Forthcoming in S. Rinofner-Kreidl & H. A. Wiltsche (eds.): *Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Methods and Perspectives. Proceedings of the 37th International Wittgenstein Symposium* (De Gruyter 2016). Please quote from published version.

Analytic and Continental philosophy: From duality through plurality to (some kind of) unity

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What should we make of the distinction between analytic and Continental philosophy? Although the latter term is a more recent invention, the alleged division has been around for a while. My aim in the following contribution is not to trace and review its historical origin, nor do I intend to examine to what extent debates and disputes between seminal figures like Frege and Husserl, Russell and Bergson or Carnap and Heidegger might have helped to shape and cement the division. My focus will be different and more direct. Is it at all an informative distinction? Does it label a real divide, a divide between what might have become two incommensurable conceptions of philosophy? That this is indeed a view held by some is easy to exemplify.

In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, Dummett refers to the divide which he argues had widened to a point where "[i]t's no use […] shouting across the gulf" since "it's as if we're working in different subjects" (Dummett 1996: 193). Now, Dummett regrets the divide and suggests a way of repairing it – primarily by going back to the beginning of the divergence in order to examine the partially overlapping projects of Frege and Husserl, including their shared rejection of psychologism. Others, however, have accepted the existence of the split, but have seen no particular reason to regret or amend it. According to R.M. Hare, for instance, German philosophers have created "monstrous philosophical edifices" and produced 'verbiage' disguised as "serious metaphysical inquiry", and he contrasts the virtues of British philosophy, namely "clarity, relevance and brevity", with the "ambiguities and evasions and rhetoric" that are the "mark of a philosopher who has not learnt his craft" (Hare 1960). Jack Smart is even more condemning and declares that "I have moments of despair about philosophy when I think of how so much phenomenological and existential philosophy seems such sheer bosh that I cannot even begin to read it" (Smart 1975: 61). For a quite recent statement of the same sentiment, consider Quinton's entry on Continental philosophy in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Quinton opines that there is "no perceptible convergence between the two philosophical worlds" since all varieties of Continental philosophy "rely on dramatic, even melodramatic, utterance rather than sustained rational argument". And, as he then concludes, for analytic philosophers, it can at most be "the object of occasional startled observation, like that of a nasty motor accident viewed from a passing car" (2005: 172)

Such dismissive and ridiculing remarks are, however, by no means exclusive to analytic philosophers. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno remarked that without dialectics arguments deteriorate into

a mere technique that "is now spreading academically in the so-called 'analytical philosophy,' which robots can learn and copy" (2004: 30) and, in a newspaper article from 2013, Zabala & Davis have concluded that

> Analytic philosophy is passé because its method is too conservative to transgress the presuppositions on which it is based. This is not only why analytic philosophy is 'anal' (in the Freudian anal-retentive sense), but its conservative nature binds it to a method that has already died (Zabala & Davis 2013).

More examples could be found, but enough has been said to show that many do indeed believe in the existence of a divide, perhaps even an unbridgeable one, between analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy. But what then does the difference amount to? Over the years, a variety of proposals have been made. The most immediate suggestion might be to look for a difference in focus. Analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy differ in virtue of the themes and topics they work on. The moment one sits down to actually list which topics are unique to each of the traditions, it becomes evident, however, that such a listing is doomed from the start. As Overgaard et al aptly put it:

> Hardly any feature held to be characteristic of one of the two camps is universally shared by all who belong to the camp in question. And most features…*are* shared by philosophers from the other side of the divide (Overgaard et al 2013: 113).

But perhaps we are looking in the wrong direction. Perhaps the relevant difference is not one of topic, but rather one related to method. But, again, a moment's reflection will show that this proposal is equally problematic. Philosophers usually considered to belong to the Continental camp do not use one specific method (what should unite phenomenologists, critical theorists and poststructuralists?), and most contemporary analytic philosophers are methodological pluralists. They are no longer committed to the 'linguistic turn' and would hardly accept the suggestion that a "primary method of philosophy is the examination of the uses of words in order to disentangle conceptual confusions" (Hacker 2007: 133).

What else might the difference consist in? As Bernard Williams once remarked, analytical philosophy doesn't have a distinctive subject matter, but is rather characterized by a certain style (2006: viii). Again, it is unclear what exactly this difference should amount to. Is the idea that philosophers belonging to the Continental camp write like novelists, whereas analytic philosophers seek to emulate the style of scientific papers? Or is the idea that the writing of analytic philosophers is distinguished by its clarity, whereas that of Continental philosophers is distinguished by its obscurity? In his book, *What is analytic philosophy?*, Glock considers and exemplifies the style of various analytic philosophers and eventually concludes: "the speech of many contemporary analytic philosophers is as plain as a baroque church and as clear as mud" (Glock 2008: 171). A closer look at the actual writings of many of the leading figures will quickly show that there is no easily determinable stylistic commonality. It is quite unclear what should unite the writing style of Apel, Adorno, Cassirer, Husserl and Derrida. Do Nagel

and Peacocke, Dennett and McDowell, Wittgenstein and Searle or Cavell and Tye really write in the same style? The answer is obviously no.

Are there other promising proposals regarding the alleged difference? Let me just mention one more, which, although inane, certainly has an elegant simplicity: the difference between analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy is a difference in quality. As Leiter puts it,

> It is fair to say that what gets called 'analytic' philosophy is the philosophical movement most continuous with the 'grand' tradition in philosophy, the tradition of Aristotle and Descartes and Hume and Kant. Only analytic philosophers aspire to the level of argumentative sophistication and philosophical depth that marks the great philosophers (Leiter 2011).

As was quite clear from the quote by Smart given above, the intensity of such ridicule is often correlated with a lack of familiarity with the target of criticism. Perhaps a more well-informed conclusion to draw is that there really isn't any philosophical difference to speak of – although nobody would deny the sociological and institutional persistence of the divide. As Putnam writes, "why can we not just be philosophers without an adjective?" (Putnam 1997: 203). This is a sympathetic response, but one, I think, that is not only misguided, but also potentially harmful. Our philosophical approach is not ahistorical, but is shaped and formed by the tradition(s) of which we are part and, as critical thinkers, we ought to remain aware of where we come from and of how that background and framework influence the questions we engage with and the conceptual options we consider. Simply thinking of ourselves as philosophers is not going to help us remain mindful of these facts.

Let me get down to my own core proposal. As I see it, the right way to question the divide between analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy is not by denying the difference, but by multiplying it. The main reason we ought to reject any talk of a divide between analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy is that such a division is far too coarse-grained and commits the mistake of regarding both (sets of) traditions as reified monolithic entities. Consider for a moment the following list, which certainly isn't exhaustive: Philosophy of life, Neo-Kantianism, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Existential philosophy, Critical theory, Structuralism, Psychoanalytic theory, Post-structuralism, Deconstruction, Speculative realism. What is the commonality here? (Were one to claim that genealogy – rather than substantial agreement – is enough to constitute the unity of a tradition, we would all be Platonists). Perhaps it could be retorted that, whereas Continental philosophy is indeed a mixed bag of assorted theory formations with no clear unity, matters are different when it comes to analytic philosophy. Consider, for instance, Dummett who first describes Frege as "the fountain-head of analytical philosophy" (1978: 440), and who then continues:

> Only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established: namely, first, that the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of *thought*; secondly, that the study of *thought* is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of *thinking*; and, finally,

> that the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of *language*. …The acceptance of these three tenets is common to the entire analytical school (Dummett 1978: 458).

More recently, Hacker has taken issue with Dummett's characterization of Frege's contribution to the linguistic turn – which he insists is radically mistaken (Hacker 2007: 134) – and has argued that we ought to reserve the term 'analytic philosophy' as a label for a quite specific period in the history of philosophy (centered around the cities of Cambridge, Vienna and Oxford). On Hacker's construal, the most influential version of analytic philosophy is found in the work of Oxford philosophers such as Ryle, Austin, and Strawson, who broadly agreed on three issues (Hacker 2007: 126-127):

- Philosophical understanding must proceed through an investigation of the use of words;
- Metaphysics understood as a philosophical investigation into the objective, language-independent nature of the world is an illusion;
- Philosophy is not continuous with but altogether distinct from science.

Hacker's definition of analytic philosophy is fairly precise, but it is also a much more narrow and circumscribed use of the term, and it certainly doesn't capture the way the term is used when referring to the current divide between analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy. To put it differently, quite a number of contemporary philosophers who call themselves analytic philosophers would reject the linguistic turn, happily engage in metaphysics, and even argue that philosophy is continuous with science and ought to be thoroughly naturalized.

There is, in short, plenty of diversity. Recognizing this diversity, recognizing that, just as Althusser, Scheler and Deleuze differ, so do Austin, Korsgaard and Churchland, should not only caution us against postulating a unity where there isn't any, but might also and more importantly allow us to discover unity where we didn't expect it. We should search for overlaps that are not merely within, but also between the traditions. Depending on the kind of philosophical work one is engaged in, one might turn out to have more in common with people working in 'the' other (set of) tradition(s) than with people working in one's own.

The moment we abandon the attempt to adopt a bird's eye perspective from which we can compare and contrast analytic and Continental philosophy as a whole and instead start to engage with the actual discussions themselves, interesting and unexpected convergences will be revealed. Compare for example Husserl's early work on intentionality with more recent contributions by Searle, Strawson, Kriegel and Crane. Take Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's exploration of our being-in-the-world and compare that to the recent debate on 4E cognition found in the work of Clark, Noë, Rowlands, Menary and Hutto. Or consider the analyses of shared affects and we-intentionality found in Scheler, Walther, Stein and Schutz and compare that to contributions to philosophy of action and collective intentionality made by authors such as Bratman, Gilbert and Tuomela. Sure, there are important differences, but to claim that any attempt at dialogue is doomed from the start since people will necessarily be talking at

cross purposes due to the endorsement of too divergent methodological and metaphysical commitments is surely mistaken.

Let me in the following discuss two concrete examples in somewhat more detail. I will first consider the relation between transcendental phenomenology and classical philosophy of language, and then compare ideas found in more recent philosophy of mind with certain themes found in phenomenology.

Phenomenology and philosophy of language

At first sight, the difference between phenomenology and analytic philosophy of language seems obvious. Whereas the latter is precisely concerned with language, the former is typically taken to investigate structures of experience. Supposedly, this difference was also highlighted at one of the rare meetings where proponents of both traditions met.

At the famous 1958 Royaumont meeting, Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin, W.V.O Quine, Bernard Williams and Peter Strawson met with phenomenological notabilities such as Jean Wahl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and H.L. van Breda.[1] The meeting was no success. As Charles Taylor, who was also in attendance, subsequently reported, it was "a dialogue that didn't come off…[F]ew left it much wiser than they came – at least as far as the subject of the conference was concerned" (Taylor 1964: 132-132). At one point during the meeting, P.F. Strawson expounded on his own view of what the principal task of philosophy is, and insisted that language use is the only experimental datum philosophers possess if they want to inquire into the way in which our thoughts and concepts work (Strawson 1992: 324). This proposal was resisted by Van Breda who interrupted Strawson with the outburst "But you have to distinguish what you are doing from what the philologist does!" (quoted in Strawson 1992: 327). Van Breda's criticism was certainly based on a misunderstanding. Strawson's philosophy is neither to be conflated with philology nor sociolinguistics. But it is a revealing misinterpretation, especially since it mirrors an often-repeated criticism of phenomenology, according to which phenomenological investigations of experience employ introspection and suffer from the same kind of fatal weakness as introspectionism. Why are both criticisms mistaken? Because they both overlook the transcendental agenda of the targeted positions.

As Merleau-Ponty points out in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, phenomenology is distinguished in each of its characteristics from introspective psychology, and this is because they differ in principle. Whereas the introspective psychologist considers consciousness one sector of being, and tries to investigate this sector in the same way the physicist tries to investigate his, the phenomenologist realizes that an investigation of consciousness cannot take place as long as the absolute existence of the world is left unquestioned. Consciousness cannot be analyzed properly without leading us beyond common-sense assumptions and towards a transcendental clarification of the constitution of the world (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 60-61). One way to understand Merleau-Ponty's point is to see him insisting that the critical stance proper to philosophy necessitates a move away from a straightforward metaphysical

[1] I am here drawing on an excellent contribution by Overgaard (2010).

or empirical investigation of objects to an investigation of the very framework of meaning and intelligibility that makes any such straightforward investigation possible in the first place. Rather than departing from the objective world as a given, phenomenology asks how something like objectivity is possible. How is objectivity constituted? How is it that the world can be manifested or revealed to us in the first place? This was also a question of central concern to Husserl, whose claim was that, if we really want to understand meaning, knowledge, truth and objectivity, we have to investigate the intentional structures of the cognizing and acting subjects. As he declared in *Krisis*, thereby summarizing his lifelong endeavor:

> The first breakthrough of this universal a priori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness (which occurred during work on my *Logical Investigations* around 1898) affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this a priori of correlation (Husserl 1970: 166).

It is not difficult to see some affinities between such a view and one that argues that philosophy offers a kind of understanding that is distinctively different from the one offered by the sciences. Philosophical questions are second-order questions, reflective questions about the concepts used in, for example, scientific fields; they are not first-order questions within a particular scientific field. Philosophy is not concerned with matters of fact, but with matters of meaning. It is concerned with logical possibilities rather than with empirical actualities. Its province is not the domain of empirical truth or falsehood, but the domain of sense and nonsense. To put it differently, philosophy clarifies what does and does not make sense. It investigates and describes the bounds of sense: that is, the limits of what can coherently be thought and said. Conceptual questions antecede matters of truth and falsehood. They are presupposed by any scientific investigation, and any lack of clarity regarding the relevant concepts will be reflected in a corresponding lack of clarity in the questions posed, and hence in the design of the experiments intended to answer them (Bennett & Hacker 2003: 2, 399, 402). As Hacker writes:

> Philosophy is not an extension of science. It is not a kind of conceptual scullery maid for the sciences, as Locke supposed. Nor is it superior to the sciences – a super-science of all possible worlds, to be investigated by means of 'thought-experiments' from the comfort of the armchair, as contemporary revisionists suppose. (Thought-experiments are no more experiments than monopoly-money is money.) It is, as Kant intimated, the *Tribunal of Sense*. So: back to the linguistic turn (Hacker 2007: 139).

Perhaps some would at this stage object that the focus on language surely points to one significant difference between phenomenology and analytic philosophy. That is indeed an important difference, but, then again, we shouldn't be so naïve as to think that phenomenology has nothing to say about language. That Heidegger (and Gadamer) is concerned with language is after all common knowledge, but so was Husserl, as the following quote shows:

> A communal life of humans becomes possible as life of a linguistic community, which is of a completely different kind than the communal life of animals. *The homeworld of humans*, which is the fundamental element for the structure of the objective world for <them> (. . .) *is essentially determined by language* (Husserl 1973: 224-5).

I am far from suggesting that there is no significant difference between the respective approaches. My point is rather that the moment we leave the simplistic caricatures behind, and start to engage with the actual writings and sayings of the protagonists, we will start to discover unforeseen similarities as well as unexpected differences. Consider, for instance, Hacker's view on the relationship between conceptual and empirical issues. For him, philosophy is of much greater importance to science than vice versa. While philosophers can clarify the concepts used in science, and thereby offer an immense service to science, it is a mistake to think that science could have much of an impact on philosophy. In fact, Hacker even considers the supposition that scientific evidence may contravene a philosophical analysis ridiculous (Bennett & Hacker 2003: 404). In his view, we should not commit the mistake of confusing metaphysical or epistemological theories with empirical claims which can be corroborated by some *experimentum crucis*. Thus, the relation between philosophy and empirical science is a one-way enterprise. It is an application of ready-made concepts. There is no reciprocity, and there is no feedback. The application does not lead to a modification of the original analysis.

This is certainly one type of response to the challenge posed to philosophy by naturalism. It is perhaps not entirely without reason that the style of analytical philosophy defended by Hacker has occasionally been accused of promoting a kind of semantic inertia and conceptual conservatism. It is not obvious, however, that phenomenology would respond in the same way as Hacker. To let an examination of ordinary language-use be our primary, if not exclusive, guide to a philosophical investigation is quite restrictive and seems to underestimate the extent to which ordinary language might simply reflect common-sense metaphysics. It impedes concrete phenomenological analyses that might reveal features, aspects and dimensions that are not simply available to any reflection on common sense (consider for instance Husserl's investigations of the structures of time-consciousness or pictorial consciousness).

I have elsewhere discussed various proposals regarding a naturalisation of phenomenology and also highlighted the extent to which transcendental phenomenology differs from Kantian transcendental philosophy (Zahavi 2010, 2013, 2015). So let me not repeat myself *in extenso* here, but instead simply make a brief reference to Merleau-Ponty, which can highlight one significant difference between his conception of philosophy and Hacker's. In his first major work, *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty engages with such diverse authors as Pavlov, Freud, Koffka, Piaget, Watson, and Wallon. The last sub-chapter of the book carries the heading "Is There Not a Truth in Naturalism?" It includes a criticism of Kantian transcendental philosophy and, on the very final page of the book, Merleau-Ponty calls for a redefinition of transcendental philosophy that pays heed to the real world (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 224). Thus, rather than making us choose between either an external scientific explanation or an internal phenomenological reflection, a choice which would rip asunder the living relation between consciousness

and nature, Merleau-Ponty asks us to reconsider the very opposition, and to search for a dimension that is beyond both objectivism and subjectivism.

What is interesting and important is that Merleau-Ponty didn't conceive of the relation between transcendental phenomenology and empirical science as a question of how to apply already established phenomenological insights to empirical issues. It wasn't merely a question of how phenomenology might constrain positive science. On the contrary, Merleau-Ponty's idea was that phenomenology itself can be changed and modified through its dialogue with the empirical disciplines. In fact, it needs this confrontation if it is to develop in the right way. And Merleau-Ponty held on to this view without thereby reducing phenomenology to merely yet another empirical science, without thereby dismissing its transcendental philosophical character.

Phenomenology and philosophy of mind

An increasing number of analytic philosophers of mind now hold the view that a careful study of the first-person perspective is indispensable for a philosophical investigation of consciousness. More specifically, a number of authors have made significant strides on the relation between phenomenal consciousness, self-experience, and selfhood. That such a development offers new possibilities for dialogue should be evident. Let me briefly present a few ideas found in the work of Galen Strawson and Uriah Kriegel.

Over the years, Strawson has argued that, if we wish to answer the metaphysical question concerning whether or not the self is real, we will first need to know what a self is supposed to be. In order to establish that, our best chance is to look at self-experience, since self-experience is what gives rise to the question in the first place by giving us a vivid sense that there is something like a self. Thus, as Strawson readily concedes, the metaphysical investigation of the self is subordinate to the phenomenological one. The latter places constraints on the former: nothing can count as a self unless it possesses those properties attributed to the self by some genuine form of self-experience (Strawson 2000: 40). In a subsequent move, Strawson has argued that a phenomenological investigation can proceed in several ways. One possibility is to investigate what ordinary human self-experience involves; another is to investigate the minimal form of self-experience. What is the least you can make do with to still call something a(n experience of) self? Strawson is primarily interested in the latter task, and he defends the view that any experience involves an experiencer, i.e., a subject of experience. Experience necessarily involves what-it-is-likeness, and experiential what-it-is-likeness is necessarily what-it-is-likeness for someone (Strawson 2009: 271). In short, experience is experiencing, and experiencing involves a subject, just as a branch-bending involves a branch (Strawson 2011: 260). Importantly, Strawson doesn't simply take this to be a conceptual and metaphysical claim. It is also an experiential or phenomenological claim: the subject of experience is something that is essentially present and alive in conscious experience (Strawson 2009: 362). Moreover, we are dealing with a quite minimal notion. A subject of experience isn't something grand. It is minimal in the sense that it is what is left when everything else except the being of experience is stripped away (Strawson 2011: 254). In fact, it is something of such a kind that it is true to say that there must be a subject of experience wherever there is experience, even in the case of mice

or spiders, or sea snails—simply because selves are just subjects of experience and experience is essentially experience-for (Strawson 2009: 276, 401).

Along somewhat related lines, Kriegel has argued that phenomenal character involves both qualitative character, e.g., the bluish component of 'x', and subjective character, i.e., its for-me component (Kriegel 2009: 8). Kriegel further describes the subjective character as that which remains invariant across all phenomenal characters, and argues that, while a phenomenally conscious state's qualitative character is what makes it the phenomenally conscious state it is, its subjective character is what makes it a phenomenally conscious state at all (Kriegel 2009: 2, 58). More specifically, Kriegel has argued that the subjective character (and experiential for-me-ness) amounts to a special kind of self-consciousness. On his account, we need to distinguish two types of self-consciousness, *transitive* and *intransitive* self-consciousness. Whereas transitive self-consciousness designates the case where a subject is self-conscious of her thought that p (or of her perception of x), intransitive self-consciousness can be captured by saying that the subject is self-consciously thinking that p (or perceiving x). What is the difference between these two types of self-consciousness? Kriegel initially lists four differences, and claims that, whereas the first type is introspective, rare, voluntary, and effortful, the second is none of these. However, he then also points to another crucial difference: whereas transitive self-consciousness is a second-order state that is numerically distinct from its object, namely the respective first-order state, intransitive self-consciousness is a property of the first-order state itself (Kriegel 2003: 104-105). Moreover, insofar as there would not be anything it is like for a subject to be in a mental state she is unaware of being in, intransitive self-consciousness must be considered a necessary condition for phenomenal consciousness (Kriegel 2003: 106).

Kriegel's proposal bears an obvious similarity to the phenomenological distinction between and discussion of pre-reflective and reflective self-consciousness, just as Strawson's reference to a minimal self resonates well with ideas found in phenomenology. Consider for example the following quote from Sartre: "pre-reflective consciousness is self-consciousness. It is this same notion of *self* which must be studied, for it defines the very being of consciousness" (Sartre 2003: 100). The basic idea defended by several phenomenologists is that consciousness is characterized by a basic dimension of selfhood precisely because of its ubiquitous self-consciousness (cf. Zahavi 1999, 2005, 2014). To phrase it in more contemporary terms, it has been proposed that phenomenally conscious episodes, episodes characterized by a subjective what-it-is-likeness, are not merely episodes that happen to take place *in a subject*, regardless of whether or not the subject is aware of it. Rather, such episodes are necessarily pre-reflectively self-conscious in the weak sense that they are like something *for the subject*. Indeed, for every possible experience we might have, each of us can say that, regardless of whatever it is precisely like for me to have this experience, it is *for me* that it is like that to have the experience. To that extent, what-it-is-like-ness is properly speaking what-it-is-like-*for-me*-ness. This for-me-ness does not denote a specific experiential content; rather, it refers to the first-personal presence of experience. It refers to the fact that the experiences I am living through present themselves differently to me than to anybody else. When I have experiences, I have them minely, so to speak. The claim is that this first-personal presence, this for-me-ness, amounts to a primitive and minimal form of selfhood. As Henry formulates it, the most

basic form of selfhood is the one constituted by the very self-manifestation of experience (Henry 1963: 581; 1965: 53).

Given this manifest overlap in terms of topics and arguments, it is increasingly hard to take the verdict seriously that analytic philosophy and phenomenology constitute two distinct and incommensurable conceptions of philosophy.[2] All of this is not to deny that one cannot also find significant and interesting differences. Kriegel has, for instance, insisted that intransient self-consciousness is a form of object-consciousness, whereas Strawson has defended the claim that the self is not only an object, but a thing as physical as a cow (Strawson 1997: 425). Both claims are in conflict with views espoused by phenomenologists, who would typically insist that the self is first and foremost a subject, rather than an object, of experience, and that object-consciousness is singularly unsuited as a model for self-consciousness proper, since it necessarily entails a distinction between that which appears and that to whom it appears, between the object and the subject of experience. Sometimes disagreements are more terminological than substantial, however. This might, at least partially, be the case here. Strawson has, for instance, argued that for something to be an object simply means that it is a strong unity (Strawson 2009: 298), whereas Kriegel has admitted that the relationship between inner awareness and what it is aware of is far more intimate than the standard relationship between a representation and what it represents (Kriegel 2009: 107–8), and that it therefore amounts to a very unusual form of object-consciousness. The question is obviously whether the difference between a highly unusual form of object-consciousness and a non-objectifying form of self-consciousness is all that substantial.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show in the preceding, it is possible to locate some significant and fertile overlaps between phenomenology and various (rather different) trends in analytic philosophy. One interesting, and perhaps slightly surprising, outcome of this comparison is that phenomenologists might have slightly mixed feelings about the recent turn in analytic philosophy away from philosophy of language and towards philosophy of mind. With few exceptions, the recent analytic interest in the study of consciousness has gone hand in hand with a strong commitment to naturalism. Whereas classical analytical philosophy of language might have been less interested in consciousness, its basic conception of language as a framework of intelligibility could easily be given a transcendental philosophical twist. Rather than engaging in first-order claims about the nature of things (which it left to various scientific disciplines), it concerned itself with the conceptual preconditions for any such empirical inquiries. The situation is now more or less reversed by those philosophers of mind who consider their own work to be more or less continuous with the natural sciences. For phenomenology, however, it is important to retain both aspects: a concern with subjectivity and experience as well as the transcendental perspective.

[2] Such a verdict is also countered by the existence of co-authored publications (cf. Zahavi & Kriegel 2015).

Let me sum up: it is a mistake to carve up the philosophical landscape into two distinct (and incommensurable) traditions. The mistake is both one of oversimplification and reification. There are far more than two traditions (let us not forget the existence of Asian philosophical traditions) and, when it comes to analytical philosophy and Continental philosophy neither (set of) tradition(s) is monolithic. Acknowledging the diversity allows us to recognize the presence of unexpected similarities as well as fruitful and productive differences. Despite the undeniable sociological and institutional reality of the divide, however, the future looks more promising. An increasing number of philosophers are now active bridge-builders. They work in and with different traditions and are actively pursuing philosophical insights wherever they are to be found.

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