

The Fate of Analysis

*ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY FROM FREGE TO THE
ASH-HEAP OF HISTORY, AND TOWARD A RADICAL
KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF THE FUTURE*

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Preface & Acknowledgments

This book completes the long arc of a single twenty-year philosophical project, started in 2001 and completed in 2021, including revised versions of materials written at various times during those two decades. As the project evolved into its final form, I decided to combine (i) “quieter-voiced” critical-&-expository material in chapters II to XVI, with (ii) “louder-voiced” critical-&-expository as well as constructive-&-positive material in chapters XVII and XVIII. So, I’ll begin with a *caveat lector*: the transition in style and tone between the quieter-voiced material and the louder-voiced material is intended by me to fuse together, and also segue between (i) a comprehensive and critical revisionist study of the history of Analytic philosophy, that’s accessible to any philosophically-minded person and can be used in a high-level introductory way by them, (ii) a provocative critique of recent and contemporary post-classical Analytic philosophy and a passionately-felt description of a radical Kantian philosophy of the future.

Because this book has been twenty years in the making, it’s humanly impossible to acknowledge everyone who substantially contributed to it and every social institution that significantly supported it. Collectively then, I thank you all most warmly! But in retrospect, a few people and institutions do stand out as special targets of my gratitude: Otto Paans, for his creative assistance with the cover design, several diagrams in the main text, and parts of chapter XVII; Michael Potter; Alex Oliver; Clare Hall Cambridge, for a visiting fellowship in 1998; Fitzwilliam College Cambridge (flanked on one side by the house where Wittgenstein died, and just down the road on the other side from the cemetery where Wittgenstein, Moore, Ramsey, and Anscombe are all buried), for visiting fellowships in 2000, 2001, 2003-2004, and 2006, and a Bye Fellowship in 2008-2009; and the Cambridge Faculty of Philosophy, for invitations to present talks to the Moral Sciences Club in 1994, 2003, and 2008, for the opportunity to supervise and/or lecture part-time in the Faculty during my visiting fellowships, and for a full-time Temporary Lectureship in 2008-2009. Of course, none of those are in any way responsible for the way the project turned out: indeed, in the particular cases of Michael and Alex, they’re probably gobsmacked. Nevertheless, in any case, I’m *very* grateful to them both for helping to arrange my visits to Cambridge, and also for their philosophical conversation and friendship when I was living there.

Otherwise, I must also much-more-than-merely-very-gratefully acknowledge the life-companionship, love, and endless patience of my wife, Martha Hanna, our daughter Elizabeth, my parents Alan and Dianne Hanna, and my brothers Douglas and Donald: I love you all too, with all my heart.

A Note on References to Kant's and Wittgenstein's Works

(1) *Kant*: For convenience, I cite Kant's works infra-textually in parentheses. The citations include both an abbreviation of the English title and also the corresponding volume and page numbers in the standard "Akademie" edition of Kant's works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer [now de Gruyter], 1902). For references to the first *Critique*, I follow the common practice of giving page numbers from the A (1781) and B (1787) German editions only. And I occasionally modify the English translations slightly, whenever it seems appropriate to the point I'm making. Here are the relevant abbreviations and English translations:

C: *Immanuel Kant: Correspondence, 1759-99*. Trans. A. Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999.

CF: *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Trans. M. Gregor. Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1979.

CPJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.

CPR: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997.

CPrR: *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. M. Gregor. In I. Kant, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 139-271.

MFNS: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. Trans. M. Friedman. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004.

ProI: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Trans. G. Hatfield. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004.

Rel: *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Trans. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni. In I. Kant, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 57-215.

WiE: "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" Trans. M. Gregor. In Kant, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Pp. 17-22.

(2) **Wittgenstein:** Again for convenience, I cite Wittgenstein's two major works, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, infratextually in parentheses. I cite the *Tractatus* by its abbreviated title (*TLP*) and proposition numbers, and the *Investigations* by its abbreviated title (*PI*) and paragraph numbers or English page numbers. Here are the English translations I've used, both of which usefully display the German and English texts in parallel on facing pages:

TLP: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. C.K. Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

PI: *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

I. Introduction

The truly apocalyptic view of the world is that things do not repeat themselves. It isn't absurd, e.g., to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end for humanity; that the idea of great progress is a delusion, along with the idea that the truth will ultimately be known; that there is nothing good or desirable about scientific knowledge and that mankind, in seeking it, is falling into a trap. It is by no means obvious that this is not how things are. (Wittgenstein, 1980: p.56^e)

The online *Philosophical Papers* survey of mainstream professional academic philosophers conducted by David Bourget and David Chalmers in November-December 2009, showed that 81% of the respondents self-identified as belonging to the Analytic tradition.¹ The survey population included professional philosophers from 40 different countries, although principally the USA and the UK. And a few years later, in 2013, Michael Beaney, the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, wrote in Whig-historical mode that

Analytic philosophy is now generally seen as the dominant philosophical tradition in the English-speaking world, and has been so from at least the middle of the last century. Over the last two decades its influence has also been steadily growing in the non-English-speaking world. (Beaney, 2013: p. 3)

In a social-institutional sense, little or nothing has changed in professional philosophy since 2013. Therefore, the Analytic tradition enjoys and exerts intellectual and social-institutional domination, and indeed cultural hegemony, over how philosophy is conceived and practiced in the recent and contemporary professional academy, worldwide.²

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, I published a book in which I critically explored some of the deep connections between Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and the historical and conceptual foundations of the European and Anglo-American tradition. I See (Bourget and Chalmers, 2014): 2486 out of the 3057 professional philosophers who replied to a question asking them to specify a philosophical tradition to which they belonged, said they belonged to the Analytic tradition. See also Bourget and Chalmers, "What Do Philosophers Believe?" It's significant, I think, that it took five years (i.e., until 2014) for the interpretive follow-up article to be written up and published, and also that the article itself has little or nothing to say beyond summarizing the response data and pointing out various statistical correlations. This in turn strongly suggests that Bourget, Chalmers, and their collaborators at the American Philosophical Association, together with the journal editors, all assume without argument or critical reflection that the Analytic tradition's stranglehold on professional academic philosophy since the 1950s is an obvious, inevitable, and immutable ideological and social-institutional fact, rather like the 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution, advanced capitalism, or the neoliberal nation-State.

² There was a follow-up PhilPapers survey conducted during October and November 2020, whose results haven't been released yet (as of July 2021); see (Bourget, 2020). But in any case, it seems to me very unlikely that there will be any significant differences between the results of the 2009 survey and those of the 2020 survey.

tion of Analytic philosophy, from Gottlob Frege's 1884 *Foundations of Arithmetic* to W.V.O. Quine's 1951 "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (Hanna, 2001). More specifically, in that book I argued (i) that Analytic philosophy emerged by virtue of its intellectual struggles with some of the central doctrines of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, (ii) that a careful examination of this foundational debate shows that Kant's doctrines were never refuted but instead, for various reasons, only rejected, and (iii) that ironically enough it's the foundations of *Analytic* philosophy, not the *Critical* philosophy, that are inherently shaky. In 2006, I followed that up with another book—actually the two books were originally parts of the same 800- or 900-page, single-spaced, monster-manuscript—which extended the same general line of argument, by critically exploring some of the equally deep connections between the *Critical* philosophy and *Analytic* philosophy from 1950 to the end of the 20th century (Hanna, 2006a). And in 2008, I published a long essay that began like this:

Alfred North Whitehead ... quotably wrote in 1929 that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."³ The same could be said, perhaps with even greater accuracy, of the twentieth-century Euro-American philosophical tradition and Immanuel Kant. In this sense the twentieth century was the post-Kantian century.

Twentieth-century philosophy in Europe and the USA was dominated by two distinctive and (after 1945) officially opposed traditions: the analytic tradition and the phenomenological tradition. Very simply put, the analytic tradition was all about logic and analyticity, and the phenomenological tradition was all about consciousness and intentionality. Ironically enough however, despite their official Great Divide, both the analytic and the phenomenological traditions were essentially continuous and parallel critical developments from an earlier dominant neo-Kantian tradition. This, by the end of the nineteenth century, had vigorously reasserted the claims of Kant's transcendental idealism against Hegel's absolute idealism and the other major systems of post-Kantian German Idealism, under the unifying slogan "Back to Kant!" So again, ironically enough, both the analytic and phenomenological traditions were alike founded on, and natural outgrowths from, Kant's *Critical Philosophy*.

By the end of the twentieth century, however—and this time sadly rather than ironically—both the analytic and phenomenological traditions had not only explicitly rejected their own Kantian foundations and roots but also had effectively undermined themselves philosophically, even if by no means institutionally. On the one hand the analytic tradition did so by abandoning its basic methodological conception of analysis as the process of logically decomposing propositions into conceptual or metaphysical "simples" as the necessary preliminary to a logical reconstruction of the same propositions, and by also jettisoning the corresponding idea of a sharp, exhaustive, and significant "analytic-synthetic" distinction. The phenomenological tradition on the other hand abandoned its basic methodolog-

³ (Whitehead, 1978: p. 39, footnote in the original).

ical conception of phenomenology as “seeing essences” with a priori certainty under a “transcendental-phenomenological reduction,” and also jettisoned the corresponding idea of a “transcendental ego” as the metaphysical ground of consciousness and intentionality.

One way of interpreting these sad facts is to say that just insofar as analytic philosophy and phenomenology alienated themselves from their Kantian origins, they stultified themselves. This is the first unifying thought behind this [essay], and it is a downbeat one. The second unifying thought, which however is contrastively upbeat, is that both the analytic and phenomenological traditions, now in conjunction instead of opposition, could rationally renew themselves in the twenty-first century by critically recovering their Kantian origins and by seriously re-thinking and re-building their foundations in the light of this critical recovery. Or in other words: *Forward to Kant*. (Hanna, 2008b: pp. 149-150)

During the thirteen years since that essay appeared—alongside other projects—I’ve worked on elaborating and extending those ideas, and writing them up into this book, thereby completing a twenty-year trilogy about the conceptual, epistemic, and metaphysical foundations, history, and fate of Analytic philosophy, all from a Kantian point of view, that began with *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (2001), and *Kant, Science, and Human Nature* (2006).

More precisely, however, *The Fate of Analysis: Analytic Philosophy From Frege To The Ash-Heap of History*,⁴ *And Toward A Radical Kantian Philosophy of The Future*⁵ is a comprehensive and critical revisionist history of Analytic philosophy from the 1880s to the present, with special reference (i) to its Kantian provenance, (ii) to the unique, subversive, and indeed revolutionary contributions of Wittgenstein, both early and late, (iii) to illuminating comparisons and contrasts with phenomenology during the period of the intellectual and social-institutional emergence and ascendancy of classical Analytic philosophy, from 1880 to 1950, (iv) to its steady decline and ultimate fall during the period of post-classical Analytic philosophy, from 1950 to the third decade of the 21st century—a dive, crash, and burn that are partially due to its dogmatic obsession with *scientific naturalism* (especially including the sub-doctrines of *scientism* and *natural mechanism*), but also intimately entangled and synchronized with the emergence, triumph, and finally domination and cultural hegemony of academic hyper-professionalism (Schmidt, 2000; Maiese and Hanna, 2019: ch. 4; and Turner, 2019) in the larger context of the neoliberal nation-State, together with what, riffing on Eisenhower’s famous phrase, “the military-industrial complex,” I’ve dubbed “the military-industrial-university-digital complex,” aka *The Hyper-State* (Hanna, 2021g; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Mills, 1956);⁶ and finally (v) to how, from the ashes of the

⁴ My use of “the ash-heap of history” repurposes Petrarch’s and Trotsky’s famous/notorious good-riddances to Rome and the Mensheviks respectively.

⁵ My use of “a philosophy of the future” repurposes the sub-title of Nietzsche’s brilliantly edgy 1886 book, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*.

⁶ For an explicit definition of what I mean by *The Hyper-State*, see section XVIII.3 below.

Analytic tradition, a radical Kantian philosophy of the future can and should arise like a phoenix during the next two decades of the 21st century.

Therefore, this book is also a study in *radical metaphilosophy*, with sociopolitical overtones and undertones, and a provocative upshot. In 1981, Richard Rorty wrote:

In saying that “analytic philosophy” now has only a stylistic and sociological unity, I am not suggesting that analytic philosophy is a bad thing, or is in bad shape. (Rorty, 1982b: p. 217)

Now forty years later, in the 2020s, with 20-20 hindsight and then some, I’m going one or two radical steps beyond Rorty (Hanna, 2020a) by suggesting *and* asserting, not only “that analytic philosophy is ... in bad shape,” but also that it’s “a bad thing.” And this is so, **first**, because classical Analytic philosophy was theoretically hobbled by Kurt Gödel’s profoundly important first and second incompleteness theorems in the early 1930s, which, when they’re taken together with Alfred Tarski’s semantic conception of truth in formalized languages,⁷ amount to a logico-mathematical 1-2 punch that collectively killed the classical Frege-Whitehead-Russell logicist project for reducing mathematics to logic, **second**, because what remained of classical Analytic philosophy as a serious and substantive philosophical program was in fact effectively brought to an end in the middle of the 20th century by W.V.O. Quine’s devastating critique of the analytic-synthetic distinction—indeed, the demise of “the old analysis” was even explicitly noted by J.O. Urmson a decade after the end of World War II (Urmson, 1956), **third**, because of the dogmatic obsession of post-Quinean, post-classical Analytic philosophy with scientific naturalism after 1950, and above all, **fourth**, because of post-classical Analytic philosophy’s spiraling descent into academic hyper-professionalism and mind-manacled complicity with the neoliberal nation-state and military-industrial-university-digital complex, aka The Hyper-State, in the late 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century, *therefore* **fifth**, the 140-year tradition of Analytic philosophy has actually bottomed out and burned up from within, existing now only as a dominant and indeed culturally hegemonic social-institutional husk and Potemkin village inside professional academic philosophy, that most urgently needs to be and ought to be replaced by something essentially different and essentially better—in my opinion, a radical Kantian philosophy of the future, during the next twenty years.

Or in other and fewer words, to update not only the classical slogan of the 19th century neo-Kantians (*Back to Kant!*), but also my back-to-the-future-style Kantian slogan from 2008 (*Forward to Kant!*), I’m hereby issuing a philosophical clarion call for the rest of the 21st century: *Forward and leftward to Kant!*

Finally, in that Kantian connection, here’s another *caveat lector*. To be sure, my comprehensive and critical revisionist interpretation of the Analytic tradition and my positive proposal for a philosophy of the future are both Kantian in inspiration. But although I’ll sometimes refer to Kant’s writings, my view is *neither* intended to be a scholarly interpreta-

⁷ For a compact explication of Tarski’s semantic conception of truth, see section X.3 below.

tion of Kant's writings, *nor* is it in any way restricted by the requirement to remain consistent with or defend any of Kant's own doctrines (for example, his alleged noumenal realism, hatred of emotions, moral formalism and rigorism, coercive authoritarian neo-Hobbesian political liberalism, etc.) or his personal prejudices (for example, his alleged racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc.). Thus my overall account and argument are Kantian, but not so *damned* Kantian. This is a spin on Josiah Royce's pithy definition of idealism: "the world and the heavens, and the stars are all *real*, but not so *damned real*" (Royce, 1970: p. 217). In other words, what I'm arguing in *The Fate of Analysis* expresses a creative use of some Kantian ideas that are also independently defensible, and it diverges from either Kant's own writings or orthodox Kantianism *whenever* that's required by attentiveness to manifest reality and/or critical reflection. In view of the social-institutional facts I've called *The Kant Wars*, one element of which is a widespread *anti-Kantian bias* in contemporary philosophy (Hanna, 2020c), it's (unfortunately) necessary to make this point explicitly. So, in order to nail down that point both explicitly and also airtightly, I want to emphasize and re-emphasize from the outset that my overall account and argument are at most only *broadly Kantian*, but above all *radically Kantian*.

