



WHAT IS **Analytic Philosophy?**

Hans-Johann Glock

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WHAT IS ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY?

Analytic philosophy is roughly a hundred years old, and it is now the dominant force within Western philosophy. Interest in its historical development is increasing, but there has hitherto been no sustained attempt to elucidate what it *currently* amounts to, and how it differs from so-called 'continental' philosophy. In this rich and wide-ranging book, Hans-Johann Glock argues that analytic philosophy is a loose movement held together both by ties of influence and by various 'family resemblances'. He considers the pros and cons of various definitions of analytic philosophy, and tackles the methodological, historiographical and philosophical issues raised by such definitions. Finally, he explores the wider intellectual and cultural implications of the notorious divide between analytic and continental philosophy. His book will be an invaluable guide for anyone seeking to understand analytic philosophy and how it is practised.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521872676

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First published in print format 2008

ISBN-13 978-0-511-38961-0 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-87267-6 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-69426-1 paperback

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*For Sonja and Helen
With a fond look back
und einem hoffnungsvollen Blick nach vorn!*

... alle Begriffe, in denen sich ein ganzer Prozess semiotisch zusammenfasst, entziehen sich der Definition; definierbar ist nur das, was keine Geschichte hat.

(... all concepts which semiotically condense a whole process elude definition; only that which has no history can be defined.)

Friedrich Nietzsche (*Genealogie der Moral* 11: 13)

We moved with Carnap as henchmen through the metaphysicians' camp. We beamed with partisan pride when he countered a diatribe of Arthur Lovejoy's in his characteristically reasonable way, explaining that if Lovejoy means *A* then *p*, and if he means *B* then *q*. I had yet to learn how unsatisfying this way of Carnap's could sometimes be.

W. V. Quine (1976: 42).

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Preface

There are useful introductions to the problems and techniques of analytic philosophy, notably Hospers (1973) and Charlton (1991). There are also distinguished historical accounts, for instance Skorupski (1993), Hacker (1996), Stroll (2000), Baldwin (2001) and Soames (2003). The current state of analytic philosophy in different subject areas is surveyed by a plethora of companions and guidebooks. Finally, there are spirited pleas for analytic philosophy, such as Tugendhat (1976), Cohen (1986) and Engel (1997).

This book does not belong to any of these genres, though it makes contributions to all of them. It is an attempt to answer the question of what analytic philosophy is in a direct and comprehensive manner. It considers past, present and future; and it tries to distinguish and rule out alternative answers in a sustained manner. To the best of my knowledge, it is the first book devoted to this task. As the title indicates, Dummett's influential *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* concentrates on the historical roots, and it does not engage with rival conceptions of analytic philosophy. Conversely, Cohen's *The Dialogue of Reason* largely ignores historical issues; and its second half is devoted not to analysing analytic philosophy, but to practising it on a specific topic. Finally, D'Agostini's *Analitici e Continentali* surveys both analytic and continental philosophy, which is more than I aspire to. Nevertheless, I shall cast repeated and, I hope, accurate glances at non-analytic ways of philosophizing. For one of my ambitions is to determine what, if anything, the analytic/continental contrast amounts to, not *just* in the past, but also at present and for the future. Nor can I afford to abstain from doing (analytic) philosophy. For it turns out that the historical and taxonomic questions with which the book is concerned raise a host of important and interesting philosophical questions of a conceptual and methodological kind. I shall need to dwell on the nature of linguistic meaning, the purposes of definition and classification, the role of historical knowledge in the resolution of philosophical problems, the threat of incommensurability between theories, the merits of historical relativism,

principles of interpretation, the nature of clarity, different types of philosophical argument, essentially contested concepts, the idea of family resemblance, the proper way of demarcating intellectual traditions, and the proper role of philosophy in public debate, among other topics.

The intended audience includes not just analytic philosophers, whether students or professionals, but also non-analytic philosophers, and indeed anyone interested in one of the most exciting, important and controversial intellectual phenomena of the twentieth century. Some acquaintance with the history of philosophy is an advantage, without being a prerequisite. I have used logical formulae where appropriate, but they can be skipped without essential loss. I have also tried to explain any technical vocabulary I employ, and further information on this score is readily available in the now plentiful works of reference.

Although this is not an exclusively historical effort, a sense of time and progression is of the essence. I have therefore used the original publication dates in my references to classics, even in cases in which I cite from later editions or translations. For such works, the Bibliography displays the original date in brackets at the beginning, and then proceeds to specify the edition referred to. I have not, however, tried to impose this system consistently on recent works about analytic philosophy, or on posthumous writings with publication dates far removed from the original composition. At the same time, I feel squeamish about anachronisms like ‘Aristotle 2001’. Instead, such giants of yore are quoted using a title and an established system of reference.

The debts I have incurred in writing this book are both diverse and profound. I am grateful for permission to use material from the following articles of mine: ‘Philosophy, Thought and Language’, in J. Preston (ed.), *Thought and Language: Proceedings of the Royal Institute of Philosophy Conference* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 151–69; ‘Insignificant Others: the Mutual Prejudices of Anglophone and Germanophone Philosophers’, in C. Brown and T. Seidel (eds.), *Cultural Negotiations* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1998), 83–98; ‘Vorsprung durch Logik: The German Analytic Tradition’, in A. O’Hear (ed.), *German Philosophy since Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137–66; ‘Philosophy’, in J. Sandford (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Contemporary German Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 477–80; ‘Imposters, Bunglers and Relativists’, in S. Peters, M. Biddiss and I. Roe (eds.), *The Humanities at the Millennium* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2000), 267–87; ‘Strawson and Analytic Kantianism’, in H. J. Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 15–42; ‘Was Wittgenstein an Analytic Philosopher?’, *Metaphilosophy* 35

(2004), 419–44; ‘Wittgenstein and History’, in Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and His Works* (Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, 2005), 177–204.

I wish to thank Rhodes University (South Africa) for awarding me a Hugh Le May Fellowship in 2002, and the Department of Philosophy, especially Marius Vermaak, for making our sojourn so delightful. I am indebted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a sabbatical as part of their Research Leave Scheme. Once more I am grateful to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a grant that allowed me to spend a term at the University of Bielefeld in 2004, and to my hosts Ansgar Beckermann, Johannes Rogenhofer and Eike von Savigny. I wish to thank the University of Reading for its support of my research over many years. It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to work in the Department of Philosophy, and I am forever grateful to John Cottingham for luring me there all those years ago. I also wish to thank my new colleagues at the University of Zurich for the warm and constructive welcome. Julia Langkau and Christoph Laszlo, in particular, have supported this project logistically.

Covering such a huge and diverse area is beyond any single individual. For this reason I had to rely not just on a vast amount of literature, but also on countless conversations and on advice provided by colleagues, students and friends. Even an incomplete list would have to include David Bakhurst, Mike Beaney, Ansgar Beckermann, Jerry Cohen, John Cottingham, Jonathan Dancy, Michael Dummett, Simon Glendinning, Oswald Hanfling, Martina Herrman, Brad Hooker, Geert Keil, Andreas Kemmerling, Anthony Kenny, Vasso Kindi, Wolfgang Künne, Julia Langkau, Diego Marconi, Ray Monk, Kevin Mulligan, Herman Philipse, Carlo Penco, Aaron Preston, John Preston, Alan Richardson, Jay Rosenberg, Katia Saporiti, Eike von Savigny, Joachim Schulte, Peter Schulthess, Hans Sluga, Philip Stratton-Lake, Roger Teichmann, Alan Thomas, Paolo Tripodi, and Daniel Whiting. They have been very generous and helpful in providing answers, and I can only hope that I have asked at least some of the right questions. As on previous occasions, I have also benefited from participating in the St John’s College discussion group, which has now, alas, come to an end.

Parts of this book have been aired at Berlin, Bielefeld, Dortmund, Edinburgh, Erfurt, Genoa, Oxford, Reading and Zurich. I am grateful to these various audiences for their questions and objections. I also wish to thank two anonymous readers for the Press for their recommendations and corrections. Peter Hacker, John Hyman, and Christian Nimtz have

commented on several chapters. Special thanks go to Javier Kalhat, who read and copy-edited the whole manuscript. Their criticisms and suggestions have been invaluable, and they have saved me, not to mention my readers, from numerous blunders, infelicities, excesses and rhetorical flourishes. I owe a more general and longstanding debt to Peter Hacker for introducing me to both analytic philosophy and its history. He will not agree with some of the answers offered in this book, but he stimulated me to ask the questions.

As ever, my greatest debt is to my family. They have inspired and supported me through good times and bad, and still found the strength to laugh about this project, academic careers and, last but not least, the philosopher in their midst.

Introduction

Analytic philosophy is roughly 100 years old, and it is now the dominant force within Western philosophy (Searle 1996: 1–2). It has prevailed for several decades in the English-speaking world; it is in the ascendancy in Germanophone countries; and it has made significant inroads even in places once regarded as hostile, such as France. At the same time there are continuous rumours about the ‘demise’ of analytic philosophy, about it being ‘defunct’ or at least in ‘crisis’, and complaints about its ‘widely perceived ills’ (Leiter 2004a: 1, 12; Biletzki and Matar 1998: xi; Preston 2004: 445–7, 463–4). A sense of crisis is palpable not just among commentators but also among some leading protagonists. Von Wright noted that in the course of graduating from a revolutionary movement into the philosophical establishment, analytic philosophy has also become so diverse as to lose its distinctive profile (1993: 25). This view is echoed by countless observers who believe that the customary distinction between analytic and continental philosophy has become obsolete (e.g. Glendinning 2002; May 2002; Bieri 2005).

Loss of identity is one general worry, loss of vigour another. Putnam has repeatedly called for ‘a revitalization, a renewal’ of analytic philosophy (e.g. 1992: ix). And Hintikka has maintained that ‘the survival of analytic philosophy’ depends on a fresh start based on exploiting the constructive possibilities in Wittgenstein’s later work (1998). Searle is one of analytic philosophy’s most stalwart and uncompromising advocates. Yet even he concedes that in changing from ‘a revolutionary minority point of view’ into ‘the conventional, establishment point of view’ analytic philosophy ‘has lost some of its vitality’ (1996: 23). Small wonder that those more sceptical about analytic philosophy have for some time now been anticipating its replacement by a ‘post-analytic philosophy’ (Rajchman and West 1985; Baggini and Stangroom 2002: 6; Mulhall 2002).

Such a combination of triumph and crisis is by no means unprecedented. But it provides a fitting opportunity to address the nature of

analytic philosophy from a fresh perspective. In the 1970s, Michael Dummett opened a debate about the historical origins of analytic philosophy with his claim that it is ‘post-Fregean philosophy’ and that it is based on the conviction that the philosophy of language is the foundation of philosophy in general. Over the last fifteen years the pace of the debate has quickened. In addition to Dummett’s *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* there have been several historical surveys of analytic philosophy (Skorupski 1993; Hacker 1996; Stroll 2000; Baldwin 2001; Soames 2003), detailed treatises on more specific aspects (e.g. Hylton 1990; Stadler 1997; Hanna 2001), and at least six collections of essays on the history of analytic philosophy (Bell and Cooper 1990; Monk and Palmer 1996; Glock 1997c; Tait 1997; Biletzki and Matar 1998; Reck 2002). If Hegel is right and the owl of Minerva takes flight only at dusk, analytic philosophy must be moribund. Now, death by historical self-consciousness may not be a bad way to go. Still, even if the analytic enterprise is to be wound up, the process ought to be less one-sided.

So far the debate about the nature of analytic philosophy has focused on two questions: who should count as the true progenitor of analytic philosophy? And at what point did the analytic/continental divide emerge?¹ There has been no sustained attempt in English to combine such *historical* questions with an elucidation of what analytic philosophy *currently* amounts to, and how it differs from so-called ‘continental’ philosophy. The first part of Jonathan Cohen’s *The Dialogue of Reason: an Analysis of Analytical Philosophy* delivers on its sub-title. But it stands alone in its focus on the present, and it explicitly sets aside the historical dimension (1986: 6–7). Moreover, it has little to say about continental philosophy. Yet contemporary Western philosophy is notoriously divided into two traditions, analytic philosophy on the one hand, and continental philosophy on the other. In spite of more than forty years of attempted dialogue and synthesis, this rift is still very real, both philosophically and sociologically. Therefore an account of analytic philosophy should also contrast it with the main alternatives, and not just at the point of its emergence.

The relative neglect of the current status of analytic philosophy is surprising, and not just because of analytic philosophy’s general reputation for being ahistorical. From Dummett onwards, the historical questions have been intimately linked to the question of what analytic philosophy is, and to passionate fights for the soul and the future of analytic philosophy.

¹ Dummett 1993: esp. chs. 2–4. Hacker (1996: chs. 1–2; 1997) and Monk (1997) join battle with Dummett on the first question, Friedmann (2000) implicitly contradicts him on the second.

Most participants in the debate have tended to identify analytic philosophy with the kind of philosophy they deem proper, and I hope to show that this tendency has led to various distortions.

My ambition is to approach the issue in a fashion that may appear to be at once more analytic and more continental. More analytic in that it scrutinizes the status and purpose of demarcations between philosophical traditions, in that it assesses the pros and cons of various definitions of analytic philosophy in a dispassionate way, and in that it discusses some of the conceptual and methodological problems surrounding the debate. Although I shall not disguise the fact that I am an analytic philosopher, I want to tackle the issue without assuming that analytic philosophy must at any rate equal good philosophy. To put it differently, my main project in this book is to contribute to *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* metaphilosophy. In this respect my project differs from the explicitly apologetic projects of Cohen (1986: 1–2), Føllesdal (1997) and Charlton (1991). This is not to say that I refrain from defending analytic philosophy against some objections. But I also press criticisms that strike me as well founded and conclude by suggesting ways in which contemporary analytic philosophy might be improved.

In any event, my views on how analytic philosophy should be pursued will be based on a prior attempt to understand what it actually amounts to. My approach to that issue may appear more ‘continental’ in that it pays attention to the historical background and to the wider cultural and political implications of analytic philosophy and its evolving conflict with other styles of philosophizing. I am not, however, exclusively or even primarily interested in the roots of analytic philosophy, but in what it *presently amounts to*, including the current state of the analytic/continental divide.

My perspective is also continental in a literal sense. As a German who has spent most of his working life in Britain, I can ill afford to be linguistically challenged, and I am aware of contemporary analytic philosophers outside of the Anglophone world. As is common in diasporas, these philosophers show a great degree of self-awareness, and over the last twenty years they have founded various associations and journals devoted to the promotion of analytic philosophy. The ‘mission statements’ of these ventures are an important source of information about the current self-image of analytic philosophy, and so are some writings for, against and about analytic philosophy that are available only in exotic languages like French, German and Italian. Due to the large scale of this investigation, I shall occasionally be forced to pronounce on historical, exegetical and

substantive issues without sustained argument. Some controversial claims will be defended in footnotes, but others will be backed simply by references to relevant literature. I hope, however, that it will become clear how my views on the general questions to which the book is devoted depend on my views on these more specific issues.

I WHY THE QUESTION MATTERS

As the title makes clear, my main focus is on ‘What *is* analytic philosophy?’ rather than ‘Where does analytic philosophy come from?’ Nevertheless, the second question will loom large, not just for its own sake but also because of its implications for the first. But do these two questions matter? In one sense, it is patently obvious that they do. Most professional philosophers hold strong views about them. Many of them confine the airing of these views to polite or impolite conversation. But there have also been statements in print on what analytic philosophy is, not least by those who officially declare the topic to be ‘unrewarding’ (e.g. Williams 2006: 155). These statements provide a second rationale for engaging with the issue. While most of them are instructive and interesting, many of them are false. And I know of no better reason for a philosopher to put pen to paper than the need to combat false views, irrespective of whether these are held by philosophers, scientists, historians or laypeople.

But should one try to replace these incorrect answers by correct ones, or should the questions of what analytic philosophy is and where it comes from simply be dismissed as unanswerable and confusing? Of course, the ultimate proof of that pudding is in the eating. But it is instructive to ponder whether one should give answering these questions a try.

Marx famously remarked ‘En tout cas, moi, je ne suis pas marxiste.’ Many people since have felt that labels for philosophical positions, schools and traditions are just empty words, superfluous at best, distracting and confusing at worst. Indeed, this sentiment has been particularly vivid among some eminent analytic philosophers, albeit for different reasons. Some early pioneers were suspicious of schools because they felt that all differences of opinion between philosophers could be resolved through the advent of analytic methods. In this spirit, Ayer wrote that ‘there is nothing in the nature of philosophy to warrant the existence of philosophical parties or “schools”’ (1936: 176, see also 42). Such hopes have faded. But even contemporary analytic philosophers associate schools and -isms with dogmatism and procrastination.

Thus Dummett deplores the analytic/continental divide as follows:

Philosophy, having no agreed methodology and hardly any incontrovertible triumphs, is peculiarly subject to schisms and sectarianism; but they do the subject only harm. (1993: xi)

The most sustained analytic attack on dividing philosophers into schools or positions is earlier and hails from Ryle.

There is no place for ‘isms’ in philosophy. The alleged party issues are never the important philosophic questions, and to be affiliated to a recognizable party is to be the slave of a non-philosophic prejudice in favour of a (usually non-philosophic) article of belief. To be a ‘so-and-so ist’ is to be philosophically frail. And while I am ready to confess or to be accused of such a frailty, I ought no more to boast of it than to boast of astigmatism or *mal de mer*. (1937: 153–4)

There is a salutary message here, and not just for those who vilify Ryle as a narrow-minded and pig-headed ‘logical behaviourist’. In the first instance, Ryle’s professed ‘repugnance’ is directed at those who not only apply philosophical labels to themselves and their adversaries, but who employ them as weapons of philosophical argument. Such a procedure is annoying and widespread in equal measure, especially when it employs ‘dismissal-phrases’ (Passmore 1961: 2) such as ‘crass materialism’, ‘naïve realism’, ‘wild idealism’ or ‘scholasticism’. Even where a clear sense attaches to a philosophical ‘ism’ and a particular thinker or theory definitely fits the bill, the argumentative weight must be carried by the reflections in favour of or against the position at issue.

Regrettably, we shall see that after World War II Ryle himself engaged in some of the most divisive ‘them and us’ and by implication school-building rhetoric in the history of the analytic/continental divide (ch. 3.1). More importantly, there is also a less unsavoury use of philosophical labels. We can classify thinkers, works, positions, or arguments without polemical or dialectical intent, namely for the sake of clarifying what their import is and what is at stake in any controversies to which they may give rise. Ryle concedes that

for certain ends, such as those of biography or the history of cultures (though not those of philosophy itself), it is often useful and correct to classify philosophers according to certain general casts of mind or temperaments. (1937: 157)

He has in mind dichotomies such as those between the ‘tender-minded’ and the ‘tough-minded’ (James 1907: 10–19, 118–20), between ‘inflationists’ and ‘deflationists’ (Berlin 1950), or between ‘prophetic’ and ‘engineering’ philosophers.

However, it does not go without saying that such classifications have no place in philosophy itself. For one thing, it is debatable (and will be debated

in chapter 4) whether there are hard and fast divisions between philosophy, the history of philosophy and the wider history of ideas. For another, even if there are clear and stable barriers between these disciplines, why should labelling not play a legitimate role in all of them? It would be wrong to reject that suggestion by appeal to the point I conceded just now, namely that philosophical labels carry no argumentative weight. Ryle for one would presumably concede that arguing is not the only activity in which philosophers legitimately engage. They also describe, classify, clarify, interpret, gloss, paraphrase, formalize, illustrate, summarize, preach, etc. Whether all these other activities must ultimately stand in the service of argument is a moot point. What is incontrovertible is that philosophy does not reduce to argument, even if the latter is conceived in a very catholic sense.

In fact, Ryle's rejection of 'isms' is based on two distinct lines of thought. According to the first, there cannot be different philosophical schools A and B which oppose one another on very fundamental issues of principle or method. For in that case supporters of A would have to present proponents of B neither as engaging in a *different kind* of philosophy, nor even as engaging in *bad* philosophy, but rather as *not doing philosophy at all* (and vice-versa).

So the gulf would be one between philosophers and non-philosophers and not between one set of philosophers and another (Astronomers do not boast a party of anti-Astrologists) . . . The members of the opposing school, championing as they do a philosophy which has the wrong general trend, are the victims of a mistake in principle, no matter what acumen they may exercise in questions of detail. Accordingly every school of thought which is conscious of itself as such must and does maintain that the opposing school or schools of thought are in some way philosophically unprincipled. For they are blind to those principles which make its philosophy *a* philosophy and *the* philosophy. (1937: 158, 161)

Alas, this argument rests on an assumption that is not just questionable but wrong. Ryle takes for granted that philosophy is on a par with the special sciences in that a sufficiently fundamental disagreement, notably one on principles, tasks and methods, simply disqualifies one of the disputants from being a practitioner of the subject. Unlike the special sciences, however, philosophy lacks any generally accepted methodological framework. The very nature of philosophy is itself a contested philosophical issue, and views about this issue are philosophically controversial. Although the investigation of the proper aims and methods of philosophy is nowadays known as 'metaphilosophy', it is not a distinct higher-order discipline but an integral part of philosophy itself (Tugendhat 1976: 17–18; Cohen 1986: 1).

The natural sciences have to establish their own fields and methods no less than philosophy. However, at least since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, they have done so in ways which have been increasingly less controversial, with the result that disputes about the nature of the subject no longer play a significant role. Even in times of scientific revolutions, scientific debates do not usually concern questions such as what astronomy is. And an introduction to that subject will not be a survey of warring schools on this issue – as it might well be in philosophy.

There are two interrelated reasons for this tendency towards consensus. Someone who has different views about the *subject matter* of a particular science is simply not engaged in that particular field. And although there is methodological debate during scientific revolutions, someone with *radically* deviant *methods*, who for example totally disregards observation and experiment in favour of aesthetic considerations, simply ceases to be a scientist. In contrast, disparate intellectual activities, tackling different problems by incompatible methods and with different aims are still called philosophy. There are, for example, philosophers who would maintain that philosophy should strive neither for knowledge nor cogency of argument but for beauty and spiritual inspiration. Whether anyone who consistently avoids arguments of any kind still qualifies as a philosopher is another moot point. But there are philosophers, including analytic philosophers, who would deny Ryle's claim that the principles of 'any reputable "ism" are established, and only established, by philosophical argument' (1937: 162; see ch. 6.5 above).

This takes us to Ryle's second argument against the existence of genuinely distinct and genuinely philosophical schools and traditions.

The real root of my objection is, I think, the view that I take of the nature of philosophical inquiry. I am not going to expound it in full, but a part of the view is that it is a species of discovery. And it seems absurd for discoverers to split into Whigs and Tories. Could there be a pro-Tibet and an anti-Tibet party in the sphere of geography? Are there Captain Cook-ites and Nansenists? (1937: 156)

Well, yes, as it happens. There are supporters of Alfred Cook and supporters of Richard Peary regarding the question of who first reached the North Pole – Dr Cook-ites and Pearinists, if you please. And there were those who accepted and those who rejected the idea that there is a great land mass around the North Pole, that El Dorado exists or that there is a large continent in the Pacific Ocean. There is room for fundamentally opposing views *within any* area of inquiry, however factual or scientific it may be. In

the special sciences, such disputes are eventually settled. Those who still believe that the earth is flat or that π is rational will be disbarred from serious astronomy or mathematics, respectively. But even in the sciences this demarcation is not always clear cut. I for one am hesitant to decide whether, for instance, Lysenkoism or intelligent design theories are simply unscientific, or whether instead they are bad, ideologically motivated, science. I am not hesitant in affirming that no such katharsis has taken place in philosophy. There is literally no position on vaguely philosophical issues that has not been adopted by someone who is generally regarded as a philosopher.

Ryle's arguments for the futility of philosophical labels fail, therefore. This leaves a more general worry. Surely, what matters is not how a particular philosopher or work should be labelled. Who cares whether someone is an enthusiastic Hegelian, a moderate Bradleian, a last-ditch logical positivist, an unswerving pragmatist, a paid-up externalist, a callow consequentialist, or a ruthless eliminativist? What counts, surely, is the *content* of the work, what the philosopher actually wrote and whether the arguments are convincing and the conclusions true!

There is a clear danger in placing excessive weight on philosophical taxonomy and doxography. At the same time, classifications are indispensable to human thought. In order to make sense of things, whether they be material phenomena or intellectual productions, we need to distinguish them by their relevant features. And we do so by applying labels according to certain principles. Historical, exegetical and metaphilosophical investigations are no exception to this rule. Contrasts like Eastern vs Western philosophy, ancient vs medieval vs modern philosophy, empiricism vs rationalism, analytic vs continental philosophy, or labels like 'Thomism', 'Neo-Kantianism' or 'postmodernism' may be simplistic, potentially misleading and downright ugly. Yet some contrasts and some labels are essential if we are to detect important similarities and differences between various thinkers and positions, and if we are to tell a coherent story about the development of our subject. One can hardly engage in an assessment of the historical development and the merits of analytic philosophy without some conception of what it amounts to. What we need, therefore, is not a puritanical avoidance of classifications, but classifications that are scrupulous and illuminating.

Of course, some labels may have acquired so many different uses and connotations that their use casts more darkness than light. Lamenting the radically disparate explanations of the term 'deflationism', Wolfgang Könnig counsels:

In view of this terminological chaos, I propose to put the term ‘deflationism’ on what Otto Neurath once called, tongue in cheek, the *Index Verborum Prohibitorum*. (2003: 20)

Whether or not this is the way forward in the case of ‘deflationism’, however, it is not an attractive option with respect to ‘analytic philosophy’. The term is used much more widely than ‘deflationism’. Furthermore, that use has itself become an important part of the history of twentieth-century philosophy. Thirdly, whereas ‘deflationism’ is often employed with a *specific* meaning introduced *a novo*, ‘analytic philosophy’ is for the most part used consciously as a label with an established meaning, albeit one that may be vague. Fourthly, this vagueness notwithstanding, there is a general agreement on how to apply the term to an open class of cases. Finally, while there are several potentially clearer alternatives to the label ‘deflationism’, no such alternatives exist in the case of ‘analytic philosophy’. For these reasons clarification rather than elimination should be the order of the day.

2 HOW THE QUESTION SHOULD BE APPROACHED

There remains a strong *prima facie* case for the idea that analytic philosophy constitutes a distinct philosophical phenomenon, whether it be a school, movement, tradition or style. Peter Bieri has recently proposed the following gruelling experiment. For a whole month, read the *Journal of Philosophy* in the morning, and then Seneca, Montaigne, Nietzsche, Cesare Pavese and Fernando Pessoa in the afternoon. Slightly altering Bieri’s set-up, and making it even more sadistic, devote the afternoon sessions to Plotinus, Vico, Hamann, Schelling and Hegel, or to Heidegger, Derrida, Irigaray, Deleuze and Kristeva. I think that Bieri’s thought-experiment is illuminating. Yet it points in the very opposite direction of the conclusion he favours. According to Bieri, the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy is ‘simply a nuisance’ that cannot be tolerated (2005: 15). By contrast, I think that three things emerge from the proposed juxtapositions: first, there is at least some overlap concerning the problems addressed; secondly, at least some of these problems are philosophical by commonly accepted standards; thirdly, what goes on in the pages of the *Journal of Philosophy* is a distinctive intellectual activity, one that differs from the activities (themselves diverse) that the other figures engage in.

Small wonder then that the labels ‘analytic’ and ‘continental philosophy’ continue to be widely used. This holds even when it is suggested that the distinction is not a hard and fast one. In reviews, for instance, it is commonplace to read not just that a book or author is typical of either

the analytic or continental movement, but also that X is unusually sensitive or open minded ‘for an analytic philosopher’ or that Y is uncharacteristically clear or cogent ‘for a continental thinker’. The analytic/continental distinction colours philosophical perception even among those who do not regard it as absolute. More generally, there is no gainsaying the fact that the idea of a distinct analytic philosophy continues to shape the institutional practice of philosophy, whether it be through distinct journals, societies, job advertisements or institutes (see Preston 2007: ch. 1). For instance, it is common and perfectly helpful to explain to students that a particular department or course is analytic in orientation.

At a time when the analytic/continental contrast was emerging, R. M. Hare maintained that there are ‘two different ways’ in which philosophy is now studied, ways which ‘one might be forgiven for thinking ... are really two quite different subjects’ (1960: 107). And even though Dummett seeks to bridge the analytic/continental divide, this ambition is predicated on the observation that ‘an absurd gulf has formerly opened up between “Anglo-American” and “Continental” philosophy’; indeed, ‘we have reached a point at which it’s as if we’re working in different subjects’ (1993: xi, 193).

This *status quo* may be neither desirable nor stable. It *may* turn out that either analytic or continental philosophy are pursuing the path of the righteous, in which case followers of the other side should simply follow suit. Alternatively, it *may* transpire that there is a premium on philosophy constituting a unified endeavour, as Western philosophy did until at least the beginning of the twentieth century (see Quinton 1995b: 161). If philosophy works best as a cohesive discipline or at least a single area of discourse, barring factions and communicative barriers, then heads should be banged together, irrespective of whether one side has a monopoly on philosophical wisdom.

But even if the analytic/continental division is regrettable on philosophical or other grounds, it remains real. It must be a starting point for any attempt to get clear about the phenomenon of analytic philosophy, if only for the purpose of overcoming or deconstructing it. The question then is not whether it is legitimate and fruitful to inquire into what analytic philosophy is, but how this should be done.

Some characterizations of analytic philosophy are clearly intended as definitions of some kind, in the sense that *ipso facto* those included do and those excluded do not qualify as analytic philosophers (e.g. Cohen 1986: ch. 2; Dummett 1993: ch. 2; Hacker 1996: 195; Føllesdal 1997). Others are formulated baldly and without qualification – ‘Analytic philosophy is ...’, ‘Analytic philosophers do ...’, ‘An analytic philosopher

would never ...' Yet they may be intended as non-analytic generalizations which do not *necessarily* apply to all and only analytic philosophers. In other words, they specify characteristic features of analytic philosophy that need not be essential or constitutive features. Finally, there are characterizations which are explicitly qualified in scope, and take forms like 'For the most part, analytic philosophy is ...', 'Most analytic philosophers do ...', etc.

But such generalizations, whether restricted or unrestricted, rely on a certain understanding of what analytic philosophy is. Otherwise they lack a demarcated sample on which they could be based. We need to know by virtue of what someone qualifies as an analytic philosopher, and hence what determines the scope of the terms 'analytic philosophy' or 'analytic philosophers'. For this reason, mere generalizations are no substitute for an explanation of what, if anything, constitutes analytic philosophy or being an analytic philosopher. It is such an account that we should seek in the first instance. In fact, most unrestricted characterizations purport to provide such an account. And even with respect to restricted characterizations it is profitable to ask whether they could be used to define analytic philosophy.

Some philosophers, swayed by Quine's attack on the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, have general qualms about the distinction between constitutive, defining or essential features of a phenomenon X on the one hand, and accidental features on the other. Elsewhere I have argued that these qualms are unjustified (Glock 2003a: ch. 3). In any event, it would be inapposite to rule out definitions of analytic philosophy *ab initio* on these grounds. If analytic philosophy cannot be defined, whether for general or specific reasons, this is something that should emerge in the course of our exploration. This leaves open entirely the question of *what type* of definition or explanation is appropriate. One important distinction here is that between *nominal* definitions, which specify the linguistic meaning of words, and *real* definitions, which specify the essence of the things denoted by them. Some philosophers, including Wittgenstein and Quine, reject the idea of real essences. But even if this blanket repudiation of essentialism is unwarranted, there are grounds for doubting that analytic philosophy is the proper subject of a real definition.

There can be no question of the label 'analytic philosophy' having a single *correct* or *intrinsic* meaning, independently of how we explain and use it. As Wittgenstein sapiently reminds us:

a word hasn't got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word *really* means. A word has the meaning someone has given to it. (1958: 28)

Similarly, Davidson writes: ‘It’s not as though words have some wonderful thing called a meaning to which those words have somehow become attached’ (1999: 41). As it stands this is no more than the superficial if incontrovertible observation that meaning is conventional in the sense that it is *arbitrary* that we use a particular sound- or inscription pattern to mean something specific. Instead of ‘analytic philosophy’ we might have used any number of other signs. A trivial variation – ‘analytical philosophy’ – is employed by Dummett, among others. More significantly, in German a different label with distinct connotations used to predominate, namely *sprachanalytische Philosophie*.

This trivial point leaves open the possibility that analytic philosophy is a robust distinctive phenomenon, one which has an essence to be captured by a real definition. In that case, any scheme of classification that is faithful to reality would have to include some label or other for analytic philosophy. But it is not easy to see how such a claim might be sustained. If the most popular current account of real essences and definitions is to be trusted, analytic philosophy is a very inauspicious candidate. According to Kripke’s (1980) and Putnam’s (1975: ch. 12) influential ‘realist semantics’, the reference of natural kind terms like ‘water’ or ‘tiger’ is not determined by the criteria for their application – the phenomenal features by which laypeople distinguish things as belonging to those kinds (such as the way something looks or tastes). Rather, it is given by a paradigmatic exemplar and an appropriate ‘sameness relation’ that all members of the kind must bear to this exemplar. ‘Water’, for instance, refers to all stuff which is relevantly similar to a paradigmatic sample, i.e. any substance which has the same microstructure as that paradigm. Accordingly, natural kinds do not just possess a ‘nominal’ but also a ‘real essence’, in Locke’s terminology (*Essay* III.3), which in our case is to consist of H_2O .

Whether this account fits natural kind terms for which there are concrete paradigms that can be investigated by science is subject to debate (Hanfling 2000: ch. 12; Jackson 1998: ch. 2). In any event, labels for philosophical schools are *not* natural kind terms. An essentialist account of taxonomic terms in philosophy is totally at odds with their actual role. Nobody could seriously suggest that ‘analytic philosopher’ applies to all and only those creatures with the same microstructure or genetic code as Rudolf Carnap or Elizabeth Anscombe, let’s say, paradigmatic analytic philosophers though they are. Although the labels and distinctions of natural science may be capable of ‘carving nature at its joints’, in Plato’s striking phrase (*Phaedrus*, 265d–266a), this cannot reasonably be expected of historical labels and distinctions.

Even if a definition of analytic philosophy is *nominal* rather than real, however, it is *not* a free for all. Nominal definitions divide into stipulative definitions on the one hand, and reportive or lexical ones on the other. Stipulative definitions simply lay down *ab novo* what an expression is to mean in a particular context, in complete disregard of any established use it may have. Such definitions cannot be correct or incorrect. But they can be more or less fruitful, in that it may be more or less helpful to single out a particular phenomenon through a separate label. Yet with respect to established terms unrestricted stipulation is rarely advisable. For one thing, it invites confusion for no apparent gain. For another, existing terms, as actually employed, stand in relations to other terms that would have to be redefined as well. Even if it deliberately diverges from its established use, an explanation of ‘analytic philosophy’ can come into conflict with the employments of the constituent terms. Thus one would at least expect that ‘analytic’ indicates an analogy with chemical or mathematical analysis and a contrast to synthesis. And it would certainly be unacceptable if analytic philosophy were defined as anything other than a kind of philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, most definitions or explanations of analytic philosophy lay claim to some kind of reportive accuracy. For this reason they can be judged by the degree to which they are true to established usage and institutional practice. In assessing these definitions/explanations one should therefore take note of the ordinary use of ‘analytic philosophy’, its cognates and antonyms. Alas, some contemporaries may find any appeal to ordinary use outdated and downright offensive. But they should be reminded of a few points.

Aristotle, the first to embark on a systematic search for a conception of philosophy, started out from the way people used the term *sophia* (*Metaphysics* 1.2; see Tugendhat 1976: ch. 2). Similarly, appeal to the ordinary use of ‘analytic philosophy’ has been a standard feature of contemporary debates about the nature of analytic philosophy, especially when it comes to criticizing alternative conceptions.

What is more, Aristotle and contemporary metaphilosophers are *right* to set store by the ordinary use of their respective *definienda*. In pursuing any question of the form ‘What is X?’ we shall inevitably rely on a *preliminary notion* of X, an idea of what constitutes the topic of our investigation. In our case we presuppose a preliminary understanding of analytic philosophy. This is not a fully articulated conception, which would have to emerge from the subsequent debate about what analytic philosophy is, but simply an initial idea of what that debate is about. Such

a pretheoretical understanding is embodied in the established use of the term ‘analytic philosophy’. Put differently, the way we use and understand a term is not only an innocuous starting point for elucidating its meaning, it is the *only* clue we have at the outset of our investigation.

That much would be underwritten not just by so-called ordinary language philosophers, but also by some of their opponents, notably Quine (1953: 106–7). In the spirit of Quine one might insist, however, that we need to graduate from ordinary use towards a more specialized one based on more exacting scrutiny of the phenomena. But this is not an objection to my procedure. The term ‘ordinary use’ is ambiguous. It may refer either to the *standard* use of a term as opposed to its irregular use in whatever area it is employed, or to its *everyday* as opposed to its specialist or technical use (Ryle 1953: 301–4). Unlike ‘philosophy’, ‘analytic philosophy’ is a technical term used mainly by professional academics, students and intellectuals. And surely there can be nothing wrong with matching suggested definitions against the established or standard use of the experts in the relevant field, if only to establish whether this use actually exemplifies a coherent pattern.

Even if one accepts my general (semantic-cum-metaphilosophical) claims, one may entertain doubts about this particular case. Nobody has done more to defend the appeal to ordinary use against contemporary animadversions than Peter Hacker. Yet he denies that the term ‘analytic philosophy’ *has* an established use (1998: 14). Hacker is right to point out that ‘analytic philosophy’ is a term of art and a fairly recent one at that. It does not follow, however, that it has no established use. An established use need not be an everyday one. In fact, what Grice and Strawson (1956) pointed out about the terms ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ holds equally of the term ‘analytic philosophy’. Although we may lack a clear and compelling explanation, we by-and-large agree in our application of these terms.

Alas, even the most established and clearly circumscribed philosophical taxonomies are liable to misuse. Brian Magee, for example, refers to Fichte, Schelling and Hegel as Neo-Kantians (1983: App. 1). With Neo-Kantians like that, who needs German Idealists? ‘Analytic philosophy’ is no worse off than more venerable labels. Though there are occasional misapplications, they are generally recognized. Consider the following, presumably rhetorical, question from a circular of Continuum International Publishing Group (21 October 2003):

Are you interested in the continental philosophy of Gilles Deleuze or Theodor Adorno, or philosophy of the analytic tradition such as Friedrich Nietzsche or Mary Warnock?

No prizes for spotting the mistake.

By this token, it would obviously count against a definition of analytic philosophy if it implied that Heidegger and Lacan are analytic philosophers while Carnap and Austin are not. It would also count against a definition if it implied that Russell and Quine are analytic philosophers, while Frege and Hempel are not. Furthermore, we agree not just on what the clear cases are, but also on what count as borderline cases for various reasons, e.g. Bolzano, Whitehead, the later Wittgenstein, Popper, Feyerabend, neuro-philosophers. Finally, the agreement is not to a list, but can be extended to an *open class* of new cases. For instance, perusal of CVs will put most professionals in a position to identify clear-cut analytic and continental philosophers from a list of job applicants.

While there is no case for sheer stipulation, there may be good reasons for modifying generally accepted explanations of 'analytic philosophy'. In assessing such suggestions, we need to trace their consequences. Revisionary definitions can be more or less illuminating for the purposes of historiography and taxonomy. Thus it would count against a definition if it implied either that no philosophers qualify as analytic or that all philosophers do. For in that case the label does no work and has turned into an idle wheel. Distinct characterizations of analytic philosophy have other less immediate consequences, not just for the self-understanding of analytic philosophy, the way in which it conceives of its history, aims, methods and results, but also for the contrast with other philosophical movements such as traditional or continental philosophy.

As I indicated before, in assessing these consequences, we need to rely on a preliminary idea of what philosophers generally count as analytic, and on what grounds. For this reason, I shall be guided by the question whether suggested definitions include all generally acknowledged instances of analytic philosophers and exclude all generally acknowledged instances of non-analytic philosophers. In other words, I shall measure conceptions of analytic philosophy in the first instance against the *commonly acknowledged extension* of the term. In fact, even if a genuine definition of analytic philosophy were a red herring, it would be profitable to ascertain whether and to what extent the countless general claims about it actually hold. By testing these claims for their suitability as definitions, we also test them for their accuracy as generalizations.

While recognized paradigms of analytic philosophy are especially important, however, I shall also consider how proposed definitions deal with cases that, for various reasons, might be considered borderline or controversial. These problematic cases can provide an important litmus test for suggested

definitions, especially if it is possible to identify the features that make them problematic. For the same reason, I mention movements like Popper's critical rationalism that have distanced themselves from analytic philosophy, but which nevertheless seem to belong to the analytic tradition.

In this context I should stress that *self*-descriptions are *not* authoritative. Philosophers have investigated and promoted self-knowledge, but they have not uniformly excelled at it. Treating avowals as a touch stone would mean, for instance, including Derrida among the analytic philosophers and excluding Fodor (see ch. 8.1). No fruitful explanation could be tailored to suit such an extension of 'analytic philosophy'.

3 THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Although my ultimate focus is on the present, I shall not confine myself to conceptions of 'analytic philosophy' that are *currently extant*. Like any intellectual tradition, analytic philosophy is an intrinsically historical phenomenon, even if this fact alone may not furnish an adequate conception of it. And the same goes for the label 'analytic philosophy', its cognates and antonyms. Without some understanding of relevant developments in the history of philosophy, one cannot appreciate the point of the notion of analytic philosophy and the various reasons for conceiving it in different ways. Such an understanding will also facilitate my discussion of conceptual and methodological issues which arise in the pursuit of an explanation of analytic philosophy.

For these reasons I start out in chapter 2 with a 'Historical survey' of analytic philosophy, a sketch of the emergence and development of the movement to which the label 'analytic philosophy' is generally applied. Unlike previous scholars, I shall examine both the Anglophone and the Germanophone roots, while *also* keeping in mind relevant developments beyond analytic philosophy.

On the basis of this historical survey, the following chapters discuss various ways in which analytic philosophy has been defined or conceived at some stage or other of its career. I have organized them not according to *specific* explanations of analytic philosophy, of which there are way too many, but according to *types* of explanations. Each chapter is in effect devoted to a parameter along which analytic philosophy, or any other philosophical movement for that matter, could be defined. The first five of these parameters turn out to be unsuitable.

Chapter 3, 'Geography and language', deals with geo-linguistic definitions. The image of analytic philosophy as an Anglophone phenomenon is

still surprisingly common and embodied in the analytic/continental contrast. But the very label 'continental philosophy' is a misnomer, especially in view of the Central European roots of analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, I shall argue, the contrast between analytic and continental philosophy ties in with, and is reinforced by, stereotypical differences between Anglophone philosophy and academic culture on the one hand, its continental counterparts on the other. In the course of the nineteenth century a conflict between British empiricism and continental rationalism was gradually replaced by geographically and intellectually more complex divisions. I also explore how political developments such as the rise of Nazism and philosophical developments such as the rehabilitation of metaphysics from the 1960s onwards turned the now unduly neglected contrast between analytic and *traditional* philosophy into the analytic vs *continental* divide as we now know it. Still, the Anglocentric conception of analytic philosophy is untenable, and so is its more sophisticated cousin, the Anglo-Austrian conception. At present, analytic philosophy flourishes in many parts of the continent, while continental philosophy is highly popular in North America. Analytic philosophy is neither a geographical nor a linguistic category. Finally, the label 'continental philosophy' fails to distinguish between the twentieth century avant-garde movements inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger and the traditional or traditionalist philosophy that actually dominates academic philosophy on the continent of Europe.

Chapter 4, 'History and historiography', debates the question of whether analytic philosophy differs from continental and especially from traditionalist philosophy in its lack of historical awareness. In recent years, even some practitioners have accused analytic philosophy of being unduly ahistorical. I aim to show, however, that analytic philosophy in general is not characterized by a dismissive attitude towards the past. Indeed, there has been a recent turn towards history. Furthermore, I shall defend analytic philosophy against historicist animadversions that so far have gone unchallenged. Against the objection that analytic philosophers ignore the past, I argue that for the most part they only resist the unfounded claim that an understanding of history is essential rather than merely advantageous to philosophy. Against the objection that analytic histories of philosophy are anachronistic, I argue that approaching the past in an analytic spirit actually makes for better historiography.

In chapter 5, 'Doctrines and topics', I turn to the idea that analytic philosophy stands out by virtue of a particular range of problems and/or answers to these problems. Definitions by reference to specific doctrines tend to be too narrow. The rejection of metaphysics was never universal