

THE CONTINENTAL-ANALYTIC RIFT: A GUIDE FOR TRAVELLERS AND BRIDGE-BUILDERS

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Abstract:

The paper explores the rift between continental and analytic style of doing philosophy, looking at the following main philosophical thesis that arguably characterize the continental turn, from Hegel to post-structuralists: first, the anthropological and historical is deeply ontological (Hegel, Heidegger). Second, the central element of human mind is a-rational, it is either will, desire or affect (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche). Third, the basic reality of the world is akin to this a-rational element of human mind (Nietzsche). Fourth, the cognitive style, the language-style and the method of studying a given domain of philosopher investigates should follow the language-style and the manner of domain itself. In particular, for a-rational domains, the cognitive style and the linguistic expression should minimize the use of traditional rationalist methods of enquiry and presentation in favor of more literary ones. Fifth, philosophy has reached its end, so that philosophers should abandon the traditional philosophical reflection in favor of participating in more concrete theoretical and political practices (Marx, post-structuralist "Theory"). Any future building of continental-analytic bridges has to take into account the complexity of the rift, and the impact of the five theses on the contemporary continental thought.

Key words: continental, analytic, a-rational, end of philosophy, literary style in philosophy.

I. Introduction

At least since the middle of the last century, if not for longer, philosophy has been split into two camps: analytic and continental.¹ They differ in style of thought, in topical preferences, in the manner of presentation and in other features. Twenty years ago, for example, they also differed in the preferred languages: the first was done mostly in English, the

second predominantly in German and French. Now English has won, so at least this contrast has disappeared. The heroes on the one side of the rift are post-Kantian German Idealists, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, then phenomenologists and hermeneuticists, and finally post-structuralist French thinkers plus authors like Sloterdijk and Agamben. On the other side are thinkers like Frege, Wittgenstein, Russell, members of Vienna Circle, then Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Quine, Kripke, Rawls and Putnam.

Let me characterize briefly the two traditions, placing them within the polarity of scientific and humanistic culture. Two out of three founding fathers of analytic philosophy, Frege and Russell, saw it as clearly aligned with the scientific culture, and the third, Wittgenstein, offered a more balanced vision. All of them were both fashioning and using new mathematical-logical tools in order to ground mathematics, the queen of sciences, and Russell, together with the early Vienna Circle set out to deal with exciting new issues raised by revolutionary physics. The early positivist allergy to substantive or normative ethics, lack of interest in aesthetics, political philosophy and philosophy of history, and dismissal of "natural" language in favor of a non-natural one, grew out of this fascination with logic and scientific style. During the sixties things started changing for the better. With Rawls, normative ethics and political philosophy gained a firm footing within analytic philosophy, some time later analytic aesthetics got slowly on its way, while philosophers of language turned collectively to the idea the natural language is at least an equally interesting object of study and instrument of analysis as the formal language. The ground was laid for linking the scientific and humanistic cultures instead of ignoring one of them or even sneering at it. However, the firm commitment of analytic philosophy to the argumen-

¹ Thanks go to Stephen Mulhall, David Davies, Majda Trobok, Ana Smokrović, Nenad Smokrović and Snježana Prijić.

tative discipline, to some kind of truth-goal, to a problem-solving approach to philosophy (instead of a historical and hermeneutic one), naturalistic tendencies that insist on science-like styles of explanation, and its readiness often to extol science as paradigm of cognition and of rationality, still tie it firmly to the scientific culture.

Continental tradition was firmly associated with history, arts and humanities as well as religion throughout the nineteenth century, and it has kept these liaisons until the present time. In phenomenology, the appeal to “lived” experience, or in hermeneutics appeal to artistic and religious experience stand in stark contrast with more abstract analytic argumentation from commonly acceptable, plausible premises with the explicit aid of logic formal and/or informal.² Analytic tradition has often pursued the aim of systematic, unified explanation of fundamental metaphysical or cognitive phenomena, of broadly causal types. Continental tradition despises causality: Husserl explicitly demands setting aside (“bracketing”) causal explanation, and the mainstream continental philosophers work with non-causal paradigms: understanding is the typical, but not the only alternative. This is linked with strong constructivism and anti-realism. Many naturalistically oriented analytic philosophers insist further on embedding particular causal explanations into a broader framework of commonsense and science, while their mainstream continental colleagues are skeptical of science: some seeing it “merely” as problematic in some aspects, but many treating it as a direct enemy of philosophical understanding.

The present characterizations are pretty much agreed upon in the literature. Let me quote a paragraph from B. Leiter on the analytic-continental contrast:

“Continental” philosophy (...) demarcates a group of French and German philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries. The geographical label is misleading: Carnap, Frege, and Wittgenstein were all products of the European Continent, but are *not* “Continental” philosophers.

² The common acceptability of premises and their commonsense status, have, in contrast, seemed to some authors in continental tradition as signs of their banality and ultimate falsity (Hegel), or as symptoms of bad unanimity derived from manipulation and repression (Marx and the whole genealogical tradition stemming from Nietzsche). Implausibility is often seen as braveness, daring and provocation, sign of deeper truth, or at least a shock therapy.

The foundational figure of this tradition is Hegel; other canonical figures include the other post-Kantian German Idealists (e.g., Fichte, Schelling), Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Gadamer, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, and Foucault. Continental philosophy is distinguished by its style (more literary, less analytical, sometimes just obscure), its concerns (more interested in actual political and cultural issues and, loosely speaking, the human situation and its “meaning”), and some of its substantive commitments (more self-conscious about the relation of philosophy to its historical situation).” (From his “Analytic” and “Continental” Philosophy’, at his web-page)

Some people deny the split, at least verbally. I have heard North-American colleagues saying that there is no analytic and continental philosophy, only the good and the bad one. But then, when you ask about the good contemporary items, their belonging shows itself: good philosophers are Kripke, Putnam, Davidson, and the like. No mention of Gadamer or Foucault. The split has had practical consequences: students are confused by it, a unitary rating of professional journals is practically impossible, competition often takes weird forms (the analytic “clan” against the continental one and vice versa), and so on. So, one is hopeful about cooperation.

And indeed, cooperation is there and it goes on; the present issue of the Balkan journal is a testimony to it. Some great names on the both sides have contributed to the cooperation. For example, the work of Paul Ricoeur since the late seventies has been a constant dialogue with analytic colleagues, in the book on metaphor (Ricoeur, 1978) with Max Black, in the book on narrative (Ricoeur, 1984) with Danto, in “*The Course of Recognition*” (2005) with B. Williams and with Rawls in the book on justice (2000). Rawls dialogued with Habermas. Brandom’s “*The Tales of the Mighty Dead*” (2002) have initiated a round of analytic-continental conversations. On the very recent scene, a typical successful work is exemplified by Shaun Gallagher’s and Daniel Schmicking’s anthology from 2010, *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, and the cognate work of authors like Dan Zahavi. We shall not talk about practical philosophy here, so let me just mention that in this area there are also attempts at bridging, linking the theory of bio-politics to analytic bioethics, the work of continental feminists to Rawlsian feminists (like Suzan Okin and Jean

Hampton), and some joint efforts by cosmopolitan philosophers on both sides of the analytic-continental rift. Finally, let me mention interesting analytic readings of the great continentals, e.g. Robert Stern's reading of Hegel in his recent *Hegelian metaphysics* (2009). But all this is far from any kind of unification. So the issue of describing and understanding the rift becomes central and urgent, and this will be our main topic in the sequel.

We want to see where the rift is at its widest and deepest, and where it is relatively shallow, and thus easy to cross or to bridge. In our view the main problem is the following: the rifting has taken place in several dimensions, not in a single one. We want to point out these dimensions and the directions of rift. So, the next, main part of the paper is divided into several sections, encompassing one about the common ancestry, and the rest dedicated each to one dimension and direction of rifting. The first section briefly presents the common origin, namely predominantly realist early modern empiricism and rationalism, and passes to Kant's anti-realism or idealism. Next, we observe the crucial move by which the actual history, including political history is presented as ontological(-metaphysical) history of the very being of the world, for the first time in Hegel's work. The third section discusses the particular shape that the topic of will, desire, sexuality, and affect have taken in continental tradition, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, and the change in the style of philosophical thinking and writing that this change has produced. Thus, the transformed, more literary style is one of the deepest dimensions of the rift. The fourth section glosses on the development that goes from Husserl to post-structuralism. The concluding short part discusses twin dangers deriving from the idea of "the end of philosophy". Namely, the dangers of abandoning philosophy either in the direction of doing science (biology and cognitive science) in the analytic tradition, and doing activist political criticism, the "Theory", in the continental one. We end with a few remarks on bridging the gap.

Our sketch is, of course brief, all too brief. We want to present the big picture but then all the interesting details disappear. Each of our claims can be contradicted with some counter-examples: we do not claim that they are exceptionless, rather, that they represent the typical and central phenomena in the field. Alternative tectonic reconstructions are possible, as they are in geology, but we have no space to discuss them here. So, we owe apologies to our more

continental colleagues and to the readers; we hope to do fuller justice to the complexities of the issues in some future papers.

II. Philosophical plate tectonics: some main directions of the continental-analytic rifting

1. Before the split

Let us briefly start with a reminder about early modern philosophy. It was predominantly realist, with some exceptions however, like Berkeley for instance. The two main currents, empiricists and rationalists shared a lot of assumptions. Above all, that the object of philosophical study is a fundamentally stable, changeless structure concerning our relation to the outside world, and the ground common to us and to presumed objects of our knowledge. The self (ego), the world of things (the Cartesian *res extensa*), and the fundamental reality that is supporting both (often god, sometimes another unitary item like Spinozist substance, or matter of the early materialists and naturalists), are there, to be discovered by diligent cognizers. Most early modern philosophers are worried about human ignorance. The standard account turns our ideas (percepts, thoughts, concepts) into ambiguous explanations: in the good case, ideas are the source of knowledge, in the bad, they account for our illusions. This "veil" that potentially separates us from reality is the source of untruth. The quartet of the human mind, external objects, fundamental reality and the veil-of-ideas—is seen as the ontologically stable framework. Some philosophers famously reject one of the components (for instance, Berkeley the second, Reid the fourth), some, like Hume, doubt that human mind can reach its objects and reality, and so on, but the framework is more or less there, largely unquestioned.

Contemporary analytic realism is the heir of this approach. Many of its defenders are broadly physicalists, offering physical reality as the fundamental item underlying, and indeed constituting, both our minds and the external objects. Most of them are representationalists, for whom representations play the same role that ideas played for their early modern ancestors.³ I will not restate the line of development that has led to the contemporary analytic philosophical preferences. Instead, I very briefly pass to the first slight earthquake that announced the rifting. It happened at the end of the XVIII century when

³ The best recent exposition of the framework is Jackson's (1998) "From Metaphysics to Ethics".

Kant's anti-realism was born that introduced into philosophy an important element that will develop into all-out idealism, and will mark the continental more than the analytic tradition.

A fashionable contemporary interpretative tradition, authors like G. Prauss and H. Allison on the one side, and P. Guyer on the other, tries to disconnect Kant from later idealism.⁴ Unfortunately, the historical influence of Kant, in which we are now interested, stemmed from a different reading of his work, which is now often called the two-worlds interpretation.⁵ It concentrates upon many passages in Kant where he claims that "external things, namely matter, are in all their configurations and alterations nothing but mere appearances, that is, representations in us, of the reality of which we are immediately conscious (A 371–2)" and where he speaks of appearance as "mere representations which, in the manner in which they are represented, as extended beings or as series of alterations, have no independent existence outside our thoughts." He contrasts this thesis with that of the "realist, in the transcendental meaning of the term" who "treats these modifications of our sensibility as self-subsistent things, that is, treats mere representations as things in themselves" (A 490–1; B 518–9).⁶

The revolutionary innovation, the Copernican turn, changed the internal structure of the early mod-

ern framework into the quartet encompassing human mind, external objects, fundamental reality, and the (veil-of-ideas). The fundamental reality of the world and of our mind retreats into thing-in-itself. The external objects go to the appearance, and we get the trio: subject—appearance—thing-in-itself. Note that the structure is again stable, unchanging and a-historical. Further, the epistemic apparatus that produces the appearance is unitary: all rational sentient beings have it.

Kantian anti-realism will give rise to German Idealism. It is the grand-parent of many formations crucial to the later history of continental philosophy, above all to constructivism. In more recent times, Kantian inspired anti-realism has given up the original Kantian assumption that the constructive epistemic apparatus is unitary, and have replaced it with the idea of plurality of paradigms, frameworks, discursive formations or epistemes.

Kantianism is not foreign to analytic philosophers, it has inspired thinkers as diverse as Carnap and Strawson, but the analytic tradition has been less stressing its idealistic components, that have played crucial historical role in the birth of continental philosophy.

2. From history and politics to ontology

Processes like rifting start with small movements, and it is notoriously difficult to locate their exact beginning. In modern philosophy, the most plausible place for the beginning of serious rifting is Hegel's philosophy and his reinterpretation of the traditional, both Kantian and pre-Kantian basic schemes. Hegel is aware of the basic tripartite ontological structure of basic matters dividing them those pertaining to subjectivity, those to object or external reality (and the foundation), and the third, intermediate layer, tied to the subjectivity – the phenomena, or the veil-of-perception, or something similar, that threatens to alienate our minds from reality. But his interest is different. It is not only that the deep reality is somehow spiritual; this has already been proposed by Fichte. The new idea is that the basic structure itself is historical. History is the medium of fundamental ontology. Subject (mind) and the external world do not stand in a basically static, structural relation; their relations change with history. And history is at the same time cultural, political and spiritual. *The deep ontology of the world changes with historical events*; to mention the event favored by Kojève, one of the most successful interpreters and popularizers of Hegel in the 20th century, the

⁴ To illustrate, let me mention that in his pioneering work Gerold Prauss (1974) offers the example of considering an object as a paperweight in contrast to considering it as a stone; two ways of looking at it stressing its different aspects, without promoting these aspects into separate objects. It one could take this contrast of aspects as the paradigm of viewing transcendental idealism and understand the contrast between appearances and things in themselves along these lines, Prauss suggested, one would hopefully end with a non-idealist reading of Kant.

⁵ Personally, I side with Guyer and the older "patchwork hypothesis", and think that Kant was an inconsistent genius, inconsistent perhaps because of his ingenious creativity. There are elements in his work that support both readings.

⁶ In the note to fourth Paralogism Kant famously writes:

We must give full credence to this paradoxical but correct proposition, that there is nothing in space save what is represented in it. For space is itself nothing but representation, and whatever is in it must therefore be contained in the representation. Nothing whatsoever is in space, save insofar as it is actually represented in it. It is a proposition which must indeed sound strange, that a thing can exist only in the representation of it, but in this case the objection falls, in as much as the things with which we are concerned are not things themselves, but appearances only, that is, representations. (A 375n)

success of Napoleon changes, so to speak, the very ontological structure of the world. Of course, such events are not contingent, they are part of the deep history of Spirit, and its journey to itself.

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BASIS	ALIENATED FORM	SUBJECT
G E I S T,	ALIENATION OBJEC- TIFICATION , Anderssein	MY SUB- JECTIVE BEING
HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL		

Let me encapsulate this revolutionary, rifting idea as a principle linking the anthropological, historical and the deeply ontological, as Anthropohistorico ontological (AHO) principle:

- (AHO) : The anthropological and historical is deeply ontological.

With the acceptance of this principle history is seen as permeating ontology; in some version the former replaces the later. It is important to not how dramatic the move of accepting the AHO principle and taking it as fundamental in one’s philosophy. The move is unthinkable for early modern philosophers; but even the Enlightenment and anti-Enlightenment authors, from Condorcet and Voltaire to Rousseau and Burke, who were obsessed by history, both political and cultural, didn’t dream of it. Equally important, once the move is made, these earlier authors can be reinterpreted and integrated into the new picture. The most naïve version would be to integrate the story of linear progress, the Whig history, into the deep ontology of Spirit and world; nobody to my knowledge did this. A more exciting move has been to harness Rousseau-style ideas about history as alienation from the original, natural state, and his dreams about the quasi-return to it, the rebuilding of the natural within the culture, properly at its very end and fulfillment. (see Mulhall 2005).

An extremely important corollary of the AHO concerns philosophy itself. The history of philosophy is a particularly important part or aspect (“moment”) of the history of the fundamental reality, the Spirit itself. When the Presocratics present being as something material, the Spirit itself is thereby taking a material form, when Hegel presents it as spiritual, being itself returns to its own nature. This corollary plays a crucial role in legitimizing the history of

philosophy as part and parcel of philosophy itself, in a sense never dreamt of by analytic colleagues. It returns triumphantly in Heidegger, and marks almost the whole of German history of philosophy in the 20th century.⁷ The same taboo status that the AHO principle would have had for the early moderns is implicitly assigned to it in the analytic tradition. Analytic authors that have not been officially professionally interested in history and politics, from Frege, through Carnap, Reichenbach and Ryle, to Quine, Davidson and Kripke leave no place for AHO in their work. But, more symptomatically, authors that have been deeply interested by the domain of the political, like Russell, Natorp, Rawls, G.A. Cohen and Scanlon, have probably never dreamt of proposing their political views as theories about the deepest nature of the cosmos and reality as a whole.

In contrast, the AHO principle has been one of the central tenets in the continental tradition. Of course, the alleged deeply ontological status of mankind’s historical adventures been variously interpreted by various key thinkers.⁸ On one reading, faithful to Hegel, these matters constitute what is, in the literal, objective sense. On the other, in a somewhat more Kantian reading, they construct our, human reality, which is then proclaimed to be the only one worthy of philosophical study. On the third reading, famously proposed by Heidegger, human history just is the history of Being (Seinsgeschichte), and at the very least it reveals Being in a particularly intimate, non objectivist way. Heidegger speaks about the happening of truth as essential for the history of Being: truth sets itself into a work of art, or it occurs through “the act that founds a political state”, then in the act of sacrifice, and finally in the thinker’s questioning (“The origin of the work of art”, in J. M. Thompson (ed.) 1999, p. 401.) So the painting of a picture, say of Mona Lisa, or founding of a state (I will abstain from giving examples), belong to essential events in the history of Being and truth. It is no wonder that the continental tradition is very interested in the issues concerning the meaning of life, since the meaning of human life is, by AHO, directly ontological. Western Marxism has also been

⁷ It seems that the return of this topos is not a direct result of Heidegger’s engagement with Hegel’s philosophy; see the papers in Tom Rockmore’s 2000.

⁸ Enmity to AHO is common to all analytic philosopher, acceptance of AHO common to most, but not all continentals; Husserl and his immediate followers being a good example (Thanks Nenad Smokrović for insisting).

very much in favor of AHO, combining the first and the third reading, and building them into their view of alienation and revolution. The principle has dominated continental tradition for over two centuries. Its most recent avatar is Alan Badiou's ontology of events: the ontologically central events are, of course, political revolutions (e.g. Badiou, 2009). The principle has dominated continental tradition for two centuries. It shows its teeth even when implied only implicitly. For instance, Foucault's early works make reference to some sort of objective, Sein-like factor of history, that shapes history and forms of our discourse and episteme. When he later turns to issues of power, he claims that subject is produced and fashioned by power. Here, suddenly, the link with his earlier interest appears: "subject" is a deep ontological category, and of course, deep ontology is historical and sensitive to power-struggle, i.e. politicized. The history of being is transformed into history of power, without thereby being betrayed.

On the continental side some phenomenologists stayed clear of the AHO, Husserl in most of its work, as well as most of his immediate disciples, and some later followers like Merleau-Ponty and to some extent even Sartre. It is no surprise that their work is much more congenial to analytic philosophers interested in bridging gaps.⁹

Note at the end that in spite of the dramatic nature of AHO, the original Hegelian platform shares some important and relevant principles with his predecessors and with the analytic tradition. One such central item is the importance of reason: reason and rationality are paramount. Although Hegel's understanding of reason (both as *Verstand* and *Vernunft*) is very specific, the very program of a rational structuring of philosophical effort provides a bridge.

⁹ Within AHO, normativity and ethics are often re-interpreted- With Hegel a new paradigm for traditional ethical issues arises: the basic form of Being, or Spirit is, so to speak, as it ought to be, so by becoming what one really is and thereby conforming to the basic form, one fulfills the request of *Sittlichkeit* (e.g. authenticity and the like). Therefore, there is no autonomous morality (and Kant and utilitarians are inadequate in many respects). The fiction of the autonomous morality is part of the alienated, or inauthentic stage of the development of Being or Spirit. (There are exceptions on the continental side, like Levinas, Ricoeur and Agamben.) There is also a hope that Greeks would have agreed. For many post-Hegelian thinkers, from Nietzsche through Heidegger to some post-structuralist it is crucial that the true and the kalon go together in ancient culture and philosophy. B Williams has argued for a similar view in a more analytic context.

This bridge snapped with another development, to which we now turn.

3. *Manifesting the a-rational*

"Continental philosophy is distinguished by its style (more literary, less analytical, sometimes just obscure)", writes Leiter in the text we quoted at the beginning, and I agree, as many colleagues would. The style is not just the style of writing, it is a matter of the way of thinking. Where does its specificity come from? I have a hypothesis on this that has not, to the best of my knowledge, been set out elsewhere. In order to present it, I now pass to the second rifting process, which, as I shall try to show, encompasses two distinct and equally important components. The first component is the (re-)discovery of the a-rational, or even irrational, as a central topic for philosophy. Will, desire and affect, with specifications like will to power, sexuality, and the like, play a central role in the continental tradition. They did play a role before its advent, but in a more tame fashion. Humean desire is a relatively homely matter, and the human passions in Pascal, La Rochefoucault and other French Enlightenment authors lack a cosmic dimension, which they receive only within the continental tradition. They receive it thanks to anti-realism and the AHO: if human mind creates reality, and the mind is a-rational (guided by drives) or even irrational (the drives act *contrary* to reason), then a-rational or irrational forces create reality. If the human and historical are directly ontological, then the fierce passions ruling our heart and our political conflicts rule the very Being itself, or are just identical to it. The world is the will, as Schopenhauer proclaimed, it is an artifact of the will-to-power, as Nietzsche claimed. Let me encapsulate the two ideas and give them names:

(A-RAT-mind): The central element of human mind is a-rational, it is either will, desire or affect.

(A-RAT-world): The basic reality of the world is akin to the a-rational element of human mind.

With late Schelling A-RAT-mind and A-RAT-world enter the late German Idealism. The central element of human mind is a drive; more importantly, a basic element of reality (including, in the first place God) is a-rational. No analytic philosopher has ever come close to endorsing the second kind of statement, the A-RAT-world. This is a lot in terms of rifting, but it is far from being the end of the story.

One can understand the emergence of the second component if one compares the early irrationalists, like Schopenhauer or his less known French counterpart Maine de Biran, with later-day ones like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The early authors argue for the primacy of the will, in the rational framework of their opponents, the first against Kant, the second against French naturalistic philosophers-scientists (*les Ideologues*). Their style fits the rational style of their opponents; no change is introduced.

Things drastically change in the middle of the nineteenth century. With Kierkegaard the affect enters the scene of post-Hegelian thinking. Kierkegaard has indeed been taken as the thinker of the passion, as opposed to reason, and has influenced the later development precisely in this direction. The passionate is at least *prima facie* contrasted with the rational.¹⁰ The passion of Abraham, his Knight of faith, transcends rational understanding „...I can understand the tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, though in a certain crazy sense I admire him more than all other men.” (*Fear and Trembling*, Wilder Publishing, 2008, p. 41). Both Vilhelm in *Either-Or* and Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* challenge Kantian and Hegelian moral rationality. Vilhelm by insisting of a kind of absolute choice of oneself, Abraham by his action that is to be condemned within a normal rational framework.¹¹

Kierkegaard’s a-rationalism brings with itself a revolutionary change of style. The first books manifesting it is his “*Either-or*”, published in 1843. Famously, three viewpoints are presented there, hedonistic, moral and religious, none of them too rationalistic (although the second one can be related to Kant). But the additional and sensational news is the style, of thinking and of writing. The hedonistic viewpoint is presented through the dairy of the seducer, the moral one through advice of the elder moralist, Vilhelm, writing very much like Seneca: it is the sincerity of the writer that counts as much as the cogency of the standpoint itself. The moralist speaks in a tone of advisory LITERATURE. The final redemption, the religious viewpoint, is presented through a sermon of a pastor from Jutland.

¹⁰ Some authors argue it is not the final contrast in Kierkegaard, e.g. Norman Lillegard (2002).

¹¹ My colleague Majda Trobok asked at this juncture: is it consistent rationally to explain A’s action and to claim that it is to be condemned within rational framework, and see oneself as going against the rational? Well, Kierkegaard does not himself see his own account of Abraham’s decisions a belonging to rational explanation.

“Either-Or” is the grand monument of domain-adapted style of thinking and writing, as MacIntyre has pointed out (in *After Virtue*, p. 38; see also Bojan Blagojevic’s paper in this issue). No philosophical comments from external, neutral standpoint: the editor character, Victor Eremita, limits himself to factual, archivist information. The characters write in the manner inspired by the domain and topic: the aesthetic attitude is embodied in the seducer’s diary, rather than being coldly dissected. Much more importantly, the two more “serious” standpoints are not presented in an argumentative manner at all. The brilliant stylistic exercise anticipates a fundamental turn. The idea is, in the form of a slogan: If you write about passion, write passionately.¹²

Either-Or stands at the beginning of a revolution in philosophical style that has profoundly marked continental philosophy and is responsible for its present profile. It suggests that if you write about a Don Juan, you should do a diary of seduction, if you write about morals you should be moralizing, and if about religion, then preaching. Michael Weston in his book on Kierkegaard and modern continental philosophy (1994) notes the following:

Post-metaphysical thought in Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida shows certain central characteristics which have their parallels in Kierkegaard: a ‘style’ of writing at variance with that of the metaphysical tradition which has its rationale in the ‘situatedness’ of the thought whose intention is, not the representation of ‘the truth’, but an ‘intervention’ into that situation. (1994, p.136)¹³

He lists “Nietzsche’s use of aphorisms, stories, poems, the fictional character of Zarathustra, Heidegger’s ‘etymologies’ and ‘poetic’ thinking, Derrida’s ‘double-reading’ (Ibid.)¹⁴ Of course, the turn to non-argumentative style (or at least to the style less ar-

¹² My colleague, Nenad Smokrovic objected that Kierkegaard writes in a non-philosophical style. But this is precisely the point, since he is a philosopher and is regarded as one.

¹³ Weston goes on to propose different explanations for the literary character of style for each author, without looking for a common ground of the similarity.

¹⁴ In his judgment these are “are strategies of writing demanded by the essentially ‘situated’ character of their thought. “(p.136). But mere “situatedness” explains little; why would one use etymologies merely because one is situated? If the answer is that the use of etymologies is dictated by our situatedness in time, then why not use General theory of relativity, give our situatedness in space-time?

gumentative than the style of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz and Hume) has been prepared by predecessors. By his enormous authority Kant made the idea that philosophy may and should be very difficult to read and understand compelling to the academic audience of the next generation; it is the depth that counts and not the shallow formal logic (in Kant, it was probably a psychological accident: his creativity was so strong that he had hard time writing down the new—and ingenious—thoughts that were occurring to him, and at the same time he wanted to press them in the preordained systematic framework; on the other hand he had fears about being accused of atheism; a convoluted style would cater for keeping the readership small and professional). German idealism continues the line: for *it* commonsense is irrelevant (Hegel) and formal logic is alienated and plainly wrong, so, traditional logical tools (from definition to nicely sequenced arguments, with premises and conclusions detailed in full) is out of question.¹⁵ In German idealism, especially in the work of Hegel, holism adds to it: one understand and evaluates parts only by somehow grasping the whole. In Hegel's aftermath, such holism combined with anti-commonsense and anti-scientific attitude, favoring depth over understanding, and religious and poetic influence, the grasping of the whole becomes less and less transparent; this projects on the parts as well. But now, if commonsense is irrelevant, where do you start? Natural science is seen as alienated, so scientific style is not welcome. One alternative is provided by links to religion and mysticism (German romantics, Schelling), another by poetry. (Holism here becomes less relevant). Since Kierkegaard the a-rationalist program becomes methodologically demanding: philosophy should *manifest* the will, desire, the unconscious, i.e. the irrational, and not only think and talk about it. Political activism also helps: if you write about politics, write manifestos! And Nietzsche contributes to the trend by switching to a more literary style: aphorism, play with words, etc.. acting against the traditional (early modern) argumentative style.

Rorty offers a story about the turn to a literary style (he does not mention a-rationalism), but he does it with enthusiasm. The passage is worth quoting in full:

The transition from a philosophical to a literary culture began shortly after Kant, about the time that Hegel warned us that philosophy paints its

gray on gray only when a form of life has grown old. That remark helped the generation of Kierkegaard and Marx realize that philosophy was never going to fill the redemptive role that Hegel himself had claimed for it. Hegel's supremely ambitious claims for philosophy were counter-productive. His System was no sooner published than it began to be read as a *reductio ad absurdum* of a certain form of intellectual life.

Since Hegel's time, the intellectuals have been losing faith in philosophy. This amounts to losing faith in the idea that redemption can come in the form of true beliefs. In the literary culture which has been emerging during the last two hundred years, the question "Is it true?" has yielded to the question "What's new?" (1997a, p.91–2)

Let me come back to the idea that the philosophical style should come closer to the literary style, that one should write passionately about the central passionate elements of both the human mind and life. This advice has been subsequently generalized, not necessarily under the direct influence of Kierkegaard. With Nietzsche, the idea becomes an implicit norm. If you write about poetry, write poetically, if you care for the future of mankind, write as prophets did. If you care about the a-rational, banish rationality from your style. The advice nicely combines with A-RAT-mind and A-RAT-world: the writer and the prospective reader are passionate beings, since all humans are; and the passionate style plays at the deepest cords of their hearts. But, and this is philosophically central, the deep cords of the heart are in unison with the deepest chords of reality: the passionate, aphoristic, literary style is at the same time deeply philosophical, since it manifests the deepest reality of the world.¹⁶ "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" is the central work at this stage.¹⁷

¹⁶ A recent work on Nietzsche by Rogério Miranda de Almeida, (2006) carries the consequences to the extreme. Nietzsche should be read as a paradoxical writer, says the Preface:

Our proposal here is, rather, to focus on paradox, or the paradoxes that Nietzsche expresses through his writing, and thus through the great diversity of perspectives and rereadings operative in the domains of art, science, religion, morality, philosophy, and culture in general. (p. ix)

It is wrong, de Almeida claims, to try to clean Nietzsche's text from contradictions:

To be sure, the traditional commentators on Nietzsche are unanimous in admitting that his oeuvre contains

¹⁵ Thanks go to Urška Mavrič for insisting on this point.

Let me jump to contemporary philosophy and briefly further illustrate the working of the same thought through the issue of conceptualizing, conceptual understanding and theory-building in matters of art.¹⁸

In a recent paper the Canadian philosopher Jean Grondin interpreting Gadamer claims “that it is not possible to grasp conceptually the play of art. What we can do is to play along, to participate and to take part in the play” (27). Let me call it Impossibility thesis. “When we hear music, we instinctively start singing and dancing.” (Ibid.), continues Grondin. If the thesis were taken seriously, as it merits to be taken, it would entail that there is no way to write about the play of art in a distanced, non-playful and non-artistic way, in the manner that is usual for the analytic approaches to art. If one writes about the play of art one should write playfully and artistically, one should “participate and (...) take part in

“contradictions” and ambiguities. But these contradictions invoke, as often as not, “apparent contradictions” in the sense that they would be—unknown to Nietzsche himself—a logical thread carrying these texts to a coherent and continuous whole. (Ibid.)

Being contradictory and literally paradoxical is the main virtue of Nietzsche, and it is linked to his understanding of poetry and fiction:

As a matter of fact, the principal themes of the Nietzschean oeuvre that we develop—that is, the will to power, the relation of forces, nihilism, and the eternal return—are extremely problematic and subject to diverse interpretations. And this is the case because Nietzsche himself continually reiterates, rereads, and creates new perspectives on the art of poetry, fiction, invention, interpretation, and construction. But the art of construction presupposes the force of destruction and imposes a new meaning. This is why a thought that moves in and from one relation of forces, and that is itself force, can only be expressed through the writing of paradox, that is, through the constant play of inclusions, exclusions, ruptures, renewals, and reevaluations. (p.x)

But how does one discuss Nietzsche once it is agreed that the meanings are subject to “constant play” of renewals and reevaluations? Every proposal can be turned into its contrary by the “constant play”, so that the danger lurks that Nietzsche turns out as saying nothing by saying too much. This might be the price of wanting to write a-rationally about the non-rational.

¹⁷ For a contrasting analytic reading of Nietzsche see Leiter’s enjoyable paper (2004) on how to recover Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud for analytic philosophy: present them as would-be naturalists, looking for explanation rather than for a “deconstruction” or “subversion” in a post-modernist vein. Of course, Leiter is allergic to Zarathustra.

¹⁸ thanks go to Darjana Nastić and her supervisor, David Weberman; I found the example in Darjana’s MA thesis.

the play”. The Impossibility thesis, very much in line with SMC, fits nicely with Gadamer’s fundamental thesis, according to which is it the play itself, in this case the play of the work of art, that guides our involvement, rather than our subjectivity playing the leading role. If we extend this fundamental thesis to the meta-level of theorizing about art, we get the view that it is the playful nature of the work itself that should guide the way of theorizing about it (although Gadamer himself does not write in playful fashion, and is very much in love with arguments). Moreover, if successful, the work of art changes us, and the change must re-appear in the manner in which we think of it; the manner must bear a stamp of the experienced work itself. And this change is then normally thought of pervading our understanding and our manner of thinking. This is not how many serious philosophers of art, from Kant to Levinson, have proceeded. They have sought precisely conceptual understanding, and their writing is not playful at all. On the other hand, the Impossibility thesis seems to capture nicely a lot of practice in contemporary continental philosophical writing about art and literature, and also shows its bite in the non-philosophical theoretical writings (literary theory, art theory), in which theoretician’s often, write in a literary fashion, re-enacting, so to speak, the works of art they are talking about.

A similar idea is perhaps lurking in Lacan’s dictum, “There is no metalanguage!” In other words, there is no neutral, rationally controlled, dispassionate point of view from which we can think, speak and write about the non-rational domains (it is not the only reading of the dictum, but it is hopefully a plausible one).¹⁹ For Lacan’s favorite area, the unconscious, the morals are clear: write in the style of the discourse on and around psychoanalyst’s sofa, use play of words, formation of words inspired by

¹⁹ The usual reading of the dictum (from the Seminar of November 1966, and repeated for instance, in the preface to the pocket edition of *Écrits*, and often in *Autres Écrits*, Seuil, 2001, e.g. at p. 18) stresses that there is not Archimedean point outside of a given discourse, from which one could talk about that discourse. This reading does suggest what we call SMC below: if you want to talk about some discourse Δ (of passion, of politics, of religious exaltation), your own talk will not be “outside” Δ , or, less metaphorically, will have characteristics of Δ . The Compendium of Lacanian term (p. 202) appeals to the following alleged comment that Lacan gives himself: ‘Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier, which could not appear outside this locus [of the signifier] in any way’ (*Écrits*, p. 310).

free associations, slip of tongue and similar sources, rather than in the dry, quasi-scientific original Freudian style. As far as Lacan himself is concerned, it is interesting to follow the changes from his argumentative and scholarly early writing (early pieces in *Ecrits* and early seminars) to a more and more literary, convoluted and non-argumentative style of the later work. Shoshana Felman I think rightly speaks of Lacan's "poetic" rejection of concept(s) and knowledge (where in her writing "poetic" implies inclusion of *madness into the very style of writing*.(2003, p.136)

In short, what started in 1843 as an experiment in style, has ended in the early 20th century as a transformation of central philosophical disciplines. Of course, I am not claiming that most of continental philosophy just became literature, this would be a caricature. A Non-argumentative style is not always used in an exclusive way, but the pressure often results in a discourse that is a bit poetic-metaphor, a bit aphoristic, a bit playing with words (from etymologies to lacanesque coincidences) Typical continental style (and here, we are aware of the dangers of one-sided generalization) has come closer to literary style than philosophy has been in the hands of Descartes, Spinoza and Locke. Most continental philosophers still argue with the reader and with their predecessors and opponents, but arguments tend to be less explicit, to be often immersed in a medium of non-argumentative style, ranging from poetic flights to political invective. For instance, the appeals to authority of the great philosophers or thinkers in general of the past (ranging from Presocratics, through Plato, Saint Paul, Marquis de Sade, to Heidegger) are rarely presented as such, but are masked as invocations of great truths with almost mystical appeal, with no rational explanation of why we should trust, say, Heraclitus rather than Chrysipus, or Saint Paul rather than Celsus.

I want now to make a further step and look for the common element in the ideas so far illustrated in the domains of writing about passion, religion, art, play and unconscious. It seems that the basic line is that the style should follow the domain. In particular, since a-rational domains are philosophically central, the style of philosophy should come closer to the reality of the a-rational. The proposal seems to me to be far-reaching, if it is correct, as I hope it is; so I want to give it a name, unfortunately not a nice sounding one. Here is the idea generalized and put in a nutshell. Let me call it Stylistic-Methodological Constraint, SMC for short:

(SMC): The cognitive style, the language-style and the method of studying a domain D should follow the language-style and the manner of D itself. In particular, for a-rational domains, the cognitive style and the linguistic expression should minimize the use of (or perhaps completely eschew) traditional rationalist methods of enquiry and presentation.

The main consequence of SMC is that if D is non-cognitive, a-rational, irrational (e.g. the unconscious, will-for-power, desire, poetic language...), then the discourse about D inherits its characteristics, at least as much as it is possible within a professional philosophical discourse.

The crucial role of SMC lies in explaining the non-argumentative, poetic and sometimes logic-unfriendly style of a lot of mainstream continental writing. Analytic colleagues get nervous about it, and the malicious among them see it a symptom of craziness. SMC presents it as a principled choice, far from craziness. Since poetry and literature in general has been traditionally the medium of passion and affectivity, SMC will naturally favor a turn to literally culture away from the scientific one. Of course, once the SMC has become a norm, it will tend to recruit authors with literary talent, and the circle (virtuous or vicious, depending on the taste) will form itself.

Consider now how SMC interacts with A-RAT-mind, A-RAT-world and AHO. By the a-rationalist assumption A-RAT-mind a-rational or irrational domains— the unconscious, will-for-power, desire—are anthropologically central. Logocentrism is bad, it is the treason of the deepest human reality. But then, by AHO the a-rational is also ontologically central, and we get A-RAT-world. So, the unconscious, will-for-power, and/or desire should play a central role within ontology as well. But now, since they are non-rational they demands non-rational presentation, by SMC. Therefore, a central ontological domain has to be presented in a non-rational, non-argumentative way. The whole of philosophical discourse—and most importantly, ontology and epistemology—itself should be passionate, poetic, aphoristic, in short, non-argumentative, at least to some extent. This moves into the very heart of philosophy since non rational domains are central since Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Marx and Freud. Marxism has been since its beginnings oscillating between its Hegelian origin and the idea of scientific understanding of social reality and the "scientific socialism" as the alternative to mere utopia: early Marx vs.

Das Kapital, Korsch and Bloch vs. dialectical-cum-historical materialism, Heideggerian Marxism vs. Althusser. And the style has been following the characterization of the domain: objective historical development vs. suffering in alienation and appeal to the forces of revolutionary subjectivity and authenticity. On the more popular side, feminism has contributed to a political denigration of the rational as phallogocentric and patriarchal; not all feminists claim this, but those that claim have attracted most attention. (Again, I apologize for brevity and generalizations, but I need to paint a big picture on a small canvas. In the next section I mention the great continentals who did not succumb to SMC).

How about rational domains, I was asked by my colleague Kati Farkas? In the more radical branches of continental thought, they are disposed with in the following way: the rational is in fact seemingly rational. Logic is just expression of the will to power. Formal logic is part of the alienated, technological world, more recently of the male dominated world: logocentrism goes with phallogocentrism. Of course, not all contemporary continentals follow this lead. But many, and the most vociferous ones do.

Thanks to SMC, continental philosophy has been vastly more successful in catering to the immediate and pressing concerns of arts and humanities than its analytic rival. Its readiness to tolerate, if not to encourage essayistic style, in particular a mixture of literary and philosophical manner of writing, its constant reference to matters cultural and artistic, its willingness to give up the truth-directedness, the goal of clarity and elimination of ambiguity in the interest of other goals (artistic finesse, political militancy or provocation and the like) has made it much more acceptable to the departments of English, cultural studies or film theory.

4 From phenomenology to the post-heideggerian scene

Back to the more rationalistic continental thinkers. With the principles LISTED, often merely implicit but powerfully at work, we have most elements of the rifting before ourselves. However, the final split did not occur at the end of 19th century, when all the elements were already present. The a-rationalist thinkers were marginal in the academic community, thought strongly present in the culture, so their influence took half a century to produce dramatic results. It needed a detour through Husserl's phenomenology, to conquer mainstream philosophy, with Martin Heidegger as the main crea-

tive force, who gave the continental philosophy its definitive face.

Husserl is one of the most interesting figures of the whole story. In the half a century of his creative work he travelled the road from traditional, realistic, logic-focused and science-friendly view through various versions of anti-realism, to the distinctly continental "life-world" synthesis of his late years. Along the way he formed the young Heidegger. With all these contributions he decisively contributed to the genesis of the main profile of continental philosophy of the 20th century. I will not deal with his work here, except for noting a few points.

First, his trajectory recapitulates the main stages of the continental rifting. Only in the late work the moves are made that are reminiscent of AHO, namely the introduction of the world of everyday experience with a historical component into the very heart of philosophy. The rest will be done by Heidegger. Husserl's mathematical background, his keen interest in logic and his positive attitude to classical logic (in contrast, to, say its Hegelian counterparts) keeps him in the tradition of the founding fathers of modern philosophy, and has kept him close to at least some fundamental ideas of Frege (and thus to the analytic strand). He managed, however, since *Logical investigations* to combine this interest with an interest in experience of thinking or thinking-as-experience (rather foreign to Frege), to combine it with anti-realism in *Ideas* and in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and finally, and most provocatively, with investigations into pre-predicative experience.²⁰

Note the central importance of Husserl's idealist turn (*Ideas, Cartesian Meditations*), and the placing of the whole issue of the causal structure of the external world "in parenthesis". The phenomenal world, thus identified, is for him still governed by a deeply logical structure. The investigations of pre-predicative experience open the door to ascribing two further, already introduced crucial features to this experience and its *Lebenswelt*, historicity and "a-rationality", in the sense of the domination of non-cognitive factors (e.g. *Lebenswelt* being structured in terms of our non-cognitive concerns, "caring", or our drives). Pre-predicative experience could have a historical structure, moving from one typical shape to another, in historical time. And, secondly, the basic motive forces in the pre-

²⁰ Thanks go to Masha Trofimova, whose doctorate dissertation on Husserl, defended at CEU, inspired these comments.

predicative experience might be basically a-rational, if not downright irrational. Husserl accepts none of the two possibilities. As for the first, he is clearly interested in basic structures of pre-predicative experience that don't seem to be historically conditioned. However, his investigations of the temporal structure of consciousness can be used as a spring-board, extending the relevant temporality to the framework of human history as a whole. As for the second, one can illustrate his loyalty to the tradition by pointing to his view about pre-predicative bases of cognition: it is the interest in finding how things are, even in coming to know about them. It is not a pragmatic interest, let alone emotional or passion-based interest. However, it is easy to feel or at least to understand the temptation to accept the two features. Acceptance of the second alone, but in a realist framework, is exemplified by Scheler, in a less realist or downright anti-realist framework by existentialists. Heidegger accepts both, within otherwise dramatically modified understanding of the framework designated by Husserl as *Lebenswelt*. In *Sein und Zeit* he clearly accepts the second (with notions like care, *Angst* and their kin), in later works the first as well. The road from realism to AHO has thus been travelled through.

Second, phenomenology provides an important contribution to the further development of continental philosophy, and this is the insistence upon the non-reductive nature of objects and properties in the world of experience. The properties in this world are richly anthro-po-centric : the world is full of color and taste, but also of "sound and fury", of sad and happy scenes and vistas, of natural beauty and ugliness: of secondary qualities, emotional properties and, most importantly, of significances, of humanly relevant sense and meaning (*Sinn*) of things and events. No question of reducing them to pairs of physical-properties-plus-subjective-reactions. They are there, making up the meaningful world of human life. The analytic tradition, of course, admits that properties are there, at least for us, but its mainstream representatives demand a physicalist explanation: either dispositionalist, of purely physicalistic, or subjectivist-eliminativist. Authors that don't make this demand create a bridge over the rift, most famously John McDowell (and recently Akeel Bilgrami).

A fine illustration of the continental-analytic contrast in this field is offered by the sub-domain of investigation into body and embodiment. For phenomenology, the body is the experienced body (liv-

ing Leib), the carrier of experiences, central to us in our normal life. Some organs make their appearance in this context, but one never does, namely the brain. The "Eigenleib" offers no direct information about the brain. On the analytic side, ninety percent effort and interest is directed to that organ: the mind-body problem is centrally the *mind-brain* problem. The remaining ten percent offers a bridge to the phenomenological tradition, and a very useful and reliable one, for that matter, as we mentioned in the Introduction. So much about phenomenology, with sincere apologies for brevity.

With Heidegger all pieces of the puzzle will come together. A new element makes its appearance, crucial in itself, but fortunately not contributing to the rift, namely the centrality of language. It will be shared by most important currents of thought in the first half of 20th century and even later; the continental—analytic divide will show not in attention to language, but to the kind of discourse that is being privileged: poetic, literary –philosophical (Plato), and gnomic-philosophical (Presocratics) on the one side, and scientific, with elements of mathematical logic in use, on the other. A shared interest in ordinary language will occasionally serve as a bridge.

Consider now the old friends. The two tectonic processes that have brought philosophy to its present stage. First, historicization of ontology. Being as such has a history, and it essentially involves human history, commanding it and structuring it.

This history has the well known structure of Fall and Redemption, alienation and return, as Mulhall has nicely shown in his (2005).

BASIS	ALIENATED FORM: THE FALL	SUBJECT
B E I N G	FORGETTING (INAUTH- ← ENTICITY, NIGHT -ERA OF METAPH.)	DASEIN -ME
SEIN / TIME , LANGUAGE		

The move of historicizing ontology and thereby ontologizing human history has had a special impact upon understanding history of philosophy. As usual, Hegel is the founding father and Heidegger the main revolutionary. The whole of cultural history being

ontologized, it is accepted that cultural changes might be equal to, or at least point to changes in the fundamental ontological configuration of the world and man's role in it. As mentioned, it is then normal for the philosopher to see history of philosophy as a privileged part of cultural history: its foundation, or pivot, or at least, its most telling aspect. So history of views about Geist (in its various incarnations under various names) or Sein becomes interpreted as the history of the very item itself: history of Spirit, of Being and the like. By doing history of philosophy, one does participate in the ontological history itself. This changes the self-understanding of philosophers: if I, the philosopher, get the things right, the things themselves get in their right state in my thinking and writing. It also enhances the role of history of philosophy in philosophy itself: if you want to know how Being was "communicating" with the mankind in Middle Ages (either hiding or revealing Itself), just study medieval philosophers. The history of philosophy becomes almost the center of philosophy. In Heidegger this line gets combined, step-by-step, with the importance of poetic language; in history of philosophy this will favor writers like Presocratics who write in gnomic sentences or verse, or Nietzsche.

One more thing happens, namely the birth of "negative ontology", in the sense of "*via negativa*", the characterization of the ultimate reality just by denying any ordinary properties to it. Since late Husserl there is a tendency to move clearly ontological issues into this negative, shadowy domain. In Husserl it is the *epoche*, the "don't ask" about the ultimate nature of reality. In Heidegger the issue of what is Being itself is never addressed directly, and in his later work one notices quasi-mystical silence about its ultimate nature. In the historicized ontology, we encounter ignorance of the future face-of-the Being. This *via negativa* culminates in Derrida, and is implicitly there in Foucault's silence about the ultimate. With post-structuralism one starts directly deconstructing ontological structures: fundamental vs. derived, primary vs. secondary and the like. Not that the secondary becomes primary (although sometimes it does), but that the distinction itself loses its relevance. Little is left, after the deconstructive work is done: no foundations, no ordering, just a free play, at best. It is hard to imagine a more fundamental contrast with the analytic obsession both with the commonsense and the scientific ontology. In the aftermath of all this, the links with traditionally central ontological problematic become attenuated.

Consider now our second old friend, the rejection of rationality, staying with the more moderate thesis, merely about nature of our mind, the A-RAT-mind. Let me borrow from Richard Wolin two dramatic quotes he uses as mottos for his book on "The Seduction of Unreason" (2004). The first is from Heidegger, the second from Foucault, both commenting Nietzsche. First, Heidegger.²¹

Thinking begins only when we have come to know that Reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stubborn adversary of thought. ("The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" in his *Off the beaten track*, 2002, CUP, p. 199).

The next is Foucault. In the text quoted ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History", he talks about Nietzsche, and in the last lines of the famous essay he will endorse the view, speaking of "the injustice proper to the will of knowledge" (1977, p.164):

All knowledge rests upon injustice; there is no right, not even in the act of knowing, to truth or a foundation for truth; and the instinct for knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind. (1977, p. 163.)

Ironically, in his polemic with Chomsky, Foucault insists that the notion of justice is deeply suspect (1974, p. 187); so one might wonder with what right he is using the notion, and condemning (what he himself describes as) injustice.

²¹ Renato Cristin tries to show in his *Heidegger And Leibniz, Reason and the Path* Kluwer, 1998, that Heidegger is closer to the reason than it is usually thought. The idea of reason that is called into play here is different from the traditional ratio and represents the point of arrival of Heidegger's path. But to be different does not mean to deny reason, nor is there any absence of reflection: "meditating thought does not happen without effort, almost by itself; in this respect it is like calculating thought. But meditating thought requires an even greater effort." (quote from Heidegger, NM) It is an effort of the reason to overcome the limits of rationalism and to reawaken to a new way of thinking: "once meditating thought is well awake, reflection will go on incessantly."¹³⁰

but his own conclusions are more poetic than argumentative:

The path along which Heidegger reaches us, and penetrates to the very heart of our philosophical thought, is arduous and dangerous precisely because it bears within itself the impressions of the entire tradition, without any exceptions. It is the riskiest of all paths because, while straying far from rationalism, it leads one to think to the bottom of things, in the phenomenological spirit of a search for the things themselves, the essence of reason (Ibid.)

Even if the quotations are taken out of context, and presented in their drastic nudity, there is something to them. Indeed, for Heidegger the traditional forms of rationality are all on the side of the fallen humanity: classical logic, scientific thinking, technological intelligence and rational planning. In contrast, the authentic forms of Dasein are famously given in the early work through existential, emotionally colored attitudes, above all the attitude of care. In later work a crucial role will be played by art, and in particular poetry, and the language of philosophy will tend to imitate the poetic language. Foucault most often writes in the spirit of the quotation; rarely, and almost in passing he notes that maybe, some forms of “local knowledge” are not so bad (e.g. in the Preface of *Il faut défendre la société*, 1997.) An even more radical variant is to be found in Lacan who, as already mentioned, combines the play of words derived from the Freudian tradition of the study of slips of tongue with poetic variations on it, unexpectedly enriched by mathematical looking formulae and diagrams, which, however, in their interpretation offer a wide space to freedom, multiple ambiguity and other typical poetical virtues.

III. Conclusion: between hope and despair

Let me summarize the tectonic development sketched so far. On the continental side we first have the AHO-rule: many prominent philosophers accept the idea that world is basically human world, so that anthropological problematic belongs to the very heart of the ontology of the world. (Others, following Husserl’s strategy of *epoche*, accept that there is, or might be, a material world largely indifferent to human concerns, but then claim that their philosophical interest is only in the “human reality”). The idea is extremely attractive, since it gives our concerns a cosmic and ontological dimension, in comparison to which the realistic naturalism, either early modern or contemporary analytic, seems pale, alienated and unappealing.

Second, we often have an acceptance of A-RAT-mind either alone or in addition to AHO: non-rational domains are anthropologically central. The followers of Nietzsche, the fans of psychoanalysis and many friends of existentialism belong here. The next step is combining A-RAT-mind with AHO, which results in the passage to A-RAT-world: desire, affect and drive are features of the deep reality of the world. We end with a philosophical ontology often inimical to rationalism, enjoining the thinkers

to turn the drive *t* into the ontological basis of reality. (Not all continentals join in. Some stay content with AHO, others with A-RAT-mind, e.g. most Lacanians who are not interested in general ontology).

By SMC, the domain, either simply mental-affective and/or ontological-arational, should then be presented in an a-rational (paradoxical, etc.) mode. If the style of thinking and of writing turn to poetic and non-argumentative in general on the continental side, and on the opposite side favor detailed, explicit and even regimented argumentation, keeping a strong connection to logic (indeed, to technical mathematical logic), the dialog threatens to end before it begins. “This is poetry, not philosophy; where is the argument?” is the typical reaction of one side. “This is dry, pedantic hair-splitting and humanly irrelevant”, is the reaction of the other. Further, in the post-modernist phase the topics of knowledge, reality and truth are either deconstructed or, more often, set aside, whereas the cultural-political interest and stance are absolutely dominant, so the central interest diverge.

This cumulative effect, of course, creates big problems for bridging. Too many too energetic moves away from the classical problematic tend to widen the rift, and the remaining continental analytic-connections tend to snap. What is the worse case scenario, the geologists ask when it comes to rifting and other massive geological changes. This question, applied to our continental rift leads us to an interesting topic: two symmetrical kinds of danger lurking, one for the analytic and the other for the continental traditions. The dangers lie in the seduction to commit philosophically suicidal moves, abandoning philosophical thought for something completely different, bio-psychological sciences for the former, and cultural-political writing and activism for the later.

Let me put the matters briefly into historical and philosophical context. The idea of the end of philosophy has been seducing philosophers since Hegel. His triumphant claim that philosophy has ended, reached its perfection, indeed, in his own work, was inspiration and provocation for generations to come. Marx and his followers offered an alternative proposal, namely overcoming of philosophy: philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it, as the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach famously has it. Heidegger’s 1964 essay “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” has it that philosophy is metaphysics, and “metaphysics thinks being as being in the manner of

representational thinking which gives reasons". (1973.p. 55). Giving reasons is bad, as versions of A-RAT thesis and SMC suggest. So, the end of philosophy, Heidegger goes on to say, is "the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world."²² Heidegger's alternative is "thinking", open to what determines it, namely Being itself. The most recent continental version of the end and overcoming of philosophy claims that it should culminate and in a way disappear in "Theory". What is "Theory"? Let me quote Žižek who talks about "the deconstructionist/feminist/post Marxist/psychoanalytic/sociocritical/cultural studies etc. approach, ironically nicknamed 'Theory' (which, of course, is far from a unified field - the above chain is more a series of Wittgensteinian 'family resemblances') by its opponents" (2001, p. 1)²³ In short, the relevant End-of-philosophy thesis claims the following: philosophers should abandon the traditional philosophical reflection in favor of participating in more concrete theoretical and political practices.

Here is then the danger on the continental side that might give rise to despair: the AHO thesis gives cultural-historical-political practices an ontological status. Add the critical and deconstructive pathos: commenting these practices the philosopher gets rid of problematic and repressive metaphysics, and of the injustice of reason and knowledge. Philosophy moves to cultural politics, as Rorty wants it to move, and to Theory –cultural studies, black, feminist, gay studies–and the actual political struggle. They constitute whatever is its proper target of research and arena of activity. But the practices are already studied by cultural studies people, historians of literature, of political movements, etc., so the philosopher

just joins in. She or he starts talking about one's work as about post-philosophy. Richard Rorty as the continental refugee from his own tough naturalism has come to the same result: the only value of philosophy is its contribution to cultural politics (Rorty, 2007). The danger is that the link with philosophy becomes hardly more than a sentimental memory revealing itself in the borrowing of some terminology and in mentioning of grand names.

Let me mention the parallel danger for the tough naturalism on the analytic side. Authors like Stephen Stich, and Paul Churchland have dedicated their philosophical carriers to the task of criticizing the standard analytic philosophy, moving even closer towards science, mainly cognitive science and neuroscience. Of course, while criticizing philosophy one remains philosopher with a charming negative, critical pathos to boot. But the next generation, if it takes the advice of its teachers seriously just merges with scientists. Philosophy disappears as a discipline. The recent debates about "experimental philosophy" bear witness to the seduction. The twin dangers of disappearance of philosophy in the cumulative effect of either strong naturalism or strong culturalism might show one day their full teeth. :

Back to continental philosophy. An interesting further process is discernable along the way, a turn to pop-culture in post-philosophy. Where does it come from? First, pop-culture is very strong in culture. Second, and this is an internal philosophical reason, a strong value(s)-relativism accepted by main Theorists leads to a dramatic leveling, raising the status of pop-aspects and parts of culture: Madonna and soap operas are as good as Beethoven and Eisenstein. Third, the general market favors books on pop-culture: if you write about Madonna you sell hundred times more than if you write only about Heidegger or Lacan. So, the pop-elements of cultural-historical-political practices get a place of honor in "Theory". The more philosophically oriented post-structuralists (Derrida, Foucault) are read selectively in search for less philosophical (and more political) material. As Rorty said in the line we quoted, "the question "Is it true?" has yielded to the question "What's new?" (2007), p.92. Pop-philosophy, pop-culture and daily politics get combined in an easily marketable production. So, this is the worst scenario: continental tradition ends as pop-philosophy. Let us hope this will not happen.

Now, after exercising ourselves in philosophical plate tectonics we should return to the crucial question: what about bridging the rift? Is it an impossible

²² See the fine analysis in Joana Hodge (199), p. 148 ff and in Patrick L. Bourgeois (2001).

²³ Here is the context:

"... the principal contradiction of today's cinema studies is the one between the deconstructionist/feminist/post-Marxist/psychoanalytic/sociocritical/cultural studies etc. approach, ironically nicknamed 'Theory' (which, of course, is far from a unified field - the above chain is more a series of Wittgensteinian 'family resemblances') by its opponents, and the so-called 'Post-Theory', the cognitivist and/or historicist reaction to it. Here, however, we immediately encounter a paradox. Although Post-Theorists acknowledge the inner differences in the field of Theory (say, between the early Screen focus on interpellation, Gaze, suture, and the later more historicist-culturalist feminist orientation), they nonetheless emphasize a common Lacanian element as central. (2001, p 1)

mission? We have listed five theses that in our view distance the contemporary continental thought from the early modern and the contemporary analytic one. The last, the End of philosophy we may set aside, since here we consider philosophers doing their work without regret and without wish to change its deep nature. Let us look at possible compromises in regard to each of the remaining four.

First, the thesis that anthropological and historical is deeply ontological (AHO). Some actual cooperation is due to the fact that the participants simply abstract from it. One can do philosophy of mind inspired by both phenomenology and cognitive science, concentrating upon particular issues (e.g. the role of embodiment in experience) and abstracting from the ultimate framework. One investigator might view the research as simply research in human mind and body, the other as revealing the deep nature of Being itself, but as long as they keep this difference on the side, they might agree on everything else. Similarly, two philosophical scholars investigating a Greek philosopher might agree on everything internal (philological, conceptual, interpretative), but keep for themselves the ultimate judgment: for one the Being itself speaks in the work of the philosopher, for the other the philosopher is just an extremely clever and creative thinker that has figured out something true and important about reality. Similarly, many good analytic interpreters of Hegel try not to stress AHO, or just quietly set it aside (Brandt, 2002, Stern 2009, most chapters in the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*), the tactic that seems a bit funny given the centrality of AHO in Hegel's thought; but, funny or not it does work.

The other possibility is one of deeper agreement. An analytic philosopher might accept AHO, and defend it in an analytic style, with perspicuous and provocative arguments (even using some formal logic). Or, her continental colleague might give up on AHO, and thus narrow the gap along one essential dimension.

Second, the thesis that the central element of human mind is a-rational, the A-RAT-mind. By itself, it should give no offence to the analytic side, since it is just a dramatized Humeanism about motivation and action. If presented in a neutral style, as it was done by Maine de Biran two centuries ago, it is very much discussable in a joint, continental-analytic framework.

In contrast, the third thesis, that the basic reality of the world is akin to the a-rational element of human mind, A-RAT-world, is the last to be accepted

by analytic philosophers, since it combines a-rationality view with AHO that is deeply problematic for analytic philosophers. No productive dialogue on this is in sight.

What about the call to a more literary, less argumentative style, grounded in SMC and in the a-rationality of the domain of interest? In good old times the contrast in style was compatible with important agreement(s). For instance, although Marcus Aurelius writes as a good, sophisticated literary writer (who has learned his style by studying a refined Hellenistic epic, "The Argonauts"), he is philosophically close to the dry and "analytic" Chrysippus, the logic genius who invented propositional logic: they are both Stoics of the same school. So, why not today? Well, there is no dialogue between extremes. Derridian sophisticated, highly literary and allusive play with words is incompatible with a mania for seriously using formal logic in discussing every philosophical issue. What about less drastic differences? The example of Habermas nicely shows the situation "in the middle": a creative philosopher, writing in an argumentative, but rather heavy manner, rich with allusions to German theoretical heritage, but also to the analytic speech-act theory and theory of truth, is respected by both sides. Similarly, on the analytic side, the late Wittgenstein and the work of Austin on philosophy of language is attractive to many continentals, with their brilliant style, informal ways of presentation, and, in the case of Wittgenstein, his bracketing the issues of realism and the AHO.²⁴ Finally, also on the recent analytic side, the style of Bernard Williams has moved to a more literary one in his last works, but without drastic jumps; combined with his sensitivity to the central analytic issues, the final result is attractive to both camps. Finally, an ironic example: we quoted Rorty defending a turn to literary manner. It should be added, that he preserved his analytic manner in spite of the defence, and is excellent in a debate with his analytic colleagues (see Rorty and Engel, 2007).

And finally, why bother? Well, the profession as a whole would gain in respectability, students would be less confused, unitary criteria could be worked out. But what could each side gain by trying a compromise? The analytic philosophers might gain two important items. First, on the internal, philosophical side, they might widen their

²⁴ I have done my passage from my continental early youth to my analytic dissertation through a period of enthusiasm for Austin, and a lot of admiration for late Wittgenstein.

area(s) of interest. Topics like philosophy of history have been sadly neglected, philosophical reflections on culture are very much underdeveloped, and whole areas of history of philosophy are almost a taboo for them. These territories do present a challenge worth addressing. On the external, more social side, they might widen the range of audience, addressing people who are deeply curious about philosophical issues, but repelled by the cold and abstract style demanded by the analytic establishment.²⁵

Continental philosophers might gain from sheer clarity of exposition, and awareness of the demands of argumentation. Most of them do use arguments, but hide them in a literary and hermeneutic context. Once they make them clearer, their strength and weaknesses will reveal themselves, as they do in the Socratic dialogue. And finally, this kind of move might block the most dangerous, suicidal tendency so strong in present day continental writing, to melt into non-philosophical Theory, and perhaps finally disappear in sheer commenting media events and the daily politics. A modicum of analytic therapy might here prevent suicide.

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²⁵ Writing about political issues is another matter. Most well-known analytic philosophers who write for a wider audience, say in their blogs, are extremely good at presenting issues in an objective and distanced manner, and being fair to the opponent (who is never considered an enemy). But this makes them boring to those who have already taken sides, and want calls to action.

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