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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.

HANS-JOHANN GLOCK is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Zurich and Visiting Professor at the University of Reading. His publications include *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (1996), *Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality* (2003) and (ed. with John Hyman) *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy* (2008).

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

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... 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,

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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

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(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 Roggenhofer 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

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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.