Almost everyone who studies the philosophical issues surrounding “the analytic/Continental divide” now recognizes that the supposed dichotomy between “analytic” and “Continental” philosophy is itself deeply problematic philosophically.¹ I’ll drop the quotes before they become tedious, but I do want to insist that, as Bernard Williams (2006) famously pointed out, cross-classifying the main division within contemporary Western philosophy in the mixed, geographical-cum-methodological terms analytic and Continental is rather like trying to sort cars into two (would-be) mutually exclusive groups, those “with an automatic transmission,” on the one hand, and those “made in Germany,” on the other.² The deeper point behind Williams’s humorous analogy is that the categories (“Continental” and “analytic”) are non-isomorphic and so disanalogous in a way that illegitimately conflates place of origin with method. On its face, “the analytic/Continental divide” seems implicitly committed to the view that philosophers’ place of geographical origin or location (and here there are only two options: “the Continent” or Britain, since “the Continent” is the British name for non-British Europe) determines the method or style of their

¹ Today the only exceptions to this rule seem to be extreme ideologues who identify exclusively with one or the other side of the divide, albeit without being able to explain convincingly (or sometimes even coherently) what qualifies one (other than the self-legislating sovereignty of the ideologue’s own pronouncements) for such exclusive membership (and hence also exclusion). As a result, such work tends not to be good enough philosophically to even merit mention. (“Let the dead bury the dead,” as Jesus said.) For a succinct and compelling deconstruction of the typical attempts to rationalize the divide, see Blattner 2013.

² Williams 2006: 201 (example slightly modified, see below). Quietly altering Williams’s joke, James Conant gives the amusing example of “classifying human beings into those that are vegetarian and those that are Romanian” (Conant 2016: 18). Williams himself is building (albeit critically) on Michael Dummett’s seminal (1993) work (see also note 2 below). There is also the rarely mentioned problem that this longstanding division of the philosophical field leaves non-Western approaches entirely out of account. See Guerrero et al., this volume.
philosophizing (as either analytic or Continental). Analytic and Continental philosophy, on this view, would be like distinct accents that show where one’s philosophical formation took place (as if on one side or the other of the English Channel).

This rather simplistic view seems to have been at least initially plausible to many philosophers. (That, at least, would be the most charitable explanation of how the analytic/Continental distinction became so widespread and influential within the profession, though we will dig deeper in what follows.) In point of historical fact, however, these would-be mutually exclusive categories have never successfully captured, reflected, or justified the existence of two wholly distinct groups of philosophers but, instead, cross-cut various philosophical communities (of which there are of course many more than two) in complicated ways, while leaving other (e.g. non-Western) approaches entirely out of account (see e.g. Van Norden 2017 and Guerrero et al., this volume). It has thus been commonplace since Dummett’s *The Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (1993) for philosophical historians of twentieth-century philosophy to point out that, rather than yielding any neat binary sorting, the categories analytic and Continental inevitably intersect in multiple ways – overlapping geographically, methodologically, topically, sometimes even stylistically – on any of the substantive ways philosophers have tried to draw the distinction.\(^3\) Now, if one goes back to our automobile analogy, the fact that those two categories overlap is so obvious that to deny it would suggest that one is in the grip of an outdated prejudice, and worse, a false belief that is currently being rendered increasingly ridiculous by history. (Imagine someone who still believed that “all German cars, and only German cars, come with a manual transmission.”) But how far can we take this analogy? Has the last century of philosophy similarly shown that the still widespread belief that there are two different approaches to philosophy (the analytic and the Continental) is “genuinely comical,” as influential philosophers like Williams (2006) and James Conant (2016: 56 note 2) suggest?

\(^3\) Dummett (1993) famously observed that much (self-identified) “analytic” philosophy actually had its origins in Germany (and so on “the continent”), in the work of Frege, Carnap, Wittgenstein, and others. Notice, however, that these German roots are not problematically German in (what I shall suggest is) the politically motivating sense of being connected to Nazism (or are at least not commonly recognized as being so connected, as in the case of Frege’s own virulent anti-Semitism, which Dummett notes). Nonetheless, as Williams and Conant point out, this did not stop Dummett himself from endorsing a stereotypical version of the divide which (in Williams’s summary) identifies analytic philosophy with “the ‘linguistic turn,’ the method of treating language as explanatorily prior to thought” (a view that, we should note, can be found in Heidegger and Derrida, among other paradigmatically “Continental” philosophers, but no longer among many leading analytic thinkers today). See Dummett 1993; Williams 2006: 201 note 4; Conant 2016; see also Critchley 2001.
Some of us tend to see the existence (and stubborn persistence) of various Continental and analytic stereotypes less as comic than as tragic – or, better, as both comic and tragic, a compound tragicomedy of mutual misunderstanding and painful marginalization – a long history of missed opportunities for productive dialogue in the world(s) of English-speaking philosophy that is only slowly beginning to give way before a growing number of philosophical syntheses that draw freely on both traditions – as, most famously, in the work of Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty, Stanley Cavell, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and Raymond Geuss, as well as in the growing body of philosophers influenced or inspired by such path-breaking bordercrossers (see e.g. the chapters by Mulhall, Sachs, Beaney, Wrathall and Loden, this volume). Whether one views this history with bemusement, anger, pride, regret, or their various combinations, no one can credibly deny that its central stereotypes – which evolved over time but consistently opposed “the analytic” to “the Continental” and vice versa – have had a profound and lasting influence on the historical shape and development of the philosophical profession in the English-speaking world (and, indeed, well beyond) in the last eighty plus years.  

Today, however, many contemporary philosophers seem to agree with Conant’s judgment that we are in the midst of a diminution in philosophers’ longstanding tendency to believe in and adhere to some strict version of the analytic/Continental divide. Adding an interesting twist to that growing consensus, Conant suggests that this ongoing weakening of the analytic/Continental divide stems (albeit in part and inadvertently) from the history of analytic philosophy itself. In Conant’s view, the current breaking down of the divide stems in large part from analytic philosophers’ own reluctant recognition that they cannot provide any convincing criteria (let alone “necessary and sufficient conditions”) capable of conferring exclusive membership in one of the two (supposedly always opposed) “camps.”  

To make this case, Conant recounts a remarkable history whereby, from the time of the Second World War until the 1990s (at least), a long succession of important, self-identified “analytic” philosophers attempted to distinguish analytic and Continental philosophy via some philosophically principled and convincing dichotomy. G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, the early Wittgenstein, Moritz Schlick, Rudolph Carnap, the later Wittgenstein, and Michael Dummett – each of these leading “analytic” philosophers proposed and sought to defend criteria that would sort analytic and

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4 For a succinct overview, see e.g. Collins 1998: chapter 13.

5 Amusingly, one can view Socrates’ failed search for concept definition (in terms close to what would later be called necessary and sufficient conditions) as the self- or auto-deconstruction of the analytic impulse in one of its founding forms.
Continental philosophy into mutually exclusive memberships. Yet, all of them failed in their various attempts, Conant shows (by providing convincing counterexamples to each case), so that, in the end, these analytic philosophers failed — not only individually but also as a collective — to define “analytic” philosophy in distinction from “Continental.” This is a rather painfully ironic failure, moreover, for a community that had long centrally prided itself on its allegedly superior ability to clearly and precisely determine the legitimate and illegitimate meanings and uses of philosophical terms and concepts.

But this twentieth-century parade of failed attempts by leading analytic philosophers to convincingly distinguish analytic and Continental philosophy is not just a glaring historical failure. For Conant, this collective failure also points us toward some of the most important lessons to be drawn from the historical study of analytic philosophy itself. Perhaps most importantly, this collective failure of (self-described) “analytic” philosophers to define “analytic philosophy” encourages us to think more critically about what it means to belong to a historical tradition of the kind that constitute the philosophical profession. One’s belonging to such a historical tradition is often strongly influenced by one’s place and time, of course, but one’s membership in such historical traditions also always remains partly voluntary (whether its members want to admit that or not), so that membership in such traditions, for Conant, has centrally to do with critically inheriting “a form of philosophical self-consciousness,” which also means working to transform from within the philosophical traditions one takes oneself to belong to historically (Conant 2016: 55).6

Indeed, as Conant nicely illustrates, although the “analytic” tradition is only entering the second century of its already complex history, this tradition has been profoundly shaped not only by struggles with its external (“Continental”) other but also, and just as pervasively, by internal struggles among and between its own competing forms of historical self-consciousness, implicit and explicit struggles over just what it means to be an “analytic” philosopher.7

For that very reason, however, some philosophical historians more informed by the “Continental” traditions would go even further and reject Conant’s neo-Wittgensteinian appeal to the very idea of distinctive “forms of [philosophical] life” as a problematic, backdoor return of the now discredited idea of distinct

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6 Studying this almost eight-decade long succession of failed philosophical attempts to clearly and persuasively define the criteria for membership in analytic and Continental philosophy, Conant (2016) suggests, should teach contemporary philosophers that defending the distinction philosophically is not just a difficult Herculean labor but an impossibility. For Conant, the divide is thus better understood in terms of the meaning of group membership, for it broaches larger questions of group identity and of what it means to inherit a tradition riven by contradictory factions.

7 See Conant 2016 and below.
(even if no longer dichotomized) philosophical traditions. Such skeptics might instead agree with William Blattner, who concludes — from his own insightful consideration of the important exceptions to the most popular ways of drawing the analytic/Continental divide — that this divide is merely an arbitrary historical construct. In Blattner’s view:

the so-called Continental-analytic division within philosophy is not a philosophical distinction; it’s a sociological one. It is the product of historical accident. It is unreasonable to cleave to it, and the insistence on remaining closed to work that is either presumptively “analytic” or presumptively “Continental” is irrational and unphilosophical . . . In light of this conclusion, I prefer to the extent possible not to use the terms “Continental philosophy” and “analytic philosophy.” They perpetuate the divisions of the past, divisions that it behooves us to overcome. (Blattner 2013)

Blattner (whose efforts here I for the most part only applaud) does not do this himself, but there are now many philosophers who like to appeal to the kinds of problems Blattner, Williams, and Conant document in order to conclude that “There is no such thing as Continental philosophy.” One problem with the claim that there is no such thing as Continental (or analytic) philosophy — especially when made by those of us who have achieved some measure of success in the philosophical profession — is that the claim risks degenerating into the same kind of move as the wealthy, white, heterosexual, cis-gendered, Anglo-male who claims that class, race, gender, sex, and ethnicity are of no philosophical importance: What he thereby seems to be confessing is that they are of no philosophical importance to him, not real for his philosophical considerations and concerns, suggesting that he has not been persistently excluded, marginalized, or ostracized for taking them seriously as important topics of philosophical discussion. Even if one is instead, like Blattner, nobly trying to bring about a future in which such alleged differences are no longer grounds for sociological exclusions within the profession (exclusions which do undeniably persist), the problem remains that such futures do not arise simply by choosing henceforth to ignore an established legacy of differences, however arbitrary their historical formation and unphilosophical their contemporary perpetuation might be (see also Sanchez, this volume).

If, like Blattner, we genuinely want to move beyond the whole destructive legacy of the analytic/Continental divide, then perhaps we need not only to deconstruct the stereotypical prejudices that this philosophical divide relies on and reinforces (as Blattner and Conant do so convincingly). Perhaps we also need to take this deconstructive critique one step further, following up its first, negative, ground-clearing moment (which includes pointing out, with Blattner and Conant, that there are obvious counterexamples to every attempt to dichotomize philosophy into separate camps) by developing a second, positive
moment of critique, in which that ground-clearing deconstruction of the divide gets beneath its historical formation in a way that discloses something of its deeper and more enduring motivations – thereby helping us to better understand the motivations for the divide and so some of the enduring obstacles to simply overcoming it. The hope that guides me here is that if, beneath the historical tensions and ideological obfuscations, we can discover some philosophical kernels of truth on both sides of the divide, then this may have the advantage of helping us to explain the central divide in the last century of philosophy (rather than trying to dismiss it as a philosophically empty, collective delusion), while nevertheless facilitating the important efforts (by Williams, Conant, Blattner, and many others) to help us move beyond the ongoing system of sociological exclusions to which this divide continues unfairly to give rise.

ANALYTIC AND CONTINENTAL STEREOTYPES

It is probably overly optimistic to imagine that any readers will not already be familiar with the Continental/analytic stereotypes in some form. But let us characterize these stereotypes at least briefly, so that we can move on to consider some underemphasized sources of the enduring tensions that these stereotypes reflect in distorted ways.

We can get a quick sense for the dominant analytic and Continental stereotypes from the renowned Oxford ethicist R. M. Hare, who (in 1960) tellingly decried the “monstrous philosophical edifices” of German philosophy, which allegedly disguised mere “verbiage” (“ambiguities and evasions and rhetoric”) as “serious metaphysical inquiry.” Against the empty castles of words supposedly typical of German philosophy, Hare proudly set the “clarity, relevance, and brevity” of his own Anglo-analytic tradition of British philosophy. Hare’s frank judgment has the virtue of clearly setting Britain against Germany. To emphasize the significant underground influence of that Anglo-Teutonic tension (and so help explain how such a simplistic stereotype could have proved so divisive historically), I slightly modified Williams’s original analogy earlier. Williams himself famously compared the belief that one could sort philosophers into either “Continental” or “analytic” with a comical attempt to sort cars into

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8 On the importance of recognizing both the negative and positive moments of every deconstructive critique – the first in which longstanding obfuscations are cleared away, and the second in which we rediscover something long concealed by those obfuscations, something that helps us find a way forward – see Thomson 2005: 141–3.

9 See Hare 1960, quoted by Dan Zahavi (2016). Zahavi provides striking examples of prejudice on both sides of the divide (80–93). See also Overgaard 2010. On the origins of this divide, see also Beaney 2013c.
either “Japanese” or “front-wheel drive” (Williams 2006: 201). I shifted gears slightly, however, because I believe the fact that Continental philosophy was largely made in Germany (and in a Germany connected to Nazism, specifically) helps explain the resistance to any automatic transmission it has long faced among the Anglo-American, analytic “mainstream” of the English-speaking philosophical world.

Those grown accustomed to swimming against (or at least across) the current of this mainstream often develop a subtle feel for some of its distinctive pulls and eddies, but if we want to understand the more subterranean sources of this current, it helps to begin by stating the obvious. Members of both analytic and Continental traditions agree, typically, that it is important to try to state the obvious in philosophy, not least because we tend to overlook the obvious otherwise – and many philosophical disagreements are based on unnoticed but conflicting presuppositions each side has taken to be “obvious.” This means that as participants in such disagreements, we can only avoid begging the deepest questions at stake between us, or just talking past one another in mutual incomprehension (as still happens too often), when we uncover and examine these supposedly obvious presuppositions. The attempt to do so usually means explicitly defining one’s terms at the outset, or even deconstructing the presuppositions built into the premises with which one is presented – including, as we have already seen, such seemingly obvious terms as “analytic” and “Continental.”

Such extreme carefulness – a product, in part, of the hypercritical tendencies endemic to philosophical discourse – helps explain why philosophical writing often gives the appearance of moving backward as it gets under way (as if its practitioners were trying to gain traction on a slippery terrain). Outsiders quickly notice the ponderous pace of the philosophical papers published by the leading analytic journals, which too often begin with a meticulous definition of terms meant to ward off possible misunderstandings (a procedure meant to establish “clarity and rigor” that Williams compared, albeit unfavorably, to the natural scientists’ efforts to secure the validity of the results of their own methodological procedures). But a perhaps even more extreme example can be found in Jacques

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10 These are corollaries of the first principle of phenomenology, the law of proximity; see Thomson 2011: 199. As chapter 3 of that book suggests, stating the obvious is also a good description for the activity of poietic world-disclosure crucial to the struggle against the most nihilistic tendencies of our late modern world.

11 See Williams 2006: 183, quoted in note 26, below. Such methods reflect a demand for transparent clarity and monosemic exactitude that is so widespread in analytic philosophy that, e.g., criticisms often take the (only innocuous seeming) form: “I am not sure I completely understood your claim that X.”
Derrida’s rather comical affinity for announcing, around the hundredth page, “We are almost ready to begin.” Indeed, Husserl taught that to be a “phenomenologist” means to be a perpetual re-beginner, ready to start over each inquiry anew in the ongoing attempt to go deeper, to drill down ever further into what still remains unexamined or insufficiently understood in that complex phenomenological question, “What can the nature of own experiences teach us about the nature of our worlds?” As Husserl’s student Heidegger would later put it, to think is to be always “under way,” a perpetual learner, never simply finished in understanding and communicating what we think about “the question of being,” that is, the basic question of what it means to be (and all the perhaps surprising ways that matters). Heidegger taught that the attempt to answer such simple but profound philosophical questions is never finished once and for all, despite the fact that all of us pervasively and ineliminably finite beings run out of time (and in many more ways than just the most obvious one).

Given such unavoidable limits here, perhaps, in the rest of this chapter, we can content ourselves with explicating just a few of the most obvious “implications of the implicit” (as Derrida nicely put it) in the traditional Continental/analytic divide. Adopting a historical and roughly genealogical approach will allow us to better understand where these stereotypes come from (in the next section); what, beneath the endless distortions of and exceptions to these stereotypes, remains true and revealing beneath them (in the section after that); and, finally, what the later chapters of the twentieth-century philosophical tradition have shown us that we both can and should do to continue to move beyond their most pernicious forms and effects (in the final section).

THE GERMAN GERMS OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Historically, the three most influential Continental philosophers – Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger – were “German” in ways that remain problematic

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12 As that formulation suggests, the phenomenological tradition begins with Kant, and with Husserl looks like a renegade form of neo-Kantianism. For a short primer on phenomenology in its relation to Kant and Hegel (cf. Smith, this volume), see Thomson 2009b.

13 For Heidegger: “Philosophers not only don’t go forward, they don’t just tread in place either; rather, they go backward” (Heidegger 2010 [1944–45]: 14) – backward, that is, toward the heart of the matters themselves (“Zu den Sachen selbst” is Husserl’s enduring motto for the phenomenological movement). Such matters too often remain distorted by unnoticed but highly problematic presuppositions inherent in the contemporary frameworks we use to try to approach them, if we do not first work to understanding the basic philosophical decisions already tacitly embedded in those frameworks. (On why Heidegger thinks that the philosopher – and philosophical thinking itself – can never be finished, see, respectively, Thomson 2013 and 2015.)
in the Anglo-American world. Besides the linguistic obstacles and interpretative difficulties caused by Hegel’s (allegedly “Teutonic”) fondness for abstraction in the service of grand metaphysical ambitions, Nietzsche’s seductive style and endlessly challenging views, and Heidegger’s jarring terminological idiosyncrasies and deliberately ambiguous poetic locutions, Nietzsche and Heidegger were both strongly associated with Nazism (Nietzsche as a problematic predecessor, Heidegger as an internal critic of the Nazi movement). Hegel, for his part, was linked first with the autocratic Prussian militarism that fed into Nazism, and then (thanks to Marx, the most influential student of Hegel’s philosophy) with the Communist governments against which the liberal-democratic West defined itself in the second half of the twentieth century. These fraught political lineages, whether rightly or wrongly (or both, as I have argued elsewhere), helped motivate the resistance to their ideas among English-speakers, especially among those generations who lost so many millions of lives at the hands of Germany’s despicable “National Socialist Workers’ Party,” then waged a prolonged “Cold War” against “Communist” enemies, real and imagined.

Such motives, however understandable in context, continue to fade along with the direct influence of those wartime generations, and from a scholarly perspective this is mostly a good thing. Since Tacitus, the scholarly ideal has been the unbiased history written sine ira et studio, “without hatred or zealousness.” While never easy to put into practice (Tacitus notoriously failed to achieve it himself), that scholarly ideal has seemed almost impossibly idealistic when something as deserving of our ire as Nazism enters the story. A nonagenarian, emeritus professor and veteran of the Second World War who audited my classes once expressed this stubborn hermeneutic problem

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14 I remain philosophically distrustful of that trendy shibboleth, “neo-liberalism,” especially when it is used to assert without argument that liberal democracy is inextricably bound to – or even merely serves as an ideological apologia for – capitalism. For that is false; Mill can no more be reduced to Smith and Friedman than Marx can be reduced to Lenin and Stalin. Indeed, it is no more radical for those raised in Communist regimes (like Žižek) to defend the noble ideals of socialism against its worst historical-political manifestations than it is for those of us raised in the capitalist West to defend the noble ideals of liberal democracy against its neo-conservative (or free-market theocratic) distortions. Rather than continue to follow the ugly precedent those distorted political regimes established by rigidly separating and opposing their two supposedly irreconcilable systems, I would instead suggest that we should support any polymorphously perverse combinations that serve the cause of justice – including, most immediately, the robust welfare state currently under attack in the West. We should thus notice, to mention just one important example, that Rawls unintentionally supplied one of the strongest arguments for Marx, as Doppelt (1981) nicely showed.

15 On both Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s direct philosophical connections to Nazism, see Thomson 2005 and 2017.
with impressively succinct candor: “I don’t read Nazis; I shoot ’em.” (Better
dead than read, as it were.) With hardly more subtlety, one of Bertrand Russell’s
widely read introductions to philosophy paired a brief and polemical dismissal of
Heidegger’s “extremely obscure” philosophy with a heart-rending photograph of
Nazi soldiers abusing Jewish civilians.\footnote{The entirety of Russell’s entry on Heidegger reads: “Highly eccentric in its terminology, his
philosophy is extremely obscure. One cannot help suspecting that language is here running riot.
An interesting point in his speculations is the insistence that nothingness is something positive. As
with much else in Existentialism, this is a psychological observation made to pass for logic” (Russell
1989 [1959]: 303.) For an explanation of the real logic behind Heidegger’s extremely important
phenomenological understanding of the “noth-ing,” see Thomson 2011: 82–106 and Thomson
forthcoming.}

Despite its more vexed connections to Nazism, Nietzsche’s philosophy only gained widespread acceptance in the
English-speaking philosophical world after being de-Nazified assiduously, even
excessively, by Walter Kaufmann in his famous (1950) book, Nietzsche: Philoso-
pher, Psychologist, Antichrist.\footnote{For critical appraisals of Nietzsche’s relation to Nazism, see e.g. Aschheim 1992; Golomb and
Wistrich 2002. The current reading of Nietzsche as a thorough-going naturalist also helps make his
philosophy more palatable to mainstream philosophers, but it requires interpreters to downplay the
unnaturalizable elements of his core views on eternal recurrence and will-to-power. One of the
leading proponents of this naturalization of Nietzsche, Brian Leiter, influentially suggests that
although “analytic philosophy” dominated the Anglo-American world from roughly 1940 until
1970, philosophers have now lost faith that any distinctive method of analysis could be used to solve
all meaningful philosophical problems. In Leiter’s view, the analytic legacy has now been split into
two competing methodological schools, the (minority) Wittgensteinian quietists and (majority)
Quinean naturalists. (See Leiter 2004: 1–3.) My sense, however, is that this division is overdrawn,
philosophically if not sociologically, and that once one rejects the quietism of (some of) the
Wittgensteinians and the relativism of (some of) the Quineans, one is left with methodological
commitments to pragmatic holism that are very broadly shared. Leiter then argues that “analytic”
and “Continental” philosophy have become philosophically empty categories, since there are no
necessary or sufficient characteristics that would reliably allow us to sort philosophers into one group
or the other. But that is just to say that the distinction between analytic and Continental philosophy
cannot be drawn using the method of conceptual analysis, one of those methods the collapse of
which (on Leiter’s reading) signaled the end of analytic philosophy as a meaningful research
program. The very fact that Leiter (like others, see below) falls back on this method of conceptual
analysis in order to contest the meaningfulness of the Continental/analytic divide suggests that the
method is not quite as dead as he thinks. Indeed, shorn of its positivistic commitments, the method
of conceptual analysis is in fact so widely routinized into mainstream philosophical practice as to be
nearly universal. Moreover, there are other ways of understanding the divide (from the other side, as
it were), including (to mention two examples employed here) family resemblances (after Wittgen-
stein) and the genealogical method (used by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault) that would
revealingly trace the complex, overlapping lineages of advisors and their students, schools of
influence and exclusion, networks of hiring and citation, etc. I think these methods can in fact
help us make sense of the still lingering effects of that longstanding division, which (unfortunately)
cannot just be argued out of existence (for the very reasons on which Pettit and Heidegger
“ironically” agree – see note 34 below).}
deliberately effaced by Russell’s cohort, who defined their new movement of “analytic philosophy” in opposition to the kind of “metaphysical” speculation allegedly practiced by the British Idealists and (according to Carnap’s influential misreading) by existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger.\footnote{On the immense historical importance of Carnap’s influential misunderstanding of Heidegger, see Friedman 2000; Thomson forthcoming. A recent scholar summarizes the “standard . . . creation narrative of analytic philosophy” as follows: “When G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell rebelled against the dominant idealistic philosophy that they had been taught at Cambridge – their rebellion gave rise to the first flush of English-speaking analytic philosophy. Moreover, their enthusiasm, vigour, and ingenuity, coupled with Russell’s sometimes dazzling rhetoric and polemical verve, gave the movement the momentum that would one day make it the dominant form of philosophy in the English-speaking world” (Lebens 2017: 1, 17). I appreciate Lebens’s acknowledgment here (pace Hare) that Continental philosophers have no monopoly on “rhetoric,” but must also note that the political tensions driving the ascendancy of analytic philosophy pass unmentioned here (as they often do when analytic philosophers recount their history), as if these momentous developments could be explained entirely in terms of the immanent history of the philosophical field (most often, and most problematically, in terms of the innate superiority of analytic philosophy).}

Substituting signposts for extended arguments, I am simplifying complex issues (which I have discussed in more detail elsewhere).\footnote{See e.g. Thomson 2005: chapters 3 and 4; 2011: chapters 3 and 7.} My main point, however, is simply that some of the original resistance to Continental philosophy among Anglo-American philosophers was politically motivated. That obvious point is important because analytic resistance to Continental philosophy continues to take the form of opposition to any style that seems to be deliberately “obscure” (that is, any style in which the philosopher seems not even to be trying to write clearly), although only extremists still advance the old charge (most famously trumpeted by George Orwell and Karl Popper) that the function of such obscure styles is to conceal the “fascism” or “Nazism” hidden at their core. That allegation now seems paranoid at worst (especially when it is used to dismiss not just Nietzsche or Heidegger but also all those influenced – and thereby “contaminated,” as it were – by their “infectious” styles and ideas) and irrelevant at best (since the contemporary Continental practitioners of such “obscure” styles tend overwhelmingly to be political leftists, as even their critics grudgingly acknowledge).\footnote{For more recent examples of such “paranoid” readings, see Wolin 2004; Faye 2009. Cf. Krell 1996. Left-wing fascism seems to be more of a problem for Marx than for Hegel, Nietzsche, or Heidegger, who all tended to swerve to the right.} Nonetheless, the lingering suspicion of any apparent stylistic “obfuscation” continues to be the main rationale for analytic hostility to Continental philosophy in the English-speaking philosophical “mainstream,” while Continental resistance to analytic philosophy most often takes shape as a rejection of the allegedly “boring” obsession with always being correct, even at the cost of analyzing anything important to our everyday lives (a point to which...
In order to move beyond such superficial and stereotypical reactions, a further exploration of the very different styles and organizations that have taken shape in and around the two traditions is in order.

**THE KERNELS OF TRUTH BEHIND THE STEREOTYPES**

Organizationally, the stereotypical difference between the analytic and Continental philosophical traditions (insofar as these are indeed meaningful as recognizable historical categories) perhaps most closely resembles the difference between the natural sciences and the fine arts. Imitating the natural sciences’ division of intellectual labor, analytic philosophers attempt to distinguish different domains (epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, ethics, applied ethics, aesthetics, etc.), and then break these domains down into clear and distinct issues (such as the nature of knowledge, of objectivity, consciousness, subjectivity, predication, representation, aesthetic experience, values, etc.), thereby seeking to make progress by clarifying and solving philosophical problems in a collective enterprise. This organizational imitation of the natural sciences is the most enduring legacy of the now defunct, early analytic program of “logical positivism,” and it still suggests the positivists’ scientistic insecurity that philosophical topics on which no clear progress has been made in hundreds or even thousands of years must be “pseudo-problems” — that is, fake or false problems (“non-problems” that are simply ill-formed and so lack some final right answer toward which philosophers should be able to converge), even if these “pseudo-problems” include such endlessly inspiring philosophical questions as “What is the meaning of life?” or “How should I live?” (questions with multiple right and wrong answers that change over time). One important question here, then, is: Does this would-be scientific organization that analytic philosophy has successfully imposed on the philosophical profession justify itself by generating “progress” in philosophy comparable to that achieved in the natural sciences? Whether or not it does (and many analytic philosophers themselves remain skeptical), this organization effectively stacks the professional decks against “Continental philosophy” by reducing it to a few marginalized “areas of specialization” on the professional job market (such as “nineteenth-century Continental philosophy” or “contemporary

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21 I discuss the hostile, mirror-image stereotypes in terms of which proud “analytic” and “Continental” philosophers often try to frame one another’s work — as being either “boring” or “bullshit,” respectively (i.e., as either caring more about being correct than about analyzing anything important, or caring more about being interesting than about being true and correct) — in Thomson 2011: 213–14.
Continental philosophy"). Moreover, those oddly-broad Continental “specializations” are ones that “prestigious” mainstream philosophy departments seem to believe they can happily and productively live without – to the great regret of many students, who are not so easily talked out of their enthusiastic interests in existentialism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, poststructuralism, psychoanalytic theory, neo-Marxist political philosophy, deconstruction, postmodernity, and the other broad Continental philosophical movements, which tend to connect with the humanities and social sciences more than with the natural sciences.

As one might thus expect, Continental philosophers remain suspicious of this ongoing division of the philosophical field into “areas of specialization” as part of an attempt to establish “normal scientific” routines that will enable philosophers finally to begin making progress by establishing and building on shared assumptions. This resistance is not just motivated by professional self-interest, however. Heidegger and others taught us to notice the philosophical presuppositions already built into such modern philosophical concepts as “consciousness,” “subjectivity,” “objectivity,” and “representation” (some of the central concepts in the analytic specializations mentioned above), seeking to show us that uncritically taking over such concepts from the modern philosophical tradition induces us unknowingly to beg some of the deepest and most important philosophical questions. (For example: Can the subject/object dichotomy ever adequately capture the underlying intertwining of self and world revealed by the phenomenological tradition? Can the self be conceived as a “consciousness” or in terms of “subjectivity” without eliding fundamental aspects of our existence? Can the encounter with a work of art be reduced without significant remainder to an “aesthetic experience”? Or language to “representation”? Or what matters most to “values”? Heidegger influentially argues that the answer to all of these questions is a resounding “No.”)

As a result, Continental philosophers tend to believe that philosophical “problems” and concepts have to be understood in

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22 For a nice, historically informed example of such skepticism, see Stroll 2001. I also thank Alan Richardson for an illuminating exchange on this point.

23 Husserl and the Frankfurt School were interesting exceptions here, and rightly remind us of the impossibility of making exceptionless claims about “Continental philosophy” (see note 10 as well as the chapters by Smith and Young, this volume). Still, this general contrast reinforces that ideological asymmetry in which mainstream analytic “technical terminology” is treated as an innocent expediency to making progress while less broadly accepted Continental “jargon” gets taken as an impermissible failure to translate into terms readily understandable even by those who do not possess the requisite background. For reasons I am about to explain, however, I would prefer to see both traditions make more of an effort clearly to unpack their own guiding presuppositions, even if that means replacing straightforward “progress” with the aforementioned appearance of moving backward by delving carefully into one’s own guiding presuppositions.

24 For a reconstruction of these arguments, see Thomson 2011: chapters 2–3.
terms of the history that implicitly but pervasively shapes and connects them, which means that these problems and concepts cannot be treated in isolation—either from each other or from the “great philosophers” who most profoundly shaped our ways of thinking about them.

With such a historical emphasis on the interconnected ideas that have been profoundly shaped, contested, and transformed by great thinkers (that being precisely what makes them “great”), Continental philosophy tends to be organized less like the natural sciences and more like the fine arts. For there too a highly diverse and often divergent community’s critical contestations and appreciations of great figures and historical movements similarly works to help inspire, shape, situate, and appraise new figures and emerging movements. This, moreover, does not mean that Continental philosophers simply reject the idea of “progress” in philosophy. It is just that the kinds of historical progress that self-identified “Continental” philosophers tend to believe in and pursue more often concern, for example, the enduring struggle for progress in the emancipatory justice of political institutions, or even progress in the philosopher’s own personal development (such as progressing through Kierkegaard’s famous “stages on life’s way”), where progress is typically conceived as an ongoing development to be continually pursued rather than some simple “maturity” attainable once and for all, let alone the eventual attainment of some finally secure “system” of human knowledge (that metaphysical castle in the sky against which not just Russell and Carnap but also Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger all so influentially rebelled).25

Stylistically, the difference between analytic and Continental traditions (again, in their stereotypical antipodes at least) most closely resembles the difference between mathematics and poetry. That this should be the case becomes less surprising, I think, once one recognizes that aptitudes for math and poetry are both proto-philosophical abilities, but ones distributed differentially and with some apparent incompatibility. Occasionally a great mathematical logician develops a poetic style (Lewis Carroll and Wittgenstein come first to mind), or a more poetic thinker puts mathematical results to highly creative use (as with Husserl and Badiou), but these are the exceptions. Great poetic stylists are not usually renowned for their math skills (which helps explain the widespread suspicion of Badiou’s understanding of set theory, when in fact it is not his grasp of the math but only his speculative application of it that is dubious), and great mathematicians and logicians have notoriously had a tin ear for poetry (some even suffer from an unfortunate tendency to take all rhetoric literally and then

25 Here it is revealing that the exceptions—like Husserl and Habermas—are widely viewed as the least “Continental” of the Continental philosophers.
complain about such “imprecise” language). That the most plentiful allotments of mathematical and poetic gifts rarely come bundled together, however, does not mean that we cannot learn to appreciate the real contributions both can make to philosophy, whether on their own or, better, in various combinations. As the examples of Wittgenstein and Badiou suggest, major figures on both sides of the analytic/Continental divide have already begun to move beyond the stereotypical stylistic dichotomy traditionally separating them, and that divide itself seems to be gradually shrinking as the fertile territory in between grows more populous with various Continental-analytic hybrids. Indeed, thanks to such pioneering border crossers as Dreyfus, Taylor, Rorty, Cavell, and Geuss, there are already more species of analytically trained Continental hybrids than can readily be catalogued, and there also seems to be a growing interest in traditionally “analytic” topics and methods among those trained in more traditionally “Continental” programs, as shown by the recent popularity of “speculative realism” and related trends among the younger generation drawn to Continental thought. The border is getting crossed from both sides, helping to blur and one day, perhaps, erase it entirely (by displacing such divisions with others, perhaps).

Nevertheless, the vitriol reinforcing the traditional divide still persists as a lack of mutual respect, one that seems to me to be rooted most stubbornly in that aforementioned Anglo-American suspicion of stylistic “obscurity,” although it is then mirrored in the various reaction-formation of those English-speaking philosophers professionally marginalized by such suspicions. (I have heard the important work of Dreyfus dismissed by the proudly “Continental” at SPEP in terms no less vitriolic and reactionary than those directed against Derrida by the proudly “analytic” at the APA.) Part of the problem (as Lyotard [1994] pointed out) is a kind of asymmetry of sympathy, and hence of hermeneutic charity; while poetic stylists often seem willing to see mathematical logic as an austere yet elegant form of poetry, mathematical logicians and natural scientists tend not to be so magnanimous, instead viewing poetry as imprecise or even

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26 On Badiou’s creative use of set theory, see Livingston 2011. Bernard Williams, who cultivated a rare combination of mathematical and poetical talents, poked fun at the “clinical literal-mindedness” at work among some of his peers: “In a way that will be familiar to any reader of analytic philosophy, and is only too familiar to those of us who perpetrate it, this style tries to remove in advance every conceivable misunderstanding or misinterpretation or objection, including those that would occur only to the malicious or the clinically literal-minded. This activity itself is often rather mournfully equated with the boasted clarity and rigour of analytic philosophy.” (Williams 2006: 183.)

27 Unfortunately, this trend too often looks like an attempt by Continentally trained philosophers to reinvent analytic wheels, tackling problems long treated within analytic philosophy without paying any heed to that history.

28 I discussed this in a much earlier version of this chapter; see Thomson 2012.
empty wordplay, far removed from scientific standards of truth and so lacking in philosophical “seriousness.” Derrida liked to say that it is a very serious thing not to give seriousness the last word. But to many leading analysts, the poetic liberties taken by Continental philosophy make it look like “bullshit” (as Frankfurt [2005] provocatively put it), more interested in being interesting than in being true. To many proud Continentals, conversely, hyper-meticulous analytic philosophy looks “boring,” as if its practitioners cared more about being correct than about analyzing anything important to our actual lives. I have challenged these distorted, mirror-image stereotypes elsewhere, but as they suggest, the hostility continues to flow in both directions across the divide, reinforcing a post-war history riven by mutual ignorance and mistrust.

Some proudly “analytic” philosophers, observing the popularity of Continental philosophy beyond the profession with a combination of envy and disdain, hew to their own version of the scientific null-hypothesis: Assume Continental philosophy is nonsense until proven otherwise. Unfortunately, such cynicism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, because this kind of hermeneutic stinginess inverts the principle of charity (articulated by Davidson and Gadamer), which instead tells us that in order to understand something different and initially strange, one needs preliminarily to assume that it makes sense (just as one would when first trying to understand Aristotle, Kant, and Lao-Tse, or Burge, Parfit, and McDowell). This does not mean that every trendy new philosopher from France should be treated with reverence or put on a pedestal alongside the established greats, but only that they should not be greeted with immediate revulsion either, simply because one finds their style jarring or the meaning of their words not readily clear, because that is precisely the first reaction a Continentally trained philosopher will have to Burge, McDowell, or Parfit.

Nurturing our inherent curiosity, philosophers of all stripes are at our best when we actively cultivate the ability to appreciate the contributions made by those who possess talents and styles quite different from our own (be these talents more mathematical-logical or more poetic-literary), instead of retreating into gated communities whose members seem capable of only the most minimal displacements of their own narcissistic self-love.

I shall thus conclude with a few words aimed at what I have suggested is the most stubborn source of that underlying resistance to Continental philosophy in the English-speaking world: Is there a legitimate philosophical reason why so

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29 On this asymmetry of hermeneutic charity, see Lyotard 1994 and note 23 above.
30 See note 21 above. Cf. Guignon and Aho’s frank remark that: “The concreteness of these examples [in Heidegger and the phenomenological tradition] stands in stark contrast to what we saw as the sterility and abstractness of standard Anglophone philosophy” (2017: 170).
many practitioners of the various Continental styles refuse to relinquish their poetic sensibilities in the face of widespread suspicion of such “self-indulgence” and “fuzzy thinking” from an analytic mainstream that prides itself on logical clarity and mathematical rigor? Why do Continental philosophers cling ever tighter to poetic styles in the face of such hostility? Is there some philosophical truth of poetry, and if so, is this something integral or extraneous to the true “core” of philosophical endeavor?

DIFFERENT WAYS OF MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER

Western philosophers and poets have had an often adversarial history ever since Xenophanes and Heraclitus rejected the traditional authority of Homer and Hesiod as unethical and misleading, and then Plato notoriously sought to exclude any poetic inspiration not subordinated to philosophical guidance from the city that Plato built of words (and partly built – ironically but undeniably – poetically) in the Republic. But that famous anti-Platonist, Nietzsche, reversed Plato when he suggested that “there is a kingdom of wisdom from which the logician is banished” (Nietzsche 1999 [1872]: 71). In one of Nietzsche’s many beautiful philosophical passages, the great philosophical stylist contends that philosophy is distinguished from scientific thinking precisely by the intuitive but “illogical” leaps of poetic imagination by which it proceeds:

Philosophy leaps ahead on tiny toeholds; hope and intuition lend wings to its feet. Calculating reason lumbers heavily behind, looking for better footholds, for reason too wants to reach that alluring goal which its divine comrade has long since reached. It is like seeing two mountain climbers standing before a wild mountain stream that is tossing boulders along its course: One of them light-footedly leaps over it, using the rocks to cross, even though behind and beneath him they hurtle into the depths. The other stands helpless; he must first build himself a firmament which will carry his heavy cautious steps. Occasionally this is not possible, and then there exists no god who can help him across. What then is it that brings philosophical thinking so quickly to its goal? Is it different from the thinking that calculates and measures only by the greater rapidity with which it transcends all space? No, its feet are propelled by an alien, illogical power – the power of creative imagination. Lifted by this power, philosophical thinking leaps from possibility to possibility, using each one as a temporary resting place. Occasionally it will grasp such a resting place even as it flies. Creative premonition will show it the place; imagination guesses from afar that here it will find a demonstrable resting place . . . Subsequent reflection comes with measuring devices and routinizing patterns and tries to replace analogy with equivalence and synchronicity with causality. But even if this should not work . . . [e]ven if all the footholds have crumbled by the time logic and empiric rigidity want to cross over . . . even after the total demolition of any scientific edifice, something remains. And in this remainder lies an impelling force which is the hope of future fruitfulness. (Nietzsche 1962[~1873]: 40–1)
According to this young, romantic Nietzsche, “the power of creative imagination” is the heart that drives the perennial philosophical endeavor, and its spirit remains capable of inspiring us even when we cannot convincingly reconstruct the arguments that led to an important conclusion.\textsuperscript{31} Nietzsche thus suggests that not everything important can be reconstructed in arguments, indeed that great philosophers’ creative intuitions will often outstrip the arguments we can offer to support, clarify, and develop them. That certainly seems true of the great philosophers, whose deepest views continue to both inspire and resist our efforts to capture them fully in some clear and unequivocal reformulation.\textsuperscript{32} If we combine Nietzsche’s insight with our earlier observation that the most abundant poetic and logical gifts tend to come in separate packages, then we can see why the Continental tradition has taken shape as a scholarly community’s hermeneutic elucidation and logical development of the great philosophers’ deep, creative, and inspiring (but not always clear, well-argued, or thoroughly developed) views. In fact, the same basic bifurcation of roles – a complicated division of philosophical labor between the creative path-breakers and the consolidating refiners and developers – deeply shapes the analytic tradition too, despite its more scientific self-image.

Nietzsche’s contrast between calculative and poetic thinking begins to anticipate Heidegger, yet neither philosopher sufficiently emphasized that – at least for those of us who are neither great poets nor mathematical logicians of the first rank – the two impulses often beat within a single heart, albeit with varying degrees of strength. Still, both thinkers did well to suggest that when these two forces occur in the right proportions – whether within the historical community or the individual – they generate the productive tension that continues to drive philosophy ever onward into the future.\textsuperscript{33} This potentially synergistic tension between depth and clarity, creativity and precision, clearly shapes both traditions and seems likely to come to matter even more in our shared future. For to be a philosopher in an age that aspires to democracy (something neither Nietzsche nor Heidegger wanted) increasingly requires that the guiding power of creative intuition find ways to answer the demand for logical clarification, for a democracy of public reasons rather than an aristocracy of private inspiration.

\textsuperscript{31} Nietzsche is discussing Thales; for the full context, see Thomson 2003.

\textsuperscript{32} Heidegger too celebrates this apparent inexhaustibility of the great philosophical teachings as the source of their enduring greatness, offering up a kind of thinker’s prayer: “May this and the other thinker’s teachings [Lehren] never lose what is venerable and mysterious educational [Belehrende], through which they surprise every new altercation that allows itself into their truth” (2010 [1944–45]: 41, translation modified).

\textsuperscript{33} On the relation between Nietzsche and Heidegger here, see Thomson 2011: chapters 1 and 3, esp. 77 note 16.
Whether or not the time of philosophical prophecy comes to an end, those who write like passive vehicles of divine providence will increasingly find themselves without a philosophical audience unless they can inspire those who prove capable of developing their insights critically, with clarity and care as well as creativity and commitment. At the same time, however, those professional philosophers whose writing is too neurotically cramped by the fear of error seem to find themselves writing for a vanishingly small camp. The future would thus seem to belong, in other words, to neither the traditional Continentals nor the analytics but, instead, to the synthetic philosophers, that is, those who strive to combine the virtues of both traditions in a multitude of ways, not only in terms of style but in terms of traditional concerns as well (a trend that can also be seen in the growing turn in the analytic mainstream toward areas long derided as mere “applied” philosophy).

This is fitting. “Philosophy,” let us recall, means “love of wisdom.” The “love” here is philia (not the erotic love of eros or the universal benevolence of agape); philia (as in filial piety, filiation) suggests the love we owe to those from whom we are descended, like our love for our parents, grandparents, and other teachers—a love that is often fraught and always marked by ambivalences. Why should our love of wisdom be ambivalent, pulling us in two directions? The word for wisdom here, sophia, goes back to sophos, sage. For Socrates, the philosophical virtue par excellence was sophrosyne, originally a deeply mysterious virtue (it forms the absent center of Plato’s Charmides) which, after Aristotle, we tend to translate as moderation, self-control, prudence, or even temperance. But sophrosyne is best heard as bespeaking the ancient wisdom of the middle way—the heroic path of the virtuous mean between vicious extremes (Scylla and Charybdis, cowardice and rashness, asceticism and hedonism, stinginess and profligacy, analytic and Continental, logic and poetry, Apollo and Dionysus, and so on).

We feel ambivalent about this path, I would suggest, precisely because philosophers are (like everyone else) constitutionally tempted to the extremes, where coherent answers are simpler and outspoken allies (smug in their one-sided righteousness) are more plentiful. The philosophical ideal of the well-balanced life of sagacity, central to the ancients (Eastern as well as Western), is thus needed once again to help guide philosophy into the future. For, contemporary Western culture is becoming ever more polarized into competing extremes, apparently dichotomous and irreconcilable positions. Instead of following suit, philosophers will need to find clear and creative ways to steer a balanced course between these dichotomized poles and the one-sided demagogues who defend them.

This is where synthetic philosophy can lead the way. For, I mean synthetic not in the sense of artificial but, rather, both in a sense that encourages the bold
combinatorial mélange of existing traditions, issues, and styles, and also in a neo-Hegelian sense of sublating dichotomous oppositions, appropriating the distinctive insights of the competing sides while eliminating their errors and exaggerations, and thereby creating new and more encompassing syntheses in which the old oppositions are transcended. The philosophical dichotomies already begging for such syntheses include not just the Continental/analytic divide (the transcendence of which I have been seeking to motivate here), but also such apparently irreconcilable oppositions as those between realism and idealism, absolutism and relativism, conservativism and liberalism, capitalism and communism, voluntarism and quietism, Nietzsche and Heidegger, individualism and communitarianism, theory and practice, East and West, nature and nurture, great thinkers and humble researchers, art and entertainment, elitism and egalitarianism, sudden revolution and progressive evolution, and so on (and on). In all such oppositions, adhering to one of the extreme positions facilitates the most dramatic rhetoric (at least until the adherent must retract or qualify their strongest claims), and adherents of such extreme positions face the simpler task of only having to defend their views from one side, as it were. In complex matters like those mentioned here, however, the truth is almost always to be found somewhere between the opposing extremes, rendering it unfit for the polemical purposes of demagogues on either side.

At the same time, however, philosophers of all kinds will need to practice a generous hermeneutic charity and so recognize that such polarized debates continue so righteously only because, beneath the noise and distortions, each side has some important insights which they are right not to relinquish. It is

34 To take just one example, Philip Pettit writes: “My preferred account of the relationship between belief and practice may be described as ‘ethnocentric’ [by which Pettit means that philosophy should acknowledge that it begins entangled in a web of practices it cannot simply throw off or transform by force of rational will] . . . Ironically, this understanding of the relationship has many affinities with the point of view maintained by Martin Heidegger in his allegedly existentialist work.” Why is this ironic? Not because embracing “ethnocentrism” (cf. Liakos and George, this volume, on Gadamer’s provocative embrace of “prejudice”) leads Pettit to worry about the political significance of his philosophical proximity to Heidegger (it doesn’t seem to) but, instead, because Pettit presumes that the core of “existentialism” is faith in the unlimited power of philosophy to transform self and world. But here the “metaphilosophical” question (if there is such a thing) remains: When discussing the future of philosophy, why reduce “existentialism” to an untenable caricature (of Sartre) and then maintain one’s opposition to it even while acknowledging one’s “ironic” affinities with its leading thinker (Heidegger)? (Heidegger rejected the “existentialist” label in his “Letter on Humanism” mainly because he didn’t want to belong to a club that would allow Sartre to write its charter, which Heidegger goes on to rewrite in his own image in the same essay: see Heidegger 1998 [1955].) In fact, Pettit and Heidegger agree that the philosophy of the future will need to embrace a middle ground between the extremes of quietistic resignation and “logocentric” fantasies of unlimited voluntaristic transformation (see Pettit 2004: 318–21, 320 note 22). I too agree, and would suggest that this is one of the many false dichotomies that the synthetic philosophy of the future will need to sublate and transcend.
precisely these insights that will need to be discerned, shorn of their ideological biases and one-sided distortions, and combined into new and broader syntheses, so that synthetic philosophy can help move us beyond that pathetic public spectacle of crowds of one-sided talking-heads, talking past one another. For this reason, I have tried to suggest that, although analytic philosophy has no monopoly on clarity, precision, and consequent depth – no more than Continental philosophy has cornered the market on historically discerning systematic interconnections or on interpretative risk-taking – these are all crucial philosophical virtues that need to be preserved and combined in creative new ways. The watchwords of the synthetic philosophy of the future might thus be creative precision, hermeneutic generosity, and passionate moderation. To find our way beyond the impasses of the present, then, let us thus practice the wisdom of the middle way, with which philosophy began.