

# Is There Still (if There Has Been At All) an Analytic–Continental Divide?

Franca d'Agostini

(University of Milan, Department of Political and Social Sciences)

**Abstract:** In this paper I reconstruct the nature, origins and survivals of the divide between the “analytic” and “continental” traditions – a famous dualism which has affected the development of philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. I also present a theory of it, stressing that its intra-philosophical causes are to be found in the mutual resistance between critical (transcendental) and semantic (logical) approaches in philosophy. I conclude by noting that good philosophers (more or less knowingly) are and have always been sensitive to the transcendental and logical aspects of the philosophical work.

**Key words:** analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, birth of modern logic, transcendental philosophy

## 1. Introduction

The “analytic–continental divide” is a historiographical and metaphilosophical label frequently used to interpret the situation of academic philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. It intends to capture a dualism between the analytic (hereafter: A) tradition, especially active in English-speaking countries, and the leading currents of European philosophy at that time, globally called “continental” (hereafter: C). The divide possibly originated in the late 19th century,<sup>1</sup> but it became clearly observable in the last decades of the 20th. As Michael Dummett wrote in 1993, “we have reached a point at which it is as if we are working in different subjects.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See P. Simons, *Whose Fault? The Origins and Evitability of the Analytic–Continental Rift*, “International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 295–311.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dummett, *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993, p. 193.

Nowadays philosophy is a globalized set of specialized disciplines, so one may say there are no philosophical systems, schools or traditions anymore (see Section 4). And yet, the conceptual couple is still adopted to explain the intuition of a difference between metaphilosophical views that can be traced back to the old dichotomy.<sup>3</sup> In my diagnosis, this happens because the underlying problem is still unsolved. What is this problem? Can/should we solve it?

The literature on the theme is quite rich,<sup>4</sup> but it is sparse and not convergent; there is no clear assessment of what the conceptual couple ultimately means and why it still captures relevant metaphilosophical concerns.<sup>5</sup> So I first offer a synthetic account of the nature, origins and survivals of the dualism. The reconstruction will enlighten that what some observers called “the great divide” has involved a series of historical and cultural factors, but the deepest elements of mutual resistance between the exponents of the two traditions have been strictly intra-philosophical, and they can be identified by the diverging consequences of two

<sup>3</sup> The A–C dualism frequently appears in historical reconstructions and definitions of A philosophy, as in H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, pp. 61–88; M. Beaney, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 49–50; S. Soames, *Analytic Philosophy in America: And Other Historical and Contemporary Essays*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014, p. 7; B. Dainton, H. Robinson, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, London 2014, pp. 569–570.

<sup>4</sup> Some texts of the last twenty years: A. Biletzki, ed., *Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide*, special issue of “The International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3; C. Prado, ed., *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY, 2003; B. Babich, *On the Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy*, in: *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, ed. C. Prado, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY, 2003, pp. 63–103; N. Levy, *Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences*, “Metaphilosophy” 2003, Vol. 34, pp. 284–304; B. Leiter, M. Rosen, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, pp. 1–4; S. Overgaard, *Royaumont Revisited*, “British Journal for the History of Philosophy” 2010, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 899–924; B. Babich, *La fin de la pensée? Philosophie analytique contre philosophie continentale*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2012; S. Overgaard, P. Gilbert, S. Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 115–144; J.A. Bell, A. Cutrofello, P.M. Livingston, eds., *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide: Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, Oxford 2016; G. D'Oro, S. Overgaard, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017 (specifically R. Piercey, *The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide*, pp. 274–292); the special issue of “Borderless Philosophy” (2022, Vol. 5) entitled *The End of Analytic and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes, or No? And if Yes, Then What's Beyond?*

<sup>5</sup> Some lines are suggested by R. Piercey, *The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide*, op. cit. I will say something more about his reconstruction later (sub-section 2.1).

metaphilosophical *turns*: the *transcendental turn*, and the *logical turn*. The two turns have been inherited and developed (also critically) in the two traditions, and respectively informed C and A conceptions of philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

The logical turn was launched by Russell at the beginning of the 20th century, the transcendental turn was conceived by Kant, and began to inform European philosophy at the beginning of the 19th. I speak of “turns” because they created the canons, the methodological tendencies, the basic metaphilosophical conceptions of the two traditions. In both cases, there have been revisions and criticisms (not by chance, we speak of “traditions” and not of “schools”: see sub-section 2.1). Some of the main lines of the transcendental-idealistic approach (Kant and Hegel) have been rejected by C philosophers; and in the central decades of the 20th century A philosophers criticized “the received view” (Russell’s basic realism or descriptivism). But undeniably, the mutual ignorance or underestimation of each turn generated what has been called “the divide,” because the transcendental (critical) philosophy stemming from Kant and developed by Hegel was conceived (by A as well as by C philosophers) as incompatible with the logical (semantic) approach to philosophy launched by Frege and Russell. With this interpretation, we get a largely shareable if not quasi-canonical image of the two traditions, and we can begin to reflect on what we ought to do nowadays (if something should/could be done).

In the next section, I specify the main methodological features of the A–C theory, I briefly reconstruct a possible “history” of the divide and specify the opposed aspects of A and C (as they appeared in the late 20th century). In Section 3, I give some details about the underlying problem, then, in Section 4, I say something about the current conditions of the A–C question.

## 2. A–C?

What do we mean, exactly, when we talk about the historical and still partially surviving dualism between A and C? What are (have been) exactly A, and C? Why do we speak of an incompatibility between them? There is no clear accor-

---

<sup>6</sup> On the definition of “transcendental” or “transcendentalism” (as referring to Kant and/or medieval philosophy, and not to the American movement centred around R.W. Emerson), there is no clear accordance. For a recent account, it is advisable to refer to the essays collected in S. Gardner, M. Grist, eds., *The Transcendental Turn*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015.

dance about these questions. I will try to give answers, but some peculiarities of the *A–C theory* are to be specified in advance, to avoid misunderstandings.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.1. What Kind of Theory Is the A–C Theory?

The conceptual couple seems faulty at first, as apparently we oppose a philosophical school (A) to a territorial determination (C). Bernard Williams famously noted the oddity of the bipartition: “a strange cross-classification – rather as though one divided cars into front-wheel drive and Japanese.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, the weird asymmetry is justified. The use of C is historically grounded, as after Nazi seizure of power the European exponents of what was going to be called “A philosophy” moved to America and England, and what remained in Europe was what was later called “C.”<sup>9</sup> But evidently, the term has no strict geographic reference.

The second relevant point is that in speaking of A and C we do not speak of philosophical “schools,” but *traditions*. The “traditionalist conjecture” (typically adopted in A-reconstructions of A philosophy) has been discussed.<sup>10</sup> To make the term more precise, I suggest intending by “tradition” a group of different trends or schools, whose members altogether acknowledge themselves (or are able to acknowledge themselves) as engaged in the same subject, and share, over time, a certain canon. So to have a tradition, we should have *mutual acknowledgement*, relative *persistence*, and shared *canonical references*. Consequently, there could be more or less closeness and affinity among exponents of a tradition, but in virtue of their mutual acknowledgement they can conceive and practice a substantially identifiable idea of what philosophy is and should be, and this idea over time works as *distinctive*, hence eliminative of others.

---

<sup>7</sup> My account differs from the one proposed by R. Piercey in the quoted essay about “the metaphilosophy” of the divide. The main difference is related to the characterization of A and C, so that, for instance, he holds Richard Rorty was an “A” philosopher, while in my view he was not.

<sup>8</sup> B. Williams, *Contemporary Philosophy: A Second Look*, in: *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, eds. N. Bunnin, E.P. Tsui-James, Blackwell, Oxford 2003, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> In this respect, as noted by Michael Friedman: the divide was generated, and consolidated, “in the extraordinary uneasy political climate of the early 1930s” (M. Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer and Heidegger*, Open Court, Chicago, IL, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> S. Lapointe, *On the Traditionalist Conjecture*, in: *Analytic Philosophy: An Interpretative History*, ed. A. Preston, Routledge, New York 2017, especially pp. 284–285.

Third, as I have mentioned at the beginning, the “A–C divide” is a *historiographical* and *metaphilosophical* label.<sup>11</sup> Like any other distinction involving history and culture, it concerns *ideal-typical* predicates, that is, predicates that have no clear and strict reference to empirically observable properties but denote the various combination of different features subsisting to certain (various) degrees in one or another object.<sup>12</sup> If you prefer, “real-world” philosophers have some *family resemblances* which authorize us to locate them in one or the other field.<sup>13</sup> This means that not all philosophers we may call “A” or “C” instantiate paradigmatic cases. As we will see in sub-section 2.3, we can locate one or another author in the A or C side by referring to a list of ideal-typical requisites, and to identify some philosopher as A or C, the joined subsistence of at least *two* of the issues in the list (in particular *canon* and *style*) could be enough.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, we can approach the A–C theory with a variety of aims, and maybe the main reason one is interested in historical and metaphilosophical subjects of this kind is that one thinks something is to be done. In this case we have a project in what Nicholas Rescher has called *normative metaphilosophy*:<sup>15</sup> we are interested in a (relatively) neutral reconstruction of what philosophy is, but in consideration of what it ought to be. Now the most obvious utility of a research on the “A–C question” is to solve what can be called *the bridge problem*, intended as the

---

<sup>11</sup> Useful clarifications about the notion of “metaphilosophy” are given by S. Overgaard, P. Gilbert, S. Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, op. cit.; G. D’Oro, S. Overgaard, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, op. cit. Specifically for the A–C question: R. Piercey, *The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide*, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> The notion of *ideal-typical* objects and predicates, launched by Wilhelm Dilthey, has remained a critical concept of hermeneutical historicism. See on this J. Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT–London 1994 [1991], pp. 76–90.

<sup>13</sup> The Wittgensteinian notion of *family resemblances* is used by Glock to characterize the apparently vague notion of “A philosophy” as implying “overlapping similarities” more than “common characteristic marks” (*What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, op. cit., p. 42). I think the reference to ideal-types is more useful, methodologically, in history-sensitive analyses. For instance, R. Piercey in the quoted essay holds that looking at the divide as a metaphilosophical issue we can find similarities between A and C, such as the reference to history, and the idea of philosophy as an “ameliorative” enterprise. But if we keep to A and C as ideal-typical predicates, we have that these two views are typically C, and are generally ignored by A.

<sup>14</sup> I have specified this point in F. d’Agostini, *From a Continental Point of View: The Role of Logic in the Analytic-Continental Divide*, “The International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 349–367; see in particular pp. 350–352.

<sup>15</sup> “Prescriptive or normative metaphilosophy is the inquiry that deliberates about what is to be thought regarding the conduct of philosophizing” (N. Rescher, *Metaphilosophy: Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective*, Lexington Books, London 2014, p. 14).

problem of providing some encounter or synthesis or combination of the two approaches. Various strategies of this kind have been proposed. But we will see that not all features of the A and C ways of conceiving and practising philosophy are (were?) perfectly acceptable. Which means that the bridge project might not be profitable for the progress of philosophy: the risk of producing contaminations, or hybrids, in which faults outweigh benefits cannot be excluded.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2. Who Are (Were) A and C?

Who are (were) A and C? Can we consistently identify them? Here is a substantially plausible reconstruction.

Table 1. Reconstruction of the analytic tradition (A) and the currents called “continental” (C). Source: own work.

	A	C
I	Frege, Russell, Moore (1900–1920)	Neo-Kantianism–neo-Hegelianism, phenomenology (1900–1920)
II	Wittgenstein – logical positivism (1920–1940)	Heidegger – existentialism (1920–1940)
III	Analytic philosophy of language (1950–1970)	Critical theory, structuralism, hermeneutics (1950–1970)
IV	Post-analytic philosophy (1970–1990)	Post-structuralism – postmodernism (1970–1990)
V	The self-acknowledgement of A tradition – the rebirth of metaphysics and philosophy of mind (1990–2000)	A+C, speculative realism – transhumanism (1990–2000)

<sup>16</sup> “While there might be a premium on reconstructing philosophy as a unified sphere of discourse, this must not go at the expense of rigour, clarity, scholarship and intellectual honesty” (H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, p. 260).

There have been other currents, schools and philosophical systems in the 20th century, but we are only interested here in those which generated the appearance (or effectiveness?) of the A–C dualism.<sup>17</sup>

I – At the origin of the A story we have Frege, Russell, Moore and their grounding action during the first decades of the century. About the birth of A tradition the canonical version is that

Frege’s creation of quantificational logic and the rebellion of Russell and Moore against British idealism are the two most significant events in the emergence of analytic philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

Note two elements: the discovery of *modern logic*, and the rejection of *idealism* (which altogether became rejection of the transcendental-dialectical approach in philosophy). Note also that in virtue of the former, A philosophers are identified by what they embrace (logic), and in virtue of the latter, they are identified by what they reject (transcendental idealism). The two aspects have been the first grounding components of what we may call the *A paradigm*, as opposed to C (Section 3).

On the C part, as correlative to A, we ought to consider the revitalization of Kant’s and Hegel’s philosophical approaches, in neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism, both conceived at the turn of the century, and variously active in the subsequent twenty years. And we also have the birth of the phenomenological school, launched by Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (1900). The so-called “first” Husserl is sometimes considered a quasi-A philosopher,<sup>19</sup> but at least from 1905 onward Husserl acknowledged the “transcendental” nature of his phenomenology. These facts considered, we may confirm that what (at least nominally) Russell and Moore rejected was revived and re-launched in a significant part of European philosophy.

II – The second phasis marked the first expression of a somewhat “A style” as opposed to a “C style.” Frege–Russell semantics, developed by Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* (1921), offered the “logical construction of the world” launched by neopositivism, and inspired a number of authors in Central Europe, all variously en-

---

<sup>17</sup> The periodization and characterization of the mentioned schools or currents have no absolute categoricalness. There might be overlappings, the dates are not to be assumed as referring to sharp time boundaries, and some issues in the table mark a tendency more than a single and uniform line of thought.

<sup>18</sup> M. Beaney, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, op. cit. p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> See P. Simons, *Whose Fault?*, op. cit.

gaged in creating a new image of logic, philosophy and scientific rationality. On the C side, we have Heidegger, who belonged to the “second” phenomenological school. His *Being and Time* (1927) became canonical for that version of phenomenology called “existentialism,” and later (in phases III and IV) for hermeneutics and the developments of structuralism.

The first symptom of the A–C incompatibility has been often considered Carnap’s harsh criticism of Heidegger’s *What Is Metaphysics?*, in the famous article published in “Erkenntnis” in 1929. Carnap showed that Heidegger’s metaphysics (rather metaphysics in general) was based on a logical misunderstanding (what he calls “the material way of speaking”), and he noted that the “new logic” created by Frege and Russell could easily reveal and dismantle the mistake. By the help of the new logic a new “scientific philosophy” was going to emerge.

We get another distinctive aspect of C philosophy as opposed to A. While the latter developed by assuming a specific logical and subordinately meta-scientific concern, the former has been marked by ignorance or rejection of the new logic (Frege–Russell semantics), and by a programmatic criticism of the primacy of “scientific” rationality in modern culture. We have thus the duality or symmetrical opposition between A and C: *what the former embraced, was rejected by the latter, and vice versa.*

III – The third phasis was characterized by the official birth of a new philosophical school named “A” philosophy, and hence the first public acknowledgment (especially in C philosophy) of the divide. The first document we have of an open confrontation between A and C is the 1958 international conference of Royaumont about *La philosophie analytique*, in which exponents of C philosophy (in particular, phenomenology and existentialism) encountered some of the most important A philosophers.<sup>20</sup> The idea of A–C working in terms of “traditions,” and not of specific currents or schools was already clear. And the mutual resistance of the two perspectives was clear. As it seems, the conference was not a complete success. Charles Taylor – who attended the meeting – later wrote: “the dialogue did not come off.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> L. Beck, ed., *La philosophie analytique*, Minuit, Paris 1962. The number of important authors who took part in the conference is impressive: on the A side we have, among others, J.L. Austin, W.V.O. Quine, G. Ryle, F. Strawson, B. Williams; on the C side J. Wahl, M. Merleau-Ponty, C. Perelman, C. Taylor, among others.

<sup>21</sup> See S. Overgaard, *Royaumont Revisited*, op. cit., p. 914.



I have mentioned *critical theory*, intending the School of Frankfurt, and its developments in the work of Karl O. Apel, Jürgen Habermas and other authors. The first critical theory had a definitely Hegelian inspiration and expressed a paradigmatic “C spirit.” From the 1970s onward, things slightly changed. While the original critical theory was distinct from and somehow opposed to neopositivism and all its consequences, Apel and Habermas began a fruitful dialogue with A philosophy. But their proposal has remained irreducibly “C”; A philosophers, at least the most typically “A” of them, have generally ignored it. I also mention *structuralism* and *hermeneutics*. The latter was launched by Hans Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1960) and became mostly important for our concern later. The same to a certain extent holds for *structuralism*. The mathematical and logical movement called with this name emerged in the 1950s, but its philosophical inheritances became later some of the most unequivocally “C” expressions of the dualism.<sup>22</sup>

IV – From the 1970s onward we see the most paradigmatic C philosophy to appear, and it was dominated by what Hans-Joachim Glock has called “the twentieth century avant-garde movements inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger.”<sup>23</sup> Most part of the classical literature about the divide was published in this phase. Historical-cultural facts have been decisive. With the advancing of globalization, exponents of post-structuralism and hermeneutics became known in territories previously colonized by A philosophy (especially in the United States), so that the *stylistic differences* (see sub-section 2.3) appeared in all clarity. C philosophy revealed itself as the philosophy of “humanities,” of literary criticism, of art, of architecture and cinema.

The confrontation was not profitable for A nor was it for C. The last two decades of the century can be labelled as an age of “post.” Under the impact of the “European” style of philosophizing, and the influence of the self-critical work launched by Richard Rorty, A philosophy has been led to reconsider its own identity. A new process of self-awareness began, and one of the first steps was the collection with the title *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, edited by John Rajchman and Cornel West.<sup>24</sup> It was intended to illustrate the “end” of a certain conception of language, being

---

<sup>22</sup> Significantly, hermeneutics and structuralism, like A philosophy, have been crucially interested in language and logic: but the hermeneutical conception of language and the structuralist use of logic has been different from A ideas about logic and language.

<sup>23</sup> H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> J. Rajchman, C. West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York 1985.

and thought, which was typical of the most traditional A tradition, and which most clearly opposed A to C. On the other side, the extra-philosophical success of C philosophy favoured the deconstructive and relativistic drift called *postmodernism* (basically a socio-cultural more than philosophical movement). Even some C philosophers formed in the Nietzsche-Heidegger line of thought began to see the damages of these extra-philosophical uses of philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

V – In the last decade(s) of the century the “reaction” of A philosophers against the spread of C expressed itself also in terms of a self-reconstructive effort. It is not by chance that the most well-known historical surveys of A philosophy, conceived from a definitely A perspective, appeared at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries. But the increasing processes of globalization and specialization of philosophy were making the conceptual couple less evident. So the A novelties in this period concern philosophical disciplines: the new attention to mind and consciousness and the rebirth of ontology and metaphysics, on new bases. On the C part of the story, we have first the diffusion of A philosophy in European countries once colonized by some versions of C (French, Italy, Spain, Germany). So one may say the novelty in European philosophy has been the emerging of A+C positions, that is, what Jeffrey Beall, Andrew Cutrofello and Paul Livingston call a “synthetic” attitude. Globalization obviously favoured this synthesis, and many C philosophers nowadays can be labelled as A + C in some sense. The other two lines I mention are only some of the most recent C tendencies. However, there are also reasons to believe the territory of philosophy nowadays is no longer (strictly) A, nor is it C, and it is not even A + C, but there is a sort of “explosion” of programmes, styles, products (Section 4).

### 2.3. The Dualism

Which were the real elements of the divergence? The A–C distinction, especially as it appeared in the last three decades of the 20th century, involved two series of canonical authors; two ways or styles of arguing and writing; two ways of relating philosophy to science, to culture generally intended (literature, cinema, art), or the public sphere (politics, and public debate); two different ways of conceiving the philosophical practice. More generally and altogether, two conceptions of

---

<sup>25</sup> See G. Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1997 [1990].

what philosophy is and ought to be, of what philosophers do and should do. We would say: two *normative metaphilosophies* in the specified sense.

Let's consider these aspects in detail, and in contrastive terms.

1. *Canons* – Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, other European classics, typically belong to the C canon, and are generally ignored, misinterpreted or underrated by A philosophers; Hume, Frege, Russell, Quine, Austin and other authors belong to the A canon and are generally underrated, ignored or misunderstood by Cs.

NB – the non-belonging of certain authors to a canon means they *can be ignored*, which does not mean they *cannot be studied*, or that they are *not criticized* by people in the tradition. There has been a variety of anti-Hegelianisms in C tradition, but Hegel has always been considered an inevitable reference. An important movement in A tradition arose from the rejection of Frege and Russell's semantics, the so-called "received view," but the view was criticized just because it was "received."

2. *Styles of arguing and writing* – "Styles" includes different features:<sup>26</sup>

2a – A philosophers address their colleagues, as any scientist does, while C philosophers have the ambition of addressing the "universal audience" (a traditional feature of philosophical discourse according to Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *Traité de l'argumentation*, 1958).

2b – A philosophers feel the need of specifying any thesis or theory by examples ("cases") and open arguments; Cs often present challenging theories without worrying so much about the explicit justification of what they claim: they adopt more *associative* than *argumentative* strategies.

2c – As a consequence, A philosophers preferably author articles or short papers, about specific, well-determined problems, while Cs publish books and wide explorations of wide themes (such as "the end of modernity," "the crisis of reason").

---

<sup>26</sup> About the scientific and epistemic role of style in logic, mathematics and philosophy in general, see P. Cantù, *What Is Axiomatics?*, "Annals of Mathematics and Philosophy" 30.07.2022, Vol. 1.

Altogether, A philosophy is distinctively characterized by “a piecemeal approach” to problems, “encouraging small-scale investigations rather than grand system-building.”<sup>27</sup>

3. *Relations to the extra-philosophical* – The consequences can be already inferred, but again I suggest distinguishing.

3a – A philosophers underrate the dialogue with *culture*, so with art, cinema and the humanities (“soft” sciences), which is favoured by Cs; they prefer to dialogue with natural or formal (“hard”) sciences, ignored by Cs or considered (in some cases) as belonging to an “anti-philosophical” paradigm.

3b – *Science* and *common sense* (“intuition”) offer shared premises for A arguments, while being irrelevant for Cs; reference to current *socio-cultural facts* gives typical premises (and legitimation) to C arguments, while being hardly mentioned by As.

3c – A philosophers underrate or ignore *public philosophy*: a philosophical practice systematically interacting with public debates, which is typical of Cs and of European culture in general.<sup>28</sup>

3d – As a consequence, A philosophers tend to think that one thing is what philosophers say as *professionals*, and another is their public engagement as intellectuals; there is no difference of this sort in the C tradition (or if it were, it would be blurred and easily crossed).

These aspects confirm what has been sometimes said: that “unlike analytic philosophy, continental philosophy has never turned away from culture, tradition, literature. By contrast, analytic philosophy has tended to think about language in abstraction from such matters.”<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> M. Beaney, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Especially in French culture. “Les philosophes” of the 17th century have turned into “les intellectuels” in the 19th, and “les maîtres à penser” of the late 20th.

<sup>29</sup> C.B. Sachs, *What Is to Be Overcome? Nietzsche, Carnap, and Modernism as the Overcoming of Metaphysics*, “History of Philosophy Quarterly” 2011, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 303.

4. The use of logic and the use of history (of philosophy) – This is a point which I consider most significant.

4a – For Cs the history of a philosophical issue or concept is “a substantial and even indispensable element for the analysis,” while As tend to treat concepts “as if they were ahistorical entities.”<sup>30</sup> Cs normally ignore or even resist the use of formal logic in philosophy, whereas modern logic has been grounding for the birth and development of A philosophy.

4b – As a consequence, A and C differ in *educational strategies*: As normally favour logic and the study of argumentation, whereas Cs consider the history of philosophy as didactically primary.

NB – What is lacking in A metaphilosophy is not “history” or “historiography” as such, but the meta-scientific (heuristic and explanatory) role of history of philosophy for philosophy. In contrast, for most European philosophers the history of philosophy offers invaluable resources for the progress of philosophy.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> C. Dutilh Novaes, *Conceptual Genealogy for Analytic Philosophers*, in: *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, eds. J.A. Bell, A. Cutrofello, P.M. Livingston, Routledge, Oxford 2016, pp. 75–108. So that “one’s stance towards genealogical projects can be seen as one of the main differences between so-called continental and so-called analytic philosophers” (p. 77).

<sup>31</sup> Michael Beaney discusses the prejudice of A tradition’s ignorance of history (*The Historiography of Analytic Philosophy*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 35–38), but he refers to historiography, and not to history as a method or resource for philosophical analyses, that is, the commitment to what Charles Taylor has called “the historical thesis about philosophy” (see R. Piercey, *The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide*, op. cit., p. 277). Gary Gutting (*Philosophical Progress*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*, eds. H. Cappelen, T. Szabó Gendler, J. Hawthorne, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, Ch. 17) criticizes the fundamentally “C” “engagement with the history of philosophy,” but clearly is not speaking of history as a resource for solving philosophical problems (and for metaphilosophical and methodological considerations). That the meta-scientific role of the history of philosophy is underrated in A tradition is one of the “wrong” aspects of that tradition has been significantly noted by Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, Barry Smith (three A philosophers who know European philosophy well) in *What’s Wrong in Contemporary Philosophy?*, “Topoi” 2006, Vol. 25, No. 1–2, pp. 63–67. An efficacious but evidently reductive version of the idea is given in T. Williamson, *Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018: “If you really ignore all past philosophy, that includes the past thirty years [...] with luck, you would reinvent the wheel. Alternatively, you might invent the square wheel” (p. 104).

Each distinction is arguable, and has been discussed,<sup>32</sup> but the A–C dualism well captures the situation of philosophical research in the late 20th century. At that time, the effects of the divide were clear and unquestionable. To mention a marginal but significant example, if someone wanted to know something about a philosophical problem, and if they wanted to receive exhaustive information, one had to refer to two main bibliographical repertoires: the *Philosopher's Index*, and the *Répertoire bibliographique de la philosophie*, the former mainly recording A researches, the latter mainly C, with poor or null intersection.<sup>33</sup> So, besides being an interesting phenomenon of historical and cultural relevance, the divide represented a practical problem: a question one ought to solve, if one wanted to consider “philosophy” a reasonable part of our collective knowledge.

### 3. The Underlying Problem

In the reconstruction of sub-section 2.2, we have seen that what Russell and Moore (and later A philosophers) rejected and what they embraced were what Cs, respectively, embraced and rejected. And I suggest they were, respectively, the *transcendental* and the *logical* conception of philosophy.<sup>34</sup> (They can be labelled differently: we may also speak of a *critical* and a *semantic* turn, but as I will explain in a while, the former term is too wide, the latter too narrow.)

#### 3.1. Is Philosophy an “Exceptional” Science?

The first step of my interpretation consists of seeing the A–C dualism as an effect of the institutional and meta-scientific *weakness* of philosophy in late modernity.

---

<sup>32</sup> I have explored and discussed each distinctive criterion in *From a Continental Point of View*, op. cit. See also B. Dainton, H. Robinson, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, in: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, eds. B. Dainton, H. Robinson, Bloomsbury, London 2014, pp. 569–570. A clear presentation of all the reasons the characterization of A philosophy in contrastive terms is arguable but somehow inevitable, is given by H.-J. Glock, *Geography and Language*, in *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, op. cit., pp. 61–88.

<sup>33</sup> Another marginal but significant case is the use of different citation systems: in paradigmatic A cases, author-date; in many C cases the notation system, which is still generally preferred in the humanities.

<sup>34</sup> One may say that my reconstruction in sub-section 2.2 is opinionated, already oriented by the thesis. In fact, it corresponds to a largely shared interpretation of the dualism. More details will be found in *From a Continental Point of View*, op. cit., pp. 354–357.

This was basically the underlying problem: the dualism has been the expression of the uncertain status of a subject named “philosophy” in the late modern settlement of science.

Philosophy has been considered a “non-normal” (vague, unspecified, ambiguous) subject since the beginning of its history. Aristotle himself spent many pages (fourteen or eleven books named *meta-ta-physika*) in trying to fix the nature of what he variously calls “first science,” or “first philosophy” or simply “philosophy”: the science of the “first principles” generally intended (*Met.* I), or “the science of truth” (*Met.* II, 993a), or also the paradoxical science whose specificity consists in dealing with “non-specified” objects (see *Met.* IV, 1003b). But any epoch has its own metaphilosophical difficulties. And there are reasons to believe that in late modernity the science or intellectual activity called “philosophy” risked disappearance. “Science” (as cultural fact and set of academic subjects) definitely distinguished from “philosophy,” and its specialized sectors and technological applications gained a new cultural relevance.<sup>35</sup>

I am not saying that the A–C question is interpretable as the conflict between, respectively, a scientific and an anti- or extra-scientific philosophy. Theories about the scientific (normal) or non-scientific (non-normal) nature of philosophy are sparsely present in both traditions. Yet, considering the distinctive factors I have mentioned in sub-section 2.3, we can see well that A philosophy *is more easily adaptable to the system of “normal” sciences*, and to the consequent requirements of specialization and methodological accuracy (see sub-section 4.2). In the C tradition, instead, the idea of *the anomalous status of philosophy has been generally accepted*, on occasion defended, and progressively *radicalized* in the central decades of the century. Why has this happened?

The diagnosis I intend to favour is that while C philosophy has inherited (and in some cases emphasized) Kant’s idea of *self-critical reason*, that is, a kind of rationality (and a consideration of science) that includes and implies the critique of reason, A philosophers have been extraneous to this idea, and so have remained substantially faithful to the principles of rationality ruling modern science, tech-

---

<sup>35</sup> This is a Heidegger-inspired account of the situation of philosophy in late modernity close to the one proposed by G. Vattimo in *Beyond Interpretation*, op. cit., and *The Responsibility of the Philosopher*, ed. F. d’Agostini, transl. W. McCuaig, Columbia University Press, New York 2010 [2000].

nology and common sense.<sup>36</sup> If we adopt this line of thought, then the interpretation of the A–C dualism changes: we do not simply have a “scientific” or “normalized” philosophy (A) as opposed to an anti-scientific or “non-normal” (C), rather we have a deeper reason of divergency.

### 3.2. The Two Turns: Philosophy and the Self-Criticism of Reason

Adopting this line of thought, we can see that the controversial point is the position of philosophy among sciences, and thus, the first origin of the A–C divide is located in the age in which German thinkers tried to give philosophy the status of a specific science. Or rather: they tried to redefine the nature of “science” in general, by locating philosophy in it, with a new, foundational role. This role was intendedly given by the idea of self-critical – transcendental, and later dialectical – reason.

A philosophers may have some difficulty in accepting this narrative. In A-mainstream account, the “transcendental” view has been most frequently seen as a position in metaphysics or in epistemology, but it was a wider programme.<sup>37</sup> Kant’s philosophy launched a new conception of self-reflective reason, including a particular philosophy of science with meta-scientific relevant consequences.<sup>38</sup> And his legacy also conveyed, specifically with Hegel, the idea that philosophical discourse deserves a particular (dialectical, dynamic) logic.

In this diagnosis, *the first intra-philosophical reason* of the A–C dualism has been the resistance of A philosophers against this attempt to ground philosophy on critical bases: the resistance against Kant’s seminal idea of philosophy as

---

<sup>36</sup> Historical and cultural facts justified the typically C move from “self-criticism” to “self-destruction” or “deconstruction” of reason. Faced with the ruinous effects of totalitarianisms, the idea that “there was something wrong” in Western rationality seemed evident. See, classically, T.W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso, London 1989 [1947]; H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Viking Press, New York 1965 [1963].

<sup>37</sup> As S. Gardner and M. Grist stress, “the transcendental turn should not be identified with any specific epistemological or metaphysical doctrine, but rather concerns the fundamental standpoint and terms of reference of philosophical inquiry” (S. Gardner, M. Grist, *Introduction*, in: *The Transcendental Turn*, eds. S. Gardner, M. Grist, op. cit., p. 1).

<sup>38</sup> See the reconstruction of the transcendental-idealistic metaphilosophy in *Die Begründung der Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus* (ed. E. Ficara, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2011). The *Wissenschaftslehre*, the doctrine of science, has been a crucial motive in the development of German philosophy.



a critique of reason (wherein “critique” in transcendental sense means *grounding*, i.e. explanation and justification). There is no need here to give details about the transcendental turn. For now, we can keep to the basic thesis: that what has been called the Anglo-American “allergy” to transcendentalism<sup>39</sup> has been the first source of the divide. The particular status of philosophy in relation to science established by Kant (and by the consequent *deutsche Bewegung*) was not acknowledged and accepted in the birth and development of A tradition.

### 3.3. The Two Turns: A New Metaphysics for Logic and Philosophy

In fact, the “allergy” would have been rapidly overcome, if there had not been, at the end of the 19th century, a similar and equally influential metaphilosophical turn. The second intra-philosophical cause of the split is related to the role of formal logic in grounding the A tradition, providing a new method and a new image of philosophy.

The “logical view” for A philosophy did not simply imply the explanatory and heuristic role of mathematical symbols and structures to approach philosophical problems; it has not been properly or exclusively the idea of promoting some kind of generalized “logicist philosophy,” “formal philosophy” or “scientific philosophy” either. As Ernst Tugendhat has stressed in his *Lectures* on analytic philosophy<sup>40</sup> the logical consideration of language offered new methodological suggestions for conceptual analysis, basically launching the predicative account of concepts (Frege’s theory of quantification, and of predicates-concepts as *functions*) but it also gave new grounding ideas in ontology and in metaphysics.

Even more radically, I would say that the new logic in the A tradition provided a *paradigmatic turn*, as complete and fruitful as was the one provided by transcendentalism: new ideas in metaphysics and epistemology, but also new methodological resources, new terminology, and consequently, a new way of locating philosophy with respect to science and culture in general. Philosophy discovered a new “exactness,” at the same time the opportunity of approaching old questions and programmes, while locating itself in the general development of late-modern scientific spirit. All this, clearly, generated the stylistic and methodological A-features I have listed in 2.3 as opposed to C.

---

<sup>39</sup> O. Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking*, transl. J. Bailiff, Humanity Press, 1997 [1987].

<sup>40</sup> E. Tugendhat, *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy: Lectures on the Philosophy of Language*, transl. P.A. Gorner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982 [1975], pp. 5, 170–176.

### 3.4. The Rivalry

Was there true incompatibility? Maybe no, there was not. But significantly (also for the above-mentioned historical and cultural reasons) the two turns have developed in irreducible rivalry.

The new logical approach was launched and conceived in opposition to the transcendental turn: or rather, to what of transcendentalism had been absorbed in the English-speaking world. Russell found in Peano's and Frege's new mathematical logic an antidote to the confounding vagueness of the theories of British idealism and of traditional (European) philosophy, and this was also the intuition at the basis of neo-empiricism.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, in the transcendental-idealistic (and hence phenomenological) tradition, logic was considered an extra-philosophical discipline (following Kant's suggestion), or there has been a clear distinction between formal and transcendental logic (Husserl conceived them as respectively objective and subjective), or a declared enmity towards the logical approach (held "intellectualistic," reductive, mechanic, fundamentally of no use in philosophy: "formulette," in Benedetto Croce's words; "technique of specialists without conceptual awareness," in Theodor W. Adorno's words). What is worse, the same meaning of "logic" in C philosophy began to diverge from the meaning used in A tradition. While A philosophers have accepted the idea that there is no other "logic" than mathematical (symbolic) logic, basically conceived as "the science of validity in virtue of forms," for many C philosophers "logic" has been conceived as "science of pure thought," or of "the a priori elements of thought" (as in the old terminology adopted by Kant), or of "the concept of concept" (in Hegel's view).<sup>42</sup>

## 4. The Divide Today

The point is not that there have been two turns, but that each of them was grounded on the rejection of the other. The logical turn, extremely important for the history of philosophy and culture of the 20th century, has been misrep-

---

<sup>41</sup> What consolidated Russell's and Moore's "rebellion" has been a complex series of cultural and practical factors, such as the resistance of pre-transcendental empiricism; bad translations; the objective difficulty of German classical thinkers' language; and eventually, the above-seen historical circumstances, which definitely strengthened the rejection.

<sup>42</sup> I have specified all this in F. d'Agostini, *From a Continental Point of View*, op. cit.

resented, ignored or underrated in the development of C philosophy. And in the same way, the transcendental turn, equally important for the self-understanding of philosophy in the age of science and information, has been ignored, misinterpreted or underrated in the A tradition. Now we can begin to see what remains of this mutual resistance nowadays.

#### **4.1. End of A and/or C?**

Theories about the end of the A–C dualism are of various kinds.<sup>43</sup> One may say it has disappeared

- because of the disappearance of A and C *separately* (each term becoming obsolete);
- because of the end of the *incompatibility* between them; or also
- because one tradition (in particular A) *wiped out* the other.

There might be reasons in favour of all of these options. (And there is also the normative version of the end-theory: if the divide has not ended, it must end now.)

In his introduction to *The Future for Philosophy*, Brian Leiter gives a well-argued presentation of the first hypothesis: the A–C interpretation of philosophical facts is obsolete for the vanishing of both A and C.<sup>44</sup> In the collective volume *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*,<sup>45</sup> we find a version of the second diagnosis: the editors claim the old distinction makes no sense, because there can be a “synthetic” philosophy, given by joined consideration of A and C products, themes, authors; and what is more, such a synthetic view is already practised, nowadays. A recent special issue of the online journal “Borderless Philosophy” is titled *The End of Analytic Philosophy and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes or No? And if Yes, Then What’s Beyond?*<sup>46</sup> The shared point of the articles is a normative end-theory of the third kind: what distinguishes A philosophy, ultimately, is the idea that “professional philosophy” is the only philosophy one has to consider, which is uselessly diminishing for all practices that are not A.

---

<sup>43</sup> A general and detailed consideration of the relevance of the distinction is also given by H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, op. cit., pp. 1–22. The contemporary failure of “geolinguistic conceptions” is also well pictured there, on pp. 80–88.

<sup>44</sup> B. Leiter, *Introduction: The Future for Philosophy*, in: *The Future for Philosophy*, ed. B. Leiter, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, pp. 1–23.

<sup>45</sup> J.A. Bell, A. Cutroffello, P.M. Livingston, eds., *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> “Borderless Philosophy” 2022, Vol. 5: *The End of Analytic and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes, or No? And if Yes, Then What’s Beyond?*

In fact, if we look at the current conditions of philosophy we cannot say A and C have totally disappeared as such (jointly or separately). Rather, we have now paradigmatic examples of A and C (say, respectively: Timothy Williamson, Judith Butler); A-formed philosophers who consider and read C (e.g., Graham Priest, Penelope Maddy) and C-trained philosophers that read and consider A (such as Günter Abel, Markus Gabriel). And we also have many A + C philosophers, people who are not necessarily bridge-builders, but show, *de facto* or *de jure*, the implausibility of the old distinction, combining authors, styles or approaches of the two traditions (some examples: Nicholas Rescher, Christopher Norris, Robert Brandom). But to have clearer ideas, we should still consider the third position, and the current situation of philosophy in general.

#### 4.2. A without C?

In favour of the third hypothesis, we can say that two unquestionable facts have occurred in the recent development of academic philosophy:

- Analytic philosophy has become “the dominant kind of philosophy in the English-speaking world.”<sup>47</sup>
- English has become, definitely, the official philosophical language, all over the world.

The connection of these two facts might be worrying: the dominant philosophy is the one which speaks the dominant language. Could it import some problems for the science-discipline we still call “philosophy”? As a matter of fact, many relevant things might get lost. Without the rich plurality of European languages, the best expressions and novelties of C philosophy risk disappearing. One would say that if there has ever been an “A–C war,” then A has simply won, and even if nominally there is still “C” philosophy, its impact in academic philosophy is becoming marginal.

“The success of analytic philosophy” is justified, according to Michael Beaney, because it is “democratic and meritocratic.” There might be reasonable doubts about both features. If we keep to the characterization of A and C suggested in subsection 2.3 we can find an alternative and more realistic explanation of the current dominance of A philosophy. All the mentioned distinctions do confirm that the

---

<sup>47</sup> M. Beaney, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, op. cit., p. 11. Scott Soames writes “by the mid-1960s the analytic tradition had become the dominant philosophical force in America” (S. Soames, *Analytic Philosophy in America*, op. cit., p. ix).

metaphilosophical approach of A philosophy is more adaptable to the procedures and methods of normal science than C philosophy. The “scientific” settlement of academic philosophy – in the way in which it is practised nowadays – gives clear advantages to A philosophers, while is obvious hindrance for Cs.

Science in principle does not admit of any *universal audience* (2a); in strictly “scientific” perspective the largely “sociological” reflections of *public philosophers* are seen as belonging to pop-sociology or to an extra-philosophical activity (3b); *wide C themes* – such as the nature of “modernity” or “the crisis of reason” – are held irrelevant (2c); *genealogical* and *historical* considerations are useless in formal or natural (hard) sciences and are admitted only in specific historiographic territories (4). And yes, science as such is “democratic and meritocratic” *in principle*, because it is ruled by truth, and so it is (should be) indifferent to powers and privileges, but *in practice*, science is (to a certain extent must be) ruled by epistemic oligarchies and selective criteria that can (should) be discriminatory. And finally, philosophy speaks English, everywhere, just because *English is the language of science*, everywhere, as Latin was in medieval times. Maybe it is a good thing or it is not, but it is a fact, and its simple occurrence imports relevant changes for philosophical styles and practices. The negative consequences are foreseeable: the destiny of theories and theses produced in the “periphery,” or “semi-periphery” of the English-speaking world is uncertain.<sup>48</sup>

### 4.3. Is There Still “Philosophy”?

In fact, the real problem is whether, once we admit the “victory” of A philosophy, this dominant “A” has really any kind of identity or enjoys any shared metaphilosophy. It is not clear whether there is still some “A” philosophy in any non-nominal sense. The big volume edited by Beaney (1,161 pages) shows that actually there still are “purely” A philosophers, and as I have said (sub-section 4.1) it is

---

<sup>48</sup> This problem has been frequently treated, by sociologists and philosophers of science, but it seems these studies have not had decisive impact in metaphilosophy. “The material and institutional constraints affecting researchers in economically disadvantaged parts of the globe” ought to stimulate a decisive revision of the institutional principles that rule sciences and disciplines in general. K. Bennett, ed., *The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing: Discourses, Communities and Practices*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014. See also the seminal work of A.S. Canagarajah, *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 2002; the problem has been tackled later by many other authors of different perspectives. See also A.S. Canagarajah, *The End of Second Language Writing?*, “Journal of Second Language Writing” 2013, Vol. 22, pp. 440–441.

basically true, but as far as I can see, they are “A” mainly because there is a certain nominal acknowledgement of their belonging to A tradition, but it is not clear whether these “A” philosophers really enjoy shared ideas about why they are doing what they do, and how they can do it “well.”

As a distinguished A philosopher has declared recently:

After all, we are still learning to do philosophy well. To see how far it can take us, we have to keep doing philosophy.<sup>49</sup>

This is an interesting and honest observation. A philosophical literature nowadays seems to be unusually interested in metaphilosophical themes and research, but the field of normative philosophy is still unexplored and extremely uncertain a territory. This should not be surprising: to have it one would require a *reflexive*, *generalistic* (universalistic) and *prescriptive* attitude, which is hardly adoptable by the “piecemeal approach” of A philosophy and with the specialized language of science. But note that, namely, the combination of reflexive and normative attitudes has been typical of the C-accounts of philosophy inspired by the transcendental programme.

In this respect, if we consider the two factors I have mentioned at the beginning: the *globalization* and *specialization* of philosophy, we can see how the divide is doomed to encounter a simultaneous and paradoxical survival and disappearance. Actually, the A–C dualism involved differences concerning mentalities, languages, cultures. But in the global world incompatibilities of this kind are not relevant. And in the current specialization of the philosophical research, “generalist” debates that animated late-modern culture do not make much sense. The field of philosophy is now a wide area of disciplines that parallel each other, often without any mutual acknowledgement of their respective results. One could consistently say that the A–C divide postulates the existence of “philosophy” as a general subject, but there is no more “philosophy” nowadays. There are philosophical disciplines that work with poor or null communication, sometimes adopting different methods, canonical authors, basic tenets, etc. And since there is no A–C without (general) philosophy, we may state that there is no A–C because there is no “philosophy” anymore.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> D.J. Chalmers, *Why Isn't There More Progress, in Philosophy?*, in: *Philosophers of Our Times*, ed. T. Honderich, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 347–370.

<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Rescher has claimed that philosophy is a lively sector of studies nowadays, but the current conditions of philosophical practice make the role of “philosophers” unthinkable, so there is

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

I have interpreted the A–C problem as the result of the uncertain status of philosophy in late modernity, and I traced back the meta-philosophical differences between A and C to the dualism between the transcendental turn and the logical turn, which respectively occurred in contemporary philosophy: at the beginning of the 19th century, and at the beginning of the 20th. The two turns have conveyed diverging ideas of philosophy. They have positively framed two different images of reason (in principle and for a certain time as based on two different conceptions of language).

I have suggested that today the differences between A and C (as ideal-typical properties) are definitely more shadowed, and there are contaminations and integrations, due to the general process of globalization of philosophy. There are reasons to favour an idea of philosophy as a sort of *exploded* territory,<sup>51</sup> wherein A philosophy survives, but more nominally than substantially, or as a perspective that is not able to correct its own “explosion.” All this happens in the context of an alleged dominance of A philosophy, so that C philosophy has no say in the matter, and thus, its traditional resources of critical and foundational rationality cannot help.

Chalmers’s doubts about “doing philosophy well” are justified because, as we see in the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology* there is no accordance about philosophical methods<sup>52</sup> and for universal admission philosophy has no definite episteme (subject matter).<sup>53</sup> So Chalmers is right in thinking that what

---

a lot of philosophy, but no “philosopher” as such (see N. Rescher, *Philosophy without Philosophers*, “American Philosophical Quarterly” 2016, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 213–214). I overturn the diagnosis: there are many (at least nominal) “philosophers,” but no trace of the field they are held to share.

<sup>51</sup> I use “explosion” in the meaning of paraconsistent logicians and dialetheists, to mean a general trivialization whereby everything becomes true, everything is proved (and the problem does not only regard philosophy). See G. Priest, F. Berto, Z. Weber, *Dialetheism*, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), eds. E.N. Zalta, U. Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/dialetheism> (substantive revision on 13.08.2022).

<sup>52</sup> J. Dever, *What is Philosophical Methodology?*, in: H. Cappelen, T. Szabó Gendler, J. Hawthorne, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016. Exploring the many and not convergent definitions of “methodology” J. Dever discovers that there is no definite answer even about the meaning of the term: “there is no obvious and straight forward fitting of an account of Philosophical Methodology onto the way in which philosophers use ‘methodological’ talk” (p. 23).

<sup>53</sup> In the authoritative picture provided by Williamson in various works (see, e.g., T. Williamson, *Doing Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 141–142) philosophy is a set of different methods to be applied to an unspecified variety of subject matters.

A philosophers can do is going on doing what they do. What I would add, is that the vagueness and wideness of the discipline and the unsupported “going on” of philosophers are the first reasons of the impressive redundancy of the field. The philosophical jungle remains unexplorable, until philosophy regains its own identity, and as it seems, the dominant philosophy cannot provide any solution.

All this may answer to the question proposed by the title of this article: yes, there has been an A–C problem, and yes, such a problem still persists (in some sense). But I would like to conclude by suggesting that “good philosophers” have never been strictly A or C: they have always practised some transcendental- and logic-sensitive philosophy, even if without naming the two aspects in this way. So nothing is to be changed in the action of good philosophers, nowadays. Rather, something is to be changed in how “philosophy” is culturally and institutionally conceived. Because if there still are “good” philosophers (in the intended sense), but the dominantly A philosophers do not have clear and shared ideas about what doing philosophy well means, then these good philosophers and their products might pass unnoticed or be systematically ignored.

In the current “information explosion” or “data flood” which affects philosophy (just like any other science or discipline), the resources for selecting what is “philosophically” good or bad, right or wrong, are exploded too. (Explosion is a *conservative* property: if a system is exploded, then the means to normalize it are exploded too.) Maybe the development of philosophy (and of science in general) will find some optimal *eskaton*, thanks to the internal wisdom of human history. This is a Hegelian thesis that is not easily acceptable (on ground of our experience). What we can do, for now, is to promote normative metaphysical reflections, and try to establish, with a certain categoricalness, what “doing philosophy well” means. A reconsideration of the A–C question may help us in this direction.

## Bibliography

- Adorno T.W., Horkheimer M., *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, transl. J. Cumming, Verso, London 1989 [1947].
- Arendt H., *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Viking Press, New York 1965 [1963].



- Babich B., *La fin de la pensée? Philosophie analytique contre philosophie continentale*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2012.
- Babich B., *On the Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy*, in: *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, ed. C. Prado, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY, 2003, pp. 63–103.
- Beaney M., *The Historiography of Analytic Philosophy*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 30–60.
- Beaney M., *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 3–29.
- Beaney M., ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.
- Beck L., ed., *La philosophie analytique*, Minuit, Paris 1962.
- Bell J.A., Cutrofello A., Livingston P.M., eds., *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide: Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, Oxford 2016.
- Bennett K., ed., *The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing: Discourses, Communities and Practices*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014.
- Biletzki A., ed., *Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide*, special issue of “The International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3.
- Canagarajah A.S., *The End of Second Language Writing?*, “Journal of Second Language Writing” 2013, Vol. 22, pp. 440–441.
- Canagarajah A.S., *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 2002.
- Cantù P., *What Is Axiomatics?*, “Annals of Mathematics and Philosophy” 30.07.2022, Vol. 1.
- Cappelen H., Szabó Gendler T., Hawthorne J., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016.
- Chalmers D.J., *Why Isn't There More Progress, in Philosophy?*, in: *Philosophers of Our Times*, ed. T. Honderich, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 347–370.
- d'Agostini F., *From a Continental Point of View: The Role of Logic in the Analytic-Continental Divide*, “The International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 349–367.
- D'Oro G., Overgaard S., eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017.

- Dainton B., Robinson H., *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, in: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, eds. B. Dainton, H. Robinson, Bloomsbury, London 2014, pp. 569–574.
- Dainton B., Robinson H., eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, London 2014.
- Dever J., *What is Philosophical Methodology?*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*, in: H. Cappelen, T. Szabó Gendler, J. Hawthorne, eds. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, pp. 3–24.
- Dummett M., *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993.
- Dutilh Novaes C., *Conceptual Genealogy for Analytic Philosophy*, in: *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, eds. J.A. Bell, A. Cutrofello, P.M. Livingston, Routledge, Oxford 2016, pp. 75–108.
- Ficara E., ed., *Die Begründung der Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2011.
- Friedman M., *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer and Heidegger*, Open Court, Chicago, IL, 2000.
- Gardner S., Grist M., eds., *The Transcendental Turn*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015.
- Glock H.-J., *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.
- Grondin J., *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, transl. J. Weinsheimer, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT–London 1994 [1991].
- Gutting G., *Philosophical Progress*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*, eds. H. Cappelen, T. Szabó Gendler, J. Hawthorne, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, pp. 309–325.
- Lapointe S., *On the Traditionalist Conjecture*, in: *Analytic Philosophy: An Interpretative History*, ed. A. Preston, Routledge, New York 2017.
- Leiter B., *Introduction: The Future for Philosophy*, in: *The Future for Philosophy*, ed. B. Leiter, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, pp. 1–23.
- Leiter B., Rosen M., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007.
- Levy N., *Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences*, “Metaphilosophy” 2003, Vol. 34, pp. 284–304.
- Mulligan K., Simons P., Smith B., *What’s Wrong in Contemporary Philosophy?*, “Topoi” 2006, Vol. 25, No. 1–2, pp. 63–67.

- Overgaard S., *Royaumont Revisited*, “British Journal for the History of Philosophy” 2010, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 899–924.
- Overgaard S., Gilbert P., Burwood S., *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013.
- Piercey R., *The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, eds. G. D’Oro, S. Overgaard, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 274–292.
- Pöggeler O., *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking*, transl. J. Bailiff, Humanity Press, San Jose, California 1997 [1987].
- Prado C., ed., *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY, 2003.
- Priest G., Berto F., Weber Z., *Dialetheism*, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), eds. E.N. Zalta, U. Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/dialetheism> (substantive revision on 13.08.2022).
- Rajchman J., West C., eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York 1985.
- Rescher N., *Metaphilosophy: Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective*, Lexington Books, London 2014.
- Rescher N., *Philosophy without Philosophers*, “American Philosophical Quarterly” 2016, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 213–214.
- Sachs C.B., *What Is to Be Overcome? Nietzsche, Carnap, and Modernism as the Overcoming of Metaphysics*, “History of Philosophy Quarterly” 2011, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 303–318.
- Simons P., *Whose Fault? The Origins and Evitability of the Analytic-Continental Rift*, “International Journal of Philosophical Studies” 2001, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 295–311.
- Soames S., *Analytic Philosophy in America: And Other Historical and Contemporary Essays*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014.
- Tugendhat E., *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy: Lectures on the Philosophy of Language*, transl. P.A. Gorner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982 [1975].
- Vattimo G., *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, transl. D. Webb, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1997 [1990].

- Vattimo G., *The Responsibility of the Philosopher*, ed. F. d'Agostini, transl. W. McCuaig, Columbia University Press, New York 2010 [2000].
- Williams B., *Contemporary Philosophy: A Second Look*, in: *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, eds. N. Bunnin, E.P. Tsui-James, Blackwell, Oxford 2003.
- Williamson T., *Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018.