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# Phenomenology and Analysis

Essays in Central European Philosophy



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## Introduction

The history of philosophy of the twentieth century is most commonly characterized by the opposition of its two main movements: analytic philosophy and phenomenology (including the latter's successor movements, commonly – and misleadingly – referred to as continental philosophy). This simplistic view overlooks an important historical fact: in their early days the two movements were quite close to one another, as various recent studies have pointed out. Also, it has been shown that they have common roots in a tradition that is referred to as “Austrian” or “Central European Philosophy”. Often, philosophers in this tradition were significant as forerunners or founders of both movements. Consequently, a re-evaluation of the history of philosophy of the last century would do well to begin with a re-evaluation of the Central European tradition.

Moreover, when analytic philosophy and phenomenology started to diverge, it became unfashionable in both movements to do metaphysics or philosophical psychology. Indeed, in continental circles there are still philosophers who believe that a person who seriously thinks of doing metaphysics must have missed a lesson in the history of philosophy. There is, it is sometimes claimed, no metaphysics after Kant: the true philosophical method is transcendental. It concerns neither being nor mind taken as such, but instead something that is supposed to generate both terms of the intentional relation: the transcendental conditions, the transcendental subjectivity, the structures of intersubjective communication, etc. A parallel development took place among analytic philosophers who, impressed by the Vienna Circle's critique of metaphysics, held that the only legitimate way of doing philosophy consisted in an analysis of language. The only possible form of metaphysics, according to this tradition, is thus an investigation into the linguistic constructions we use to describe the world, and the only possible philosophy of mind can be an exegesis of ways we describe our mental states. Traditional metaphysics and philosophical psychology (at least in so far as this involves an ontology of mind) has been relegated to the philosophical museum.

This anti-metaphysical approach to philosophy is no longer as dominant as it once was. Recent years have seen a welcome revival of in-

terest in metaphysics and philosophical psychology. Ironically, the central European tradition is not only a precursor of the two movements; it is also particularly attractive to those philosophers who advocate a revival of metaphysics and philosophical psychology. This tradition is associated with the names of Bernard Bolzano, Franz Brentano, Alexius Meinong, Edmund Husserl, the Vienna Circle and their followers. It emerged in Germany and Austria and spread quickly to the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy and Slovenia. At its beginning it was distinguished by an anti-Kantian and broadly descriptive-psychological attitude. Nowadays it constitutes an interesting bridge between the so-called “continental” and “analytic” philosophy, as it takes seriously both descriptive psychology and traditional ontological issues as well as the postulates of “scientific philosophy” and the logical and mathematical tools.

This volume presents contributions by philosophers from Central Europe, Great Britain and North-America that provide characterizations of both the history and present state of this philosophical tradition. The first two papers, by Peter Simons and by Barry Smith, reflect on the nature and distinctive features of Austrian philosophy; thus they provide a general introduction to the field that does not only set up the historical background, but also brings to the fore those aspects of this tradition that make it relevant for contemporary research.

The papers in the following group focus on one or more prominent figure(s) of the central European tradition. The first three of them center on the philosophy of Bernard Bolzano. Dagfinn Føllesdal introduces Bernard Bolzano’s main achievements for philosophy, Christian Beyer discusses systematically Bolzano’s and Husserl’s views on singular existential statements, and Edgar Morscher shows how Bolzano’s theory of objects might have led to Meinong’s *Gegenstandstheorie*. In the following contribution, Arkadiusz Chrudzimski presents an interpretation of the latter that avoids ontological extravagancies.

The essays in the next group focus primarily on Brentano and Husserl: Wilhelm Baumgartner explores why Brentano’s philosophy fitted well within the cultural climate of Austria at the time. Dieter Münch reflects on the roots of Brentano’s philosophy in the reception of Aristotle among Catholic circles in South Germany. Wolfgang Huemer traces the relations between Husserl and the Brentano School, focusing on the debate

concerning psychologism. Gianfranco Soldati discusses Husserl's theory of abstraction and abstract objects and contrasts it with Frege's, and Tommaso Piazza compares Husserl's and Schlick's views on the synthetic *a priori*. The group of papers that focus on particular central European philosophers ends with Robin Rollinger's contribution, which outlines and compares Bolzano's, Brentano's, Meinong's, and Husserl's theories of judgment.

The essays in the final group develop further some of the themes that were dominant in the Central European tradition in philosophy, and thus show the relevance and importance of this tradition for a systematic approach to philosophical problems. Roberto Poli focuses on Brentano's theory of categories; Dale Jacquette shows how Meinong's views on assumptions could inform the debate in the philosophy of artificial intelligence; and Jan Woleński discusses Brentano's critique of the scholastic negative theory of evil, based on which he develops a generalized logical square of axiological modalities.

First and foremost, we would like to thank all of the contributors who have made this collection possible. Our particular thanks go to Phillip Meadows for his valuable help with proofreading the English contributions.

Most papers were written for this volume. Barry Smith's article "Austria and the Rise of Scientific Philosophy" has been previously published (in: K. Lehrer and J. C. Marek (eds.), *Austrian Philosophy Past and Present*, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1996, pp. 1–20). We would like to thank *Kluwer Academic Publishers* for the kind permission to reprint this material. An English translation of Dagfinn Føllesdal's "Bolzanos bleibende Leistungen" (which was originally written in German) was published under the title "Bolzano and Analytic Philosophy", in: Wolfgang Künne, Mark Siebel, and Mark Textor (eds), *Grazer philosophische Studien* 53 (1998), pp. 1–11. We would also like to thank Rodopi for the kind permission to print this article. A French version of Dieter Münch's contribution appears in D. Thouard (ed.), *Aristote au XIXe Siecle (Cahiers de Philologie, série: Apparat Critique)*, Villeneuve d'Ascq et Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion. Our thanks go to Dieter Münch for his kind permission to print the German version of the text.

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*The editors*

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