophers and their ideas. We acknowledge, then, that the term 'analytic philosophy' does have an established use; that it is, indeed, a *lexical item* in standard philosophical terminology; and, finally, that the lexical item either can or cannot be turned into a useful tool in our historical inquiries by means of an analytic definition. This is the approach in Glock's well-known study (2008, Chapter 1), and I concur with it, up to a point.

Being a lexical item with an established use, the term has a tolerably clear extension and hence *clear positive* and *clear negative* cases. Such figures as G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, the early Wittgenstein, Susan Stebbing, Rudolf Carnap, G. E. M. Anscombe, Georg Henrik von Wright, David M. Armstrong, David Lewis and Timothy Williamson are clear examples of analytic philosophers. And Edmund Husserl,

[3] Cf. here Matar (2017).

Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas and Slavoj Žižek are equally clear cases of non-analytic philosophers. There are also *unclear* cases, philosophers who "look like analytic philosophers" but whose relationship to the tradition is somehow problematic: Bernard Bolzano, the later Wittgenstein, Karl Popper and Paul Feyerabend would be good examples.

At this point it may be argued, however, that even if our *terminus technicus* does possess a reasonably well-established use, a closer inspection will nevertheless show that its *extension is arbitrary*. This claim is the gist of the dismissive strategy: as Dagfinn Føllesdal (1997) puts it, whatever "principle of classification" we use in our analytic definition, it *cannot generate a class possessing genuine unity*. Føllesdal argues that any classification of "current philosophical trends" inevitably suffers from flaws that are not unlike the flaws of the famous Chinese imperial taxonomy of animals in Jorge Luis Borges' essay "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins"; in 'a certain Chinese Encyclopedia', animals were divided, among others, into those that belong to the Emperor, tame, sucking pigs, mermaids, stray dogs, those drawn with a very fine camel hair brush, and those that from afar look like flies.

We are familiar with our homely analytic tradition, and a list of 'analytic philosophers' will not strike us as arbitrary and fanciful like Borges' charming list. But why not? Føllesdal puts forth the valuable question: *What* are we trying to define, when we define analytic philosophy? What kind of thing or phenomenon is it? Is analytic philosophy:

> a) a doctrine or set of doctrines, b) a set of characteristic problems, c) a set of canonical texts, d) a set of philosophical virtues, e) a school, f) a movement, g) a tradition, h) a progressive philosophical program; or something else?

Føllesdal's own reply is subversive: no 'analytical trend' can be identified within contemporary philosophy. The reason is not that no such trends exist; they do exist, he holds, because suitable distinctive marks *can* be found for phenomenology, hermeneutics, etc. The trouble is specifically with the alleged analytical tradition itself: considered as a twentieth century philosophical movement, it lacks genuine unity.

Føllesdal is not entirely dismissive of 'analytic philosophy', though. No such movement exists, he argues, but there is a general and timeless *analytical approach* to philosophy. It is not a method but has to do with the most general philosophical virtues; it is the approach *by justification and argumentation*. If you are "very strongly concerned with" justification and argumentation, Føllesdal (1997, 7) suggests, then you qualify as an 'analytic' philosopher. (This may look rather thin, but the impression would be somewhat misleading, as Føllesdal uses the notion of reflective equilibrium to elaborate on the relevant notion of 'argument and justification'.) Of course, the exercise of these virtues is not confined to any philosophical current of today, or of the past century: Aristotle, St. Thomas of Aquinas, Descartes "as well as a large

number of other truly great philosophers" were analytic philosophers in this sense (Føllesdal 1997, 14).

This purely methodological conception of 'analytic philosophy' has three consequences:

(iii) 'Analytic' is a term that applies *independently of school and era*; an ancient sceptic, a medieval schoolman, a German idealist, a twentieth-century phenomenologist and a logical positivist can all of them insist that arguments must be given to support philosophical theses.

(iii) It makes sense to talk about *degrees of 'analytic'*; it makes sense to say, for instance, that Husserl was more analytic than Heidegger.

(iii) Although analyticity is a virtue that philosophers have always exercised, it is nevertheless *not a trivial characteristic*; one can be a philosopher without putting much emphasis on this virtue: Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger *might* be examples of philosophers who put less emphasis on analyticity in this sense.

To use 'analytic' in this way, exclusively as a virtue category, has an obvious weakness: we can no longer speak about the *analytic tradition in philosophy* in the ordinary, well-established sense. In this sense, Aristotle and Saint Thomas, for instance, were *not* analytic philosophers, although their works are replete with arguments; and in this sense, Husserl, for instance, was not one of twentieth century analytic philosophers, although he may have been more analytic than most phenomenologists and undoubtedly was at least as analytic as many analytic philosophers.

The dismissive strategy, in my opinion, is too radical. The real problem is not in 'analytic philosophy' or 'analytic tradition'; it's in the idea that we should use an analytic definition in their delineation. The problem is (to quote David Hilbert from an entirely different context) that here "one is looking for something one can never find because there is nothing there; and everything gets lost and becomes vague and tangled and degenerates into a game of hide and seek".

Before we conclude that the provision of an analytic definition for 'analytic philosophy' really is just a game of hide and seek, however, we should consider the revisionary strategy. Unlike Føllesdal, it does not dismiss analytic philosophy as a unitary phenomenon but *redefines it within reasonable limits*. Unlike Dummett, it does not propose to stipulate a precise meaning for 'analytic philosophy'; it complies up to a point with the established and familiar usage, but revises our pre-analytic understanding of the term in order to turn it into a useful tool for classification. In brief, the revisionist provides a Carnapian *explication* for the term 'analytic philosophy'.

5. Panu Raatikainen, in his search of analytic philosophy, has proposed just such an explication.[4] He proceeds in two steps. First, he focuses on what he calls the *original meaning of* '*analytic philosophy*' by considering how the term was introduced into philosophical vocabulary. This was a lengthy process, extending from the 1930s until the 1950s (more of this below). The original meaning is what fixes the reasonable limits for his revisionism and covers what he calls *orthodox analytic philosophy;* the heyday of analytic philosophy extended, roughly, from the late 1920s until the late 1950s, and hence Raatikainen's provocative title "What *was* analytic philosophy?".

Raatikainen's second step is the *extension of the original meaning*. The term 'analytic philosophy', although it was introduced in the 1930, made its real breakthrough only in the 1950s, by which time it had come to mean, very roughly, *the sort of philosophy where the focus is on language and the clarification of meanings*. The term caught on, but as the analytic tradition kept on developing in new directions, the sense acquired fresh layers (and lost older ones). Furthermore, the term's coverage was extended *backwards* as well, so as to cover the *roots* of 'analytic philosophy' in Cambridge (Moore and Russell) and in Jena (Frege). These extensions of the analytic canon were based primarily on perceived lines of influence, with the consequence that the doctrinal shape of 'analytic philosophy' rapidly grew less and less clear.

Raatikainen argues that we obtain terminological clarity if we stick to the original meaning of 'analytic philosophy'. In this way, we can still use the term "as a clear and distinct, serviceable, contentually classifying expression of the history of philosophy" (2013, 21). Furthermore, he has a straightforward answer to someone who is accustomed to thinking of Moore or Russell, say, as paradigmatic analytic philosophers: "[T]he problem is solved [...] when one distinguishes, on the one hand, the philosophical movement or school of thought proper, and, on the other hand, its essential predecessors and background figures" (*ibid.*). Moore and Russell were not yet genuine analytic philosophers *sensu stricto*. Orthodox analytic philosophy is what *derives* (partly) from these gentlemen. And similarly for later developments: "They could perhaps be called, if one wants to emphasize their background, 'post-analytic philosophers'" (*ibid.*, 23).[5]

[4] Raatikainen (2001, 2013).

[5] Skorupski (2013) offers a similar construction.

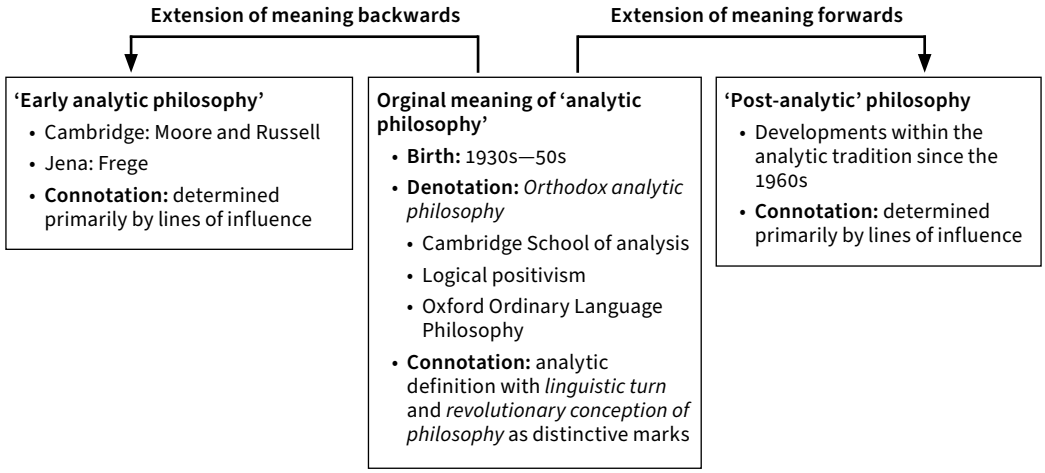

Figure 3.1: The genesis of the analytic tradition, according Raatikainen's (2001, 2013) revisionary definition of 'analytic philosophy'

Raatikainen's key point is that orthodox analytic philosophy does, indeed, form a genuine unity; that, in fact, *orthodox analytic philosophy can be given an analytic definition*. His definition is based on two distinctive marks, both of which derive from the *Tractatus*. First, there is the linguistic turn, or the idea that "the sole task of all legitimate philosophy is the analysis of language, the clarification of meaning, or such" (2013, 20–21). Second, there was the revolutionary ethos accompanying the linguistic turn, that "one was witnessing a definite turning point in the history of philosophy, a wholly new revolutionary way of understanding the task of philosophy and the nature of philosophical problems" (*ibid*., 20).

In the next section, I shall argue that the conceptual clarity created by Raatikainen's revisionary definition is spurious: the three-fold distinction as in the above diagram (figure 3.1) is in itself a good way of looking at the analytic tradition, but Raatikainen makes it rather too principled. I argue that we can come to see this if we first look at the relevant facts about the original meaning of 'analytic philosophy' and then consider the true shape of Raatikainen's "orthodox analytic philosophy"; there were 'schools' or 'movements' in the analytic tradition, but as long as we consider real life phenomena, they do not really permit any definitions in the strict, analytic sense.

6. As Raatikainen points out, the term 'analytic philosophy' is of surprisingly late origin: it was introduced in the 1930s but did not really catch on until the 1950s. Here's an outline of the earlier developments, different in some important respects from Raatikainen's version of the story.[6]

The term came to use in the early 1930s when the English philosophical community began to use it to denote a particular group within that community, a group that came to be known as *the Cambridge School of Analysis*. They were, by and large,

[6] An avid reader might want to consult Frost-Arnold (2017) as well.

followers of G. E. Moore, they held the view that the analysis of common sense and scientific facts was the proper field for philosophers, and they put considerable effort into the clarification of the notion of analysis itself. A. E. Duncan-Jones, himself one of these analytic philosophers, observed in 1937:

> "The question asked in this title ["Does Philosophy Analyse Common Sense?"] relates, of course, to philosophy as understood and practiced by a particular limited group of philosophers; primarily the contemporary philosophy of the people in his country who have commonly been called analytic philosophers." (Duncan-Jones 1937, 139)

The wording here suggests that by 1937 the term 'analytic philosopher' enjoyed a well-established use in Britain. Looking at published sources, we find R. G. Collingwood criticizing 'analytic philosophy' and 'analytic philosophers' as early as 1933, in Chapter 7 of *An Essay on Philosophical Method*. The current scholarly consensus seems to be that this is the first literary occurrence of the term 'analytic philosophy', while John Wisdom had used 'analytic philosophers' in 1931 in his book on Bentham and philosophical method (Wisdom 1931; Beaney 2013, 42).[7] These terms then occur several times in a Symposium organized by the Aristotelian Society in 1934, which was entitled "Is Analysis a Useful Method in Philosophy?", with contributions from John Wisdom, Maurice Cornforth, and Max Black.[8] Similar discussions continued throughout the rest of the 1930.

The philosophers of this Cambridge School of Analysis were the original 'analytic philosophers'. In 1935, A. J. Ayer mentioned four of them by name: Susan Stebbing, John Wisdom, C. A. Mace, and A. E. Duncan-Jones.[9] In 1938, Max Black gave a fuller list under the title "Some of the analytical philosophers in England". It included Frank Ramsey (who had died 1931), Stebbing and a dozen or so 'younger philosophers'.[10]

In 1935, A. J. Ayer lectured in Paris to an international audience about the "analytic movement in contemporary British philosophy". Ayer himself sought to blend together logical positivism and British empiricism (as in *Language, Truth and Logic*), but he clearly identified himself with the analytic movement. In this way, he already took a step towards *widening* the extension of 'analytic philosophy', as he recognized an important affinity between a number of British philosophers and their Continental colleagues. Ayer, though, was critical of colleagues both at home and abroad. Log-

[7] To the best of my knowledge, however, the very first occurrence of 'analytic philosopher' is as early as 1922 and is due to none other than Bertrand Russell. It occurs in a somewhat casual book review and is brief but not without interest. I won't discuss this early specimen here, however, as it was just a foretaste of something that was still in the future and appears to have had no effects. Of course, it would be unfair not to mention here *the first ever analytic philosopher by name;* as you might expect, the title goes to G. E. Moore (Russell 1922, 406).

[8] Black et al. (1934).

[9] Ayer (1936, 57).

[10] Black (1939, 34–35).

ical positivists, he claimed, were prone to exaggerate the revolutionary character of their conception of philosophy as analysis; *this* had always been a standing feature of British empiricism. On the other hand, while Ayer found the gist of philosophical analysis in Russell's method of logical constructions, he argued that colleagues at home had not sufficiently appreciated its true nature, as they continued to formulate it using misleading metaphysical vocabulary.

In 1938, Max Black gave yet another survey of contemporary British philosophy, focusing on the Cambridge School of Analysis. The label, he argued, was convenient but still an exaggeration, as it was hard to find a single principle that all supporters of the analytic method would have accepted. More fitting, he explained, would be talk of "analytic movement" or just "analytical philosophy in England", characterized by an "unmistakable climate of opinion that was hostile to metaphysics and speculative philosophy, and sympathetic to analysis" (Black 1939, 24).

Now, insofar as *this original analytic philosophy* had a defining feature, it was an emphasis on *method*. Collingwood (1933) was critical of what he termed 'analytic philosophy', precisely because an exclusive focus on given facts and their analysis left no room for constructive philosophical thinking, and led to a kind of scepticism. He instances Moore and Stebbing as 'analytic philosophers', thus making clear that his criticism is of real-life philosophers and not some ideal type. Almost as a reply to this criticism, the English analytic philosophers of the 1930s debated the nature of analysis intensely. What are logical constructions? Is analysis concerned with worldly facts or with language? Does analysis possess a "direction", or is the *analysans* on the same level as the *analysandum?* Is analysis concerned with facts licensed by common sense? These are examples of their questions, and nothing in the debate is indicative of a convergence of opinions. Susan Stebbing, in her last contribution to the debate, simply declared that she had grown tired of the entire topic.[11]

We see that 'analytic philosophy' was originally a very British phenomenon. Then, in 1936, the term was used more freely by Ernst Nagel in his paper, 'Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe', published in *The Journal of Philosophy*. Nagel, born European, was an American philosopher who received his education at Columbia. He spent the academic year 1934–1935 in Europe as a Guggenheim scholar, visiting five major philosophical centres: Vienna, Prague, Warsaw, Lwów (Lviv) and Cambridge. Likely – and this is my conjecture—he picked a useful term in Cambridge and used it *to make a bold generalization:* 'analytic philosophy' was a European and not just a narrowly British phenomenon. With this generalization, he wanted to assure his fellow Americans that "a romantic irrationalism had not completely engulfed Europe" (1936, 5). By Nagel's reckoning, analytic philosophy existed in Europe in several places and forms: (i) in Cambridge, which was dominated by G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein; (ii) on the Continent in Vienna, Berlin and elsewhere, where it existed as different versions of 'logical positivism'; and (iii) in Poland, where it existed as 'nominalistic naturalism, dominated by the logico-analytic method'.

[11] Stebbing (1938–1939), 71.

Nagel used four features to describe European 'Analytic philosophers'. As we would expect, they were occupied with philosophy as analysis. That is, they took scientific results for granted and didn't expect to add to it but to clarify it; discussions of *method* dominated all these places. They had little patience with philosophical systems in the traditional sense. Also, they didn't care about history of philosophy, the only point of which was to see how philosophers of a previous generation had committed a particular logical blunder. Finally, they subscribed to a kind of common sense naturalism, the gist of which was the conviction that philosophy couldn't deliver anything that conflicted with "informed practice and common experience" (1936, 7). This, though, was not a doctrine but an underlying tenet at best; for analytic philosophers never asserted a *Weltanschauung* as a part of their philosophy. Although he is more elaborate than Black, their respective pictures of analytic philosophy are quite similar: analytic philosophers often differ in their doctrines (Nagel sketches out recent developments in Cambridge and in the *Wiener Kreis*), and what they have in common is an attitude, or a number of basic convictions, both positive and negative.

Sketchy as it is, the above account of the original meaning is hopefully enough to convince the reader of the following two points. First, from its inception, 'analytic philosophy' was recognized by everyone to be a heterogeneous phenomenon. Second, its unity was less a matter of doctrine than of certain attitudes. The second point is strengthened by noting that Black's observation about the English climate of opinion in the 1930s can, in fact, be generalized so as to cover all of what Raatikainen calls *orthodox analytic philosophy*.

7. In many ways, the Vienna Circle is the paradigm of a philosophical school. After all, it was an actual group of philosophers and scientists who organized themselves into a regular discussion group and published a manifesto telling what their *Weltanschauung* was and who were their friends and adversaries. And the core of their doctrines can apparently be summarized by a few theses or doctrines (consult any textbook). But if you were to ask serious historians, they would tell you a rather more intricate story. For instance, Juha Manninen has argued in a study of the emergence of the Circle that "the features common to the Circle are to be found in a successful institutionalization and attitudes related to it, rather than in any set of collectively accepted and developed theses" (2002, 101). He argues further:

> The Vienna Circle was a process which involved a wide spectrum of sometimes conflicting ideas. The process never took a final shape. To understand the continuities and discontinuities of the Circle, we have to consider its individual members and the wider social interaction. The most dramatic manifestation of this is to be found in their views on language, which were subject to continual revision.[12]

[12] Manninen (2002, 103). Translation by AK.

Analogous points apply to philosophy in the post-war Oxford. Paul Grice, who himself worked there in the 1950s, has emphasized that there were no dogmas uniting Oxford-philosophers and that the only position accepted – with a varied measure of enthusiasm – was that philosophical thinking must be founded on "a careful examination of the detailed features of ordinary discourse", a view that implied nothing definite about the relationship between linguistic phenomena and philosophical theses.[13] Basically, Grice explains, there were two reasons why Oxford-philosophy had the appearance of a philosophical school. First, it was associated with a loose social structure, 'The Play Group', which convened for discussions on Saturday mornings (similar to but presumably looser than Moritz Schlick's famous Thursday evening Seminars). Second, Oxford-philosophy was rigidified into a "School" by its relentless critics like Russell and Gustav Bergmann. For them, talk of a "school" was a handy rhetorical device: once you define a philosophical school by reference to a few characteristic doctrines, you will have refuted all its members once you show the doctrines to be false.

8. I conclude that no feasible analytic definition can be given for 'analytic philosophy'. All such proposals, including Raatikainen's sophisticated revisionary definition, inevitably misrepresent the nature of the phenomenon under consideration. How, then, are we to proceed in our search of analytic philosophy?

My own proposal is that we should tackle the problem *historically*. We should stick to 'analytic philosophy' as a lexical item, thus obtaining a pre-theoretical and agreed-upon notion of *analytic tradition* as a starting-point. We can then put forth the following schematic characterization:

> [AP] Analytic philosophy consists of a series of connected phases—schools, movements, trends as much as individual philosophers—that together constitute the analytic tradition.[14]

[AP] is, indeed, schematic and does not say anything contentual about analytic philosophy. But it does make a point: *the unity of analytic philosophy is historical unity;* the category "analytic philosophy" is first and foremost a historical category.

We observed above that an average analytic definition fails to specify the genus that it seeks to define. Given [AP], we can say that the unity and continuity of analytic philosophy is (ultimately) supplied by the analytic *tradition*; and the very notion of tradition contains the idea that this unity and continuity need not be grounded just upon shared similarities or common features; it may be as much a matter of confrontations, changes of direction, etc. For instance, in the late 1940s, Oxford-philosophers did not regard any obscurantist metaphysics à la Heidegger as their *bête noir;* this

[13] Grice (1986, 49–51).

[14] I was pleased to find the following statement by von Wright: "The unity of the phenomenon [of analytic philosophy] I have tended to see in a chain of historically related, successive stages" (from a letter to Peter Hacker, quoted in Hacker 2016, 82.)

role was reserved for Carnap, the philosophical technologist.[15] Russell, on the other hand, argued that what he called the Oxford 'cult of common usage', among its other sins, was insincere, provided an excuse for laziness, and rendered philosophy trivial.[16] And yet, both Oxford-philosophy and Carnap and Russell all belong to the hardest core of analytic philosophy.

People like Føllesdal see heterogeneity as an existential threat to analytic philosophy. The fact is that heterogeneity belongs to the nature of the phenomenon. To begin with, it has been a standing element in analytic philosophy as long as it has been called by that name. Evidence for this claim was given above. Secondly, there is nothing exceptional about analytic philosophy in this respect. For instance, if we took a closer look at the phenomenological tradition, we would at once perceive similar heterogeneity (how does the realist phenomenology of Adolf Reinach and others relate to Husserl's endeavours?) And of course, this applies outside the sphere of philosophy, too. The analytic tradition is an intellectual formation, and as such, its structure, heterogeneity and dynamics could be readily compared, say, to the tradition of modernism in twentieth-century music, which exhibits an almost endless variety and is nevertheless a genuine and distinct phenomenon

Being historical, the concept of analytic philosophy cannot be defined. As Nietzsche observed in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality:*

> All concepts in which a whole process is semiotically concentrated defy definition; only something which has no history can be defined.[17]

We can come to understand analytic philosophy by considering various aspects of the process that has been semiotically summarized in the concept; the key to 'analytic philosophy' is the analytical tradition, and understanding analytic philosophy is an essentially historical undertaking. But what are the "various aspects"? Briefly, they are (i) the various features that have been characteristic of the tradition; (ii) the inner dynamics of the analytic tradition; and (iii) the outer dynamics of the analytic tradition, that is, its relations to other relevant traditions.

Following Hans-Johann Glock's (2008) well-known analysis, we may say that, on this approach 'analytic philosophy' is at the same time a *family-resemblance* and *genetic-historical category*. This means two things. The unity of analytic philosophy is, first of all, a matter of "various resemblances" which "overlap and criss-cross like the similarities between the members of a family", to use Wittgenstein's language from *Philosophical Investigations*, § 67. The analytic tradition consists of distinct and different phases, between which there are similarities or resemblances, without there being any single feature or a group of features that should run through all these stages. Considering similarities alone, however, we would soon find ourselves outside

[15] See Ryle (1949).

[16] Russell (1953).

[17] Nietzsche (1887, *Second Essay*, § 13).

the analytic tradition. Therefore, and this is the second factor behind unity, similarities must be tied to a *particular historical tradition*. It's in the context of this tradition that we are to consider the similarities, and membership in this tradition is what makes a philosopher 'analytic' in the relevant sense. The essential point is that family-resemblances and membership in a particular tradition only work together, so that 'analytic philosophy' cannot be a purely historical and genetic concept, either. Merely considering who influenced whom and who was influenced by whom would soon take us outside analytic philosophy; lines of influence do not follow borders of traditions. Practically all European philosophers in the period between 1830 and 1930 were influenced by Kant, but that does not suffice to make them 'Kantian', not even 'neo-Kantian'.

This two-pronged approach is not fully satisfactory, however. The problem is that talk of 'family-resemblance' tends to obfuscate the *diachronic* side of the matter. The notion of *tradition* has *temporal continuity* and *change* as its key elements, but when a concept is said to be a family-resemblance concept, that is usually just a synchronic claim about taxonomy and classification; as when it is said that "things in the extension of a family-resemblance concept are brought together, not by any single feature that is common to all of them, but by a group of overlapping similarities". To repeat, the unity of the analytic tradition is primarily historical; and we should add, it's the unity of a *living tradition*. Mere features do not work here very well. They are static, supposedly repeated and transmitted within a tradition, whereas a living tradition is one that changes over time; a single so-called 'feature', moreover, may in fact cover several different, sometimes even opposite instances.

To do justice to analytic philosophy, we have to make these features *dynamic* and consider them as characteristics of a living tradition; we have to see analytic philosophy itself as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument", to quote Alasdair MacIntyre's well-known definition of tradition.[18] As MacIntyre also points out, a tradition has an outside as well as an inside: tradition is maintained and transformed by internal, interpretative debates (*internal conflicts*), and also by *external conflicts* with critics and enemies.[19] We have already met this notion of tradition. It is not very natural to call the Vienna Circle a "tradition" (it did not live long enough to developed into one); rather, it was a "school" or, better, a "movement". And yet, we saw an eminent historian arguing that even the Circle and, indeed, its so-called logical positivism ought to be considered as a "socially embodied argument", not as a set of fixed doctrines.

9. A good deal ought to be said to render the message of the previous section more transparent and convincing. Here I can do no more than draw the reader's attention to a few salient points about "features", as explained above. I shall use *linguistic philosophy* (and its cousin, *the linguistic turn*) as illustration. In the past, people were wont to use such phrases to explain the very idea of analytic philosophy. We know

[18] MacIntyre (1984, 222).

[19] MacIntyre (1988, 12).

now that this will not do, not even in a definition of classical, hard core analytic philosophy. Many philosophers in the analytic tradition, though, have shared the very general conviction that *language matters to philosophy*. And there is no doubt that an increasing attention to matters involving language was relevant to the emergence, evolution and transformations of the analytic tradition. But we have to ask: *why and in what way?*

Linguistic philosophy in this minimal and abstract sense is not a single phenomenon: in the analytic tradition, there have been many ways and many why's behind its linguistic turns. A rough typology distinguishes *three types*, all of them diachronic and dynamic (that is, historical).

Type 1 linguistic philosophy (LP-1) is the most radical one. According to it, philosophical problems, theories, theses, etc. are inextricably married to confusions and misunderstandings about language and how it works. Unsurprisingly, how this is supposed to come about depends on what philosophical phenomenon is at stake and what aspect of language is connected to it and how. To illustrate, Wittgenstein held throughout his career that philosophical problems owe their existence to "our misunderstanding the logic of our language"; but as he understood this logic differently at different times, the diagnosis in fact changed over time. In the *Tractatus*, "the logic of our language" is a deeply metaphysical matter (although the metaphysics is hidden and is officially not there at all), whereas in his later thought, beginning with the *Blue Book* of the mid-1930s, it was connected with a completely different set of ideas. Or think of Gilbert Ryle. In the early 1930s, he gave a somewhat simplistic account of philosophical mistakes as based on the notion of "systematically misleading expressions" (Ryle 1932); then, in the *Concept of Mind* (1949), he formulated an intriguing diagnosis of how the Cartesian theory of mind comes about when we misconstrue the logical geography of our mental language.

Type 2 linguistic philosophy (LP-2) is less radical. LP-2 people think that genuine philosophical problems exist and need not be based on confusions. They may think, for instance, that philosophical investigations are conceptual in nature and that concepts and conceptual distinctions are tied down to language. In addressing their problems, LP-2 people wield "a linguistic method". For example, J. L. Austin, along with many kindred spirits, argued that concepts live in our language, in "our common stock of words", which therefore embodies all the distinctions and connexions our ancestors have found worth drawing "in the lifetimes of many generations" (1961, 130). The crucial point is this: "When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* words [...] but also the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena" (*ibid.*).

The distinction between LP-1 and LP-2 is not very sharp. For instance, how should we classify the Carnap of his syntactic phase, who held that genuine philosophical problems do not exist? This sounds like LP-1, but he also held that once all the relevant confusions have been eliminated, there remains the hard, scientific core of phi-

losophy, which is logic. In this way, philosophical questions sort of disappear, as their place is taken by genuinely scientific questions about the proper formulation of the language of science (Carnap 1934). That the distinction should be vague, though, is only to be expected: we are here concerned with actual philosophers' actual thoughts and their contours, and not with ideal structures with sharp delimitations.

Type 3 linguistic philosophy (LP-3) has been present in the analytic tradition ever since its inception. Unlike Types 1 and 2, LP-3 does not see the questions, problems, subject matter or methods of philosophy as essentially linguistic: philosophy is about the real world, and "goes to the things themselves"; LP-3is just the awareness that philosophers must become conscious of the workings of language, or the ways of meaning, as this is a necessary condition of all valid philosophizing. Now, I am inclined to say that if by "the linguistic turn" we just mean an acceptance of LP-3, then it has, indeed, been a key characteristic of the analytic tradition – but it would still not be a distinguishing feature, because one can advocate LP-3 without thereby becoming an analytic philosopher.[20]

Russell and Moore are supreme examples of analytic philosophers who took the linguistic turn in the sense of LP-3. They began their careers as analytic philosophers with a resolute *denunciation* of the relevance of language to philosophy. Then, however, came a growing awareness that symbols and meaning are not as transparent as they had assumed at first. The first fruit of the new awareness was Russell's theory of definite descriptions, which Moore, too, came to accept. Russell, then, delved deeper into how symbols mean (*The Philosophy of Logical atomism* is mostly about this), not because this was what philosophy was about but because he found out that misunderstandings about "symbolism" were the veritable treasure trove behind much of traditional philosophy; here we perceive a certain overlap between LP-1 and LP-3, but they nevertheless remain distinct.

In Russell's case, there were other exciting developments, which took place as direct consequences of LP-3, including a sort of naturalistic turn. The phenomenon of meaning itself began to take on new philosophical importance for him, and since meaning, he now thought, was largely a matter of psychology and physiology, this brought about a more general change in his philosophical perspective. (You get a picture of this if you first read Russell's *The Problems of philosophy* (1912) and then his *An Outline of Philosophy* (1927), two books that stand so far apart that they were clearly written by two distinct philosophers).

Moore took a linguistic turn that probably, in the end, took him beyond LP-3. Methodologically, his version of analytic philosophy started from "transparency of appearing", as we may call it; the objects of philosophical analysis, he held, were *propositions*, or meaning structures which are independent of our minds but whose constituents and composition are something that we can become conscious of; at the end of the day, then, we just have to *see* that something is thus and so, and not some other way (Butler's maxim, which was the motto of *Principia Ethica*). When

[20] Franz Brentano would be an exciting early example (see Aho 1990).

this method turned out to be rather too simplistic (Russell's influence), Moore had to come up with a new one, and here Common Sense truisms and the inspection of actual linguistic usage become the benchmark. It is likely that Moore ended up being a linguistic philosopher in the stronger sense of LP-2; but at any rate he got there *via* LP-3.

10. So much for typology. You might raise a question at this point: What features should we include in a characterization of the analytic tradition? My preferred answer is: *any feature that a serious historian considers worthwhile*. It may be a big feature, like 'linguistic philosophy', one that runs through much of the analytic tradition. But it may be a small one too. The important point is that features *are not really meant to be typological at all but explanatory*. [21] We, as 'serious historians', want to understand the analytic tradition and explain things within it as well as about it, that is, at different levels of granularity, as they say: individual philosophers, interaction between individual philosophers, groups, schools, movements, and maybe entire segments of the tradition. This, indeed, is my main message.

Finally, I mention a special virtue of the present notion of a feature: it helps us see the analytic tradition as a broad intellectual movement. Specifically, it shows early analytic philosophy to have been so much more than just the handful of (male) names that make up the standard story, as in Soames (2014, 2018).[22] To be sure, Soames has his reasons for adopting a narrow perspective on the analytic tradition and its evolution. He is a philosopher who cares about what he takes to be *progressive* in contemporary analytic philosophy, and also about the past of such progressive elements. He would not really care about the analytic tradition as an intellectual movement; studying it only ever leads to endless contextualizations, from which no philosophical lessons can be derived. This, I think, would be wrong on several counts, but an elaboration must be preserved for another occasion. Here my concern has been with a preliminary investigation of 'analytic philosophy'.

[21] Cf. here Kremer (2013).

[22] As Janssen-Lauret (2022, Chapter 1) points out, this, indeed, remains a common blind spot.

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