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The Role of Methodology as a Key Component of Modern Analytic Philosophy

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Abstract

The article views methodology as a key component in the development of analytic philosophy, as well as a primary criterion for identifying analytic philosophy in its modern state. It deals with the analysis of language, geographical, thematic, and methodological components of analytic philosophy as a way of identifying its origins and distinguishing it from continental philosophy. It discovers that while language, geographical, and thematic criteria do not provide a coherent picture of the development of analytic philosophy, especially in its current state, methodological criterion reveals a certain consistency and heredity among different branches of analytic philosophy. In the modern context, when analytic philosophy has spread worldwide, is practiced in many languages, and often shares its themes with those traditionally perceived as continental, it is important to focus on the aspect of methodology as a defining criterion.

Keywords: analytic philosophy, methodology, Frege, Vienna Circle, Russell, Moore.

1. Introduction

The understanding of the phenomenon of analytic philosophy is deeply rooted in its discrimination from other paradigms of philosophical thinking. In particular, one of the established perceptions is that of a topological difference between analytic and continental philosophy, i.e. the assumption that analytic philosophy is generally something that Anglo-American philosophers are more prone to, whereas continental philosophy is an embedded element of European culture. However, with the growth of interest towards analytic philosophy worldwide, as well as some more global involvement of scientific communities of various countries into various fields of philosophy, this view has received some criticism.

Another way of distinguishing the peculiarities of analytic philosophy presupposes that there should be a division of themes and topics for analytic and continental philosophy. While such classification relies upon the fact that early supporters of analytic philosophy did tend to develop their interest in it through the philosophy of mathematics and logic, contemporary vectors of philosophical research are often intersecting within the established categories of analytic and continental philosophy. Therefore, the objective of this article is to investigate the ways in which methodological component of analytic philosophy influenced its evolution to the point where it is today.

2. Literature review

One of the paramount criteria that majorly influenced the perception of analytic philosophy as a predominantly Anglo-American one, is the question of its origins. Although during a significant part of the twentieth century, it was a commonly acknowledged belief that British philosophers Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore were the first followers of the new paradigm in philosophy, today such view is widely challenged.

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Michael Dummett in his work *The Origins of Analytic Philosophy* addresses the issue of 'continental' background of analytic philosophy. However, it is important to understand what particularly Dummett refers to. Not only he leaves alone Russell and Moore who are perceived as the most influential figures of early analytic philosophy, he also does not go deep into discussing the Vienna Circle as one of its sources (Dummett, 2014: 14). On the other hand, the influence of Frege, who does not represent Anglo-American philosophy, but is deeply connected to analytic philosophy both in themes that he explored and in methodology, is well recognized.

David Bell also draws on to emphasize that analytic philosophy did not emerge as such in Cambridge with the works of Russell and Moore (Bell, 1999: 193). In such a way, despite the fact that Russell and Moore used their doctrines to 'revolt' against British Idealism, the sources of those doctrines can be found in again – Frege's works on the philosophy of logic, as well as Bernard Bolzano's philosophy of mathematics, and even certain thematic correlation with phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (Bell, 1999, *ibid*). However, it would not be amiss to see particular patterns, in which Moore and Russell rejected the doctrine of neo-Hegelian idealism.

Bertrand Russell's idealistic period is signified by his belief in 'constructing a complete dialectic of the sciences' (Hylton, 2004: 57). In many ways, such strongly Hegelian approach had to do with the methodological apparatus he was told at Cambridge. However, it would not be honestly to deny the clarity provided by idealistic monism when applied to geometry – the subject that was the center of interest in Russell's early philosophy. Moreover, at the time, Russell was interested in relations between formal and transcendental logic, and eventually, he deemed Kant's philosophy 'psychologistic' (Hylton, 2004, *ibid*).

One can also attribute the spread of analytic philosophy across the Atlantic to the German-speaking philosophers, representatives and supporters of the Vienna Circle who fled Europe because of the political situation. Also, although, in many ways, it contributed to the spread of analytic philosophy in the USA, the 'invention' of analytic philosophy can hardly be attributed to German speakers as well. Moreover, it is paramount to note that historic events, including World War I lead "to the decline of German as an academic language" (Glock, 2008: 67). Rorty also pointed out that the division of philosophy into analytic and continental tradition may be 'due to the fact historicism and antirepresentationalism are much more common among non-anglophone philosophers' (Rorty, 2002: 40). One of the outcomes of such decline was that for a while works of Frege, Schlick, Carnap, and others did not receive enough credit with analytic philosophy being perceived as an element of the British and American field of scientific interest.

In such a way, in terms of language and geography affecting the development of analytic philosophy, it is hardly possible to see the beginning of analytic philosophy as a coherent event. Meanwhile, another possible criterion for defining analytic philosophy is themes and topical affiliations, i.e. the assumption that analytic philosophy develops around logic, therefore, should stay clear of any sort of metaphysics.

This assumption stands majorly out of the Vienna Circle's reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Rorty, 1992: 37). On the other hand, this line of thought would also presuppose that any kind of philosophical investigation evolving around the analysis of correlation between thought and language should be deemed a part of analytical philosophy, which would lead to finding its sources in works of Locke, Aristotle, and Plato, making the origins of analytic philosophy basically untraceable.

3. Research results

Thematic parameters of analytic philosophy fail to be the main criterion of its discrimination for one more reason. Since empiricism, analytic philosophy has evolved rather drastically and it did not hold on to the dogmatic circle of scientific interest that would prevent it from investigating such areas as metaphysics, theology, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of law, etc. Moreover, "many naturalizing philosophers who regard themselves as analytic discuss the issues of substance and apparent philosophical relevance without making much use of semantic ascent and without tackling the problem of meaning" (Chase, Reynolds, 2014: 48). On one hand, such approach dissolves some boundaries between analytic and continental philosophy. However, on the other hand, it allows bringing methods of one into the field of study of the other. Hence, in such a way, the last of the distinguished criteria of analytic philosophy is its methodology.

Michael Beaney recognizes Frege's Begriffshrift as a formal starting point of quantificational logic (Beaney, 2005: 15). In many ways, such new interpretation of refers to new ways of exploring the relation between reality and thought expressed in a form of a logical proposition and, therefore, existing in the linguistic realm. Different philosophers take on different turns even within early analytic philosophy. While Russell follows in the root proposed by Frege and both critiques his conception and incorporates it in his own philosophy, from the notion of object-language to his inquiries into the epistemological meaning of the notions of truth and falsehood, Moore takes a path of conceptual analysis (Russell, 2013: 63).

Both of those conceptions inspire other philosophers respectively. Bertrand Russell was one of the main influences on Wittgenstein, especially in his early period, and alongside Frege is the only other philosopher mentioned in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Again, there are alternatives to conceptual analysis as early as those in the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap (Justus, 2012: 162). In a similar manner, while *Tractatus* inspired Schlick and other representatives of Vienna Circle, who, in their turn, influenced the post-positivism, the later Wittgenstein's philosophy boosted the linguistic turn and substantially affected the the opment of philosophy of language. Sandbothe (2004) points out that the changes in analytic philosophy can be observed through the changes in the status of the linguistic method (Sandbothe, 2004: 68). In other words, for Russell and other logical empiricists, syntax was a means to construct a perfect language, whereas, among the representatives of the school of ordinary language, linguistic method focused on language in its ordinary use. The methodology of those two (and many other) offshoots of philosophy differ, there is a degree of heredity among them.

The linguistic, geographical, and thematic criteria for discriminating analytic philosophy into a separate category can be challenged on many levels. Although it would not be entirely correct to say that analytic philosophy preserved the purity of its methodological approaches since Frege, Russell, or Moore, the methodological criterion appears to be the most consistent.

4. Conclusion

Analytic philosophy evolved in terms of themes it explores, which is why it would be hard to hold on to, for example, dogmas of logical positivism in newer branches of analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some philosophers regarding themselves as analytic do not necessarily refer to the quantificational logic or conceptual analysis as it was perceived by Moore, the basic principle of meticulously analyzing smaller themes rather than tackling ultimate universal patterns.

Moreover, another important aspect is that unlike thematic or linguistic criterion, there is a consistent correlation in the ways methodological apparatuses of different branches of analytic philosophy developed. In conclusion, in the context of a modern state of philosophy, where analytic philosophy has spread worldwide, is practiced in many languages, and often shares its themes with those traditionally perceived as continental, it is important to focus on the aspect of methodology as a defining criterion. The various offshoots of analytic tradition do not retain to a particular dogmatic set of methodological approaches, but the heredity of methods can be easily traced and it unifies philosophers who are considered analytic, where other criteria cannot.

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