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A Genealogical Notion*

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This is a book-length discussion[1] of a question to which most professional philosophers have considered answers, even if only at relaxed after-dinner conversations. In fact the book is a clear exemplar of the institution it purports to characterize, in that it perspicuously sets the problem, explores a wide range of possible answers on the basis of a deep acquaintance with its subject, its present standing and its history, puts forward sharp criticisms of most of those answers, and lucidly presents an alternative account *prima facie* capable of withstanding criticisms. It reminds one of classic exercises of the analytic practice, such as David Lewis's *Convention* or Harry Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*, even if the concepts those works purport to characterize have a wider use than *analytic philosophy*.

Even though 'analytic philosophy' (abbreviated as 'AP' henceforth) is primarily used to refer to a "school of thought" or intellectual tradition and its practitioners, it is useful I think to focus on its application to the *outputs* of philosophical work, such as talks, papers or books; a thinker can then be counted as 'analytic' if he mostly produces analytic output, and the tradition itself would be the historically evolving social setting embracing those works and thinkers. Glock follows this practice. For instance, he asks us to imagine reading for a month the *Journal of Philosophy* in the mornings, and Plotinus, Vico, Hamann, Schelling, Hegel, Heidegger, Derrida, Irigaray, Deleuze and Kristeva in the afternoon – a thought-experiment intended to establish that "analytic philosophy constitutes a distinct philosophical phenomenon" [p. 9]; and many of the counterexamples to proposals to define the notion that he provides are philosophical works.

In his introductory chapter, Glock points out that the concept he wants to characterize has an established usage, even if only among a restricted class of concept-users (professional philosophers and those that interact with them). He also notes that the definition he looks for can hardly be expected to provide a hidden "real essence" of what it applies to, in the way that, on the Kripke-Putnam view about definitions of natural kinds, *being* H_2O provides the essence of water. My final proposal will in a way question this presumption, for

it shares with the Kripke-Putnam view the idea that only "experts" are in a position to delineate the precise details of the extension. For most of the book, Glock considers "analytic" proposals that do attempt to properly specify the contours of the concept, characterizing its correct extension in an illuminating way. While on the one hand there is, according to him, some room for error in specific proposals, to be pinpointed relative to data from usage, on the other one can expect the evidence for and against different proposals to come from armchair considerations. After a historical survey in chapter 2, chapters 3 to 7 of the book are devoted to critical examinations of proposals he considers inadequate. In general I found the criticisms in those chapters persuasive, and the considerations brought to bear illuminating and informative.

Chapter 3 deals with, roughly, spatial issues, and chapter 4 with temporal ones. Chapter 3 rejects the clearly inadequate taxonomic guidance offered by the geographical connotations in 'Continental Philosophy'; although the point is not very controversial, the considerations are usually informative. AP was partly "continental" in its origin, and it is becoming a more globalized pursuit every day, as witnessed by this very volume. The temporal issues discussed in chapter 4 have to do with the criticisms that analytic philosophers ignore the history of the subject at their peril, and that they distort it when they do not. Here Glock usefully distinguishes stronger from weaker historicist claims, to conclude that AP is no more subject to reasonable objections on the basis of historical considerations than any other systematic approach to philosophy.

In chapter 5, Glock considers *prima facie* more promising *topical* definitions; after all, one would expect that a philosophical or scientific tradition, purporting to provide knowledgeable answers to the set of questions characterizing its research topic, be identified by its distinctive proposals – general indications on how to answer those questions. Dummett's (1993) well-known proposal follows this pattern; according to it, the "linguistic turn" distinguishes AP, by placing the philosophy of language at the core of the discipline. However, it will also be mostly uncontroversial that proposals along these lines will not do, at least if the project is descriptive and not stipulative, as Glock sensibly has set it up at the beginning. Dummett's proposal both under-generates and over-generates – as do other proposals of this kind, such as the contention that what distinguishes AP is an anti-metaphysical attitude or a scientistic or reductive naturalistic spirit. Once again, although Glock's criticisms will be, I think, widely accepted, he presents them in an illuminating and generally informative way.

Chapter 6 deals with another set of *prima facie* promising proposals which Glock shows to be inadequate. This time the idea is that it is not the *content* of specific philosophical proposals that characterizes AP, but the *method* of approaching them. The problem again is that sufficiently precise characterizations of what the analytic method is supposed to be (say, the use of mathematical logic as a tool in framing theoretical proposals) are too ex-

clusionary, while vaguer descriptions (such as the "rationalist" characterization, appealing to clarity in stating claims and argumentative perspicuity in providing support for them) are too inclusive. Chapter 7 examines, with equally disappointing results, claims about ethical or political views or attitudes allegedly distinctive of AP. Chapter 8, which contains Glock's own proposal, will be presently considered in more detail; the final chapter 9 is devoted to a once again all-but-judicious examination of contemporary disputes involving the "analytic" and "continental" approaches and their foreseeable future, with the alleged ailments and strengths of one and the other: the intellectual imposture revealed by the Sokal affair on the continental side, charges of scholasticism and technical superfluity against the analytic camp, etc.

Let us then finally examine Glock's own proposal in chapter 8. As we will see, it is again very reasonable; my only complaint is that, given the independent interest of a general account of the kind of concept that *analytic philosophy* illustrates (as we are about to see, what we might call *genealogical notions*), it receives a disappointingly short treatment. In fact, at most five pages of the chapter, and thus of the entire book, are devoted to presenting and developing it. After such a meticulous examination of the difficulties other proposals confront, this feels a bit like a letdown. This is why I will devote the remainder of my review to press Glock to elaborate a little on his proposal.

Given the problems of the more ambitious "intrinsic" characterizations of the institution summarized above, a natural alternative is skepticism: to conclude that the concept of analytic philosophy is vacuous. A perhaps less despairing idea is to abandon the project of an "analytic" definition, one providing necessary and sufficient conditions for its application. The usual suggestion here is to appeal to Wittgensteinian family resemblances or, relatedly, prototype-based concepts. The main problem with this approach, as many writers have pointed out, is that if one tries to specify the respects of similarity to the prototype and their relative weights in classifying individuals which characterize the concept (as one should, to avoid well-founded charges of vacuity: everything resembles everything else in some respects), one will probably end up with a traditional definition, framed in a more complex shape. Moreover, the suggestion lacks ambition; perhaps our ordinary concepts of a bird or a tree are prototype-based; but that does not exclude the possibility of a more precise, vagueness-reducing characterization still vindicating the adequacy of the ordinary concept in delimiting a natural extension with sufficient accuracy, in those two cases perhaps a scientific, evolutionary and thereby relational one.

This goes perhaps too much in the direction of the Kripke-Putnam view that Glock had earlier rejected, but a related alternative is to consider relational, "extrinsic" but nonetheless analytical characterizations providing necessary and sufficient conditions that can be justified from the armchair. The one Glock ultimately provides is of this sort, although – puzzlingly in my

view, for reasons I will provide presently – he combines it with a family resemblance one.

I have characterized as 'intrinsic' the definitions that do not work, and as 'extrinsic' those that might work, in both cases placing the expressions inside scare quotes. A good comparison that may help explain what I have in mind in proceeding in this fashion, for which there is a good reservoir of interesting literature on which we can draw, is provided by the case of *art*.[2] There have been many attempts throughout the history of philosophy to define the institution of art, most of them initially focusing on its products, correspondingly to what we proposed at the outset for the case at stake. To distinguish artworks from other things, traditional approaches focused on properties, if not properly speaking *intrinsic* to them (hence the scare quotes), at least perceptively discernible in the work by appropriate subjects (which is what I will mean henceforth by the adjective, dropping the scare quotes): representational or "imitative" features, an "aesthetic" form, expressive qualities, or their capacity to produce experiences of a peculiar sort ("intrinsically valuable experience that results from close attention to the sensuous features of an object or to an imaginary world it projects", as Stecker (2003), p. 142 puts it). These accounts are evaluated relative to the usual criteria: whether they are non-circular, or at any rate sufficiently explanatory of proper taxonomic practice; whether they collect all and only actual instances.

It seems clear, however, that icons of the modern Artworld such as Duchamp's ready-mades and Warhol's silk screen Brillo boxes put an insurmountable pressure on such intrinsic definitions of artworks. Consider the recent debate about the "authenticity" of some of Warhol's silk screens, the *Bruno B Red Self Portrait*, which the Andy Warhol Art Authentication Board stamped "Denied" after considering it inauthentic. As Dorment (2009), p. 18 points out, the result is that "no auction house or dealer will handle a work whose authenticity the board has questioned. A painting stamped DENIED is worthless". Presumably this is because, in not being considered a painting by Warhol, it has been demoted from its very status as a piece of art, to become the mere commercial pieces that other similar-looking silk screen printings are (as could be established by comparing their market value, if the debate subsides and the Board's decision becomes the established view). It is difficult to believe that any intrinsic features distinguish the demoted *Bruno B Red Self Portrait* from the authentic indistinguishable-looking "Red Self Portrait". The alternative is not to count any such pieces as artworks, but this reactionary attitude has very few supporters nowadays, and it is difficult to find good reasons for it in any case: there is little, if anything, to distinguish them in other respects (the technical difficulty of their production, their originality, not to mention the "intrinsic" features) from other pieces everybody wants to count as artworks.

In response to these counterexamples to intrinsic definitions, philosophers have recently advanced complex relational accounts of what an artwork is; the two most influential are the *institutional* account initially promoted by G. Dickie, which essentially appeals to a social institution, the "Artworld"; and the *historical* account initially put forward by A. Danto and later developed by J. Levinson, which appeals instead to the history leading to the production of the relevant object. This mirrors a general trend in the philosophy of language, with writers such as Austin and Searle, on the one hand, and Burge, Kripke, Kaplan, Perry and Putnam on the other, providing respectively social-institutional and historical characterizations of acts (and their outcomes) such as *asserting* in the first case and *referring* in the second. In metaphysics, more recently writers such as Thomasson (1999) have similarly argued that realists about works of fiction and the fictional characters that appear in them should not individuate them as abstract entities along traditional Platonic or Aristotelian lines, but should allow for their having an origin in time and also an end. For reasons that both Davies (2001) and Stecker (2003) helpfully summarize, most contemporary proposals in fact include aspects of both approaches, socio-institutional and historical, as well as features of traditional intrinsic characterizations. This is easy to understand: on the one hand, historical accounts need to specify some *origin*, and intrinsic accounts are well placed to characterize original artworks as such; on the other hand, institutional accounts require an informative way of characterizing the artwork-status-granting institutions, for which intrinsic-cum-historical characterizations are well placed.

Now, there are *prima facie* reasons to doubt these complex-relational accounts of Art, and thus to try to stick to intrinsic characterizations even in the face of the Warhol problem. Artworks have different, independent histories in different artistic traditions, and also many different institutionalized accoutrements (in some cases, it might be argued, verging on the non-existent). Correspondingly, we can imagine "Martian" artifacts that we would like to count as artworks.[3] This is not, of course, the place to pursue this issue beyond the limits of its comparative relevance. However, I do not think similar considerations would establish that there could be "Martian" analytic philosophy. Let us imagine that, of two pieces of work which, on the basis of the problems they confront, the general lines of the proposals they make, and the methods they use, an informed reader without knowledge of their more relational properties would count as equally "analytic", one is in fact a work in the intellectual tradition we call 'analytic philosophy' while the other is just an (English translation of an) obscure medieval or early-nineteenth-century Mittel-European polemicists (or, more fantastically, comes from an otherwise truly alien culture). It does not seem at all intuitively clear to me that the two are to count as cases of *analytic philosophy*, given the way I deploy that concept – except perhaps in a derived, metonymical sense.

So it seems that, both on account of the difficulties of the alternative "intrinsic" (geographical, topical or methodological) characterizations,[4] and also on the basis of its intuitive plausibility, a genealogical characterization of AP is just what is called for. As Hans Sluga puts it, in a text that Glock quotes [p. 219], "I take analytic philosophy as originating in the work of Frege, Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein, as encompassing the logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle, English ordinary language philosophy of the post-war period, American mainstream philosophy of recent decades, as well as their worldwide affiliates and descendents". As Glock indicates, Peter Hacker and others have come up with similar "historical or genetic" proposals such that "analytic philosophy is first and foremost a historical sequence of individuals and schools that influenced, and engaged in debate with, each other, without sharing any single doctrine, problem or method" [p. 220]. Williamson (2007), p. 21 concurs: [the term "analytic philosophy" is customarily applied to a broad, loose tradition held together by an intricate network of causal ties of influence and communication, not by shared essential properties of doctrine or method".

Glock mentions two challenges for accounts of this sort. The first concerns specifying "what kind of philosophical group are we dealing with" [p. 220]. Here he goes for a "tradition" (as opposed to a "school" or a "movement"), "not a blip on the radar screen, a fashion, fad or vogue … (but) a body of problems, methods and beliefs that is socially transmitted from the past and evolves over time" [p. 221]. The second concerns whether it captures the intuitive extension of 'analytic philosophy'. For that, a more precise description of the historical process to which the proposal appeals is needed. Glock focuses on defining what counts as influence among philosophers: "*A* has influenced *B* positively if there are clear affinities and convergences between the ideas of *B* and those of *A*, and *B* was familiar with the latter through reading or conversation. Replace 'affinities and convergences' by 'disagreements and divergences', and you get a criterion for negative influence … positive influence counts for more than negative influence" [p. 222]. The relevant sort of influence is a causal one, but there must be intentional aspects too, along the lines that Glock suggests; I will not question his proposal. In any case, it is clear that, by itself, appealing to relations of philosophical influence is not enough to define the extension we are looking for. As in the case of historical-reflexive definitions of 'artwork' such as Danto's or Levinson's, a characterization of the origin is required, and, exactly as in that case the features mentioned in intrinsic accounts proved to be helpful, in our case it seems obvious that an appeal to the problems, proposals and methods that have been suggested as characteristic of the analytic tradition should help to identify the original works in the tradition, presumably by Frege, Moore, Russell and Wittgenstein.

But this is not the line that Glock appears to take. Instead, he indicates that the necessity to supplement the appeal to philosophical influence, so as to get the origin right, and to make decisions in borderline cases (say, when we find cases of influences among what we would like to count as analytic and non-analytic works), "suggest that the historical or genetic account requires supplementation by a family resemblance perspective" [p. 223]. A second reason that he provides for the need of this supplementation is "to preserve a kernel of truth in the rationalist conception … philosophers that do not form part of analytic philosophy … can be more or less analytic, and may be among the precursors of analytic philosophy" [*ibid*.]; he had earlier characterized such "rationalist conception" by invoking a quotation from D. Føllesdal, to the effect that "analytic philosophy is very strongly concerned with argument and justification" [p. 174]. This is thus Glock's final proposal:

> I want to argue in favour of *combining* a historical and a family resemblance approach. We learn most about analytic philosophy by regarding it as a tradition that is held together *both* by ties of influence *and* by a family of partially overlapping features. Methodological and stylistic ideas which are less general than clarity and argument play a particularly important role here. For example, most analytic philosophers rely on methods of sentential paraphrase and conceptual articulation, whether or not these methods are guided more by artificial logical calculi or more by the subtleties of ordinary use. They also tend to show an interest in logic and language (variously conceived). There is even one point of widespread consensus as regards the role of science. Naturalists *à la* Quine, Kantian or Wittgensteinian anti-naturalists and even proponents of essentialist metaphysics *à la* Kripke reject the ultra-rationalist Hegelian idea that philosophy can pronounce *a priori* on the nature of the world, independently of the special sciences [pp. 223-4].

In what follows, I want to take issue with the appeal to family resemblances, mostly with the aim of asking Glock to elaborate a bit more on his proposal, for our disagreement may ultimately be merely verbal. I have already indicated my general misgivings about the appeal to family resemblances: once we specify enough of the features relevant for the resemblance, as we must, we presumably end up with a more or less vague traditional analytical definition; moreover, the fact that an ordinary conception is of this sort does not exclude more hidden and appropriate characterizations, in our case the one an expert can provide by properly developing the genealogical account, properly specifying the origin and the lines of influence.

Perhaps with his appeal to "family resemblance" considerations, Glock only means that a properly articulated historical characterization should include aspects of the intrinsic traditional ones. And this is correct, as we have seen. In the first place, in order to properly define the origins of AP, we will have to be more specific about the problems, proposals and methods that se-

lect the works of Frege, Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein at the beginning of the tradition.[5] In the second place, if we try to be more specific about the intentional aspects involved in the notion of *philosophical influence*, we will in all probability come to appreciate why the more intrinsic features that Glock mentions in the paragraph just quoted, concerning philosophical problems addressed, methods used to deal with them, and proposals made in the end, do apply in general to analytic works and the philosophers producing them.

However, none of this supports Glock's considerations to add "family resemblance" traits to the definition of *analytic philosophy*. In the first place, the genealogical characterization, properly completed with the description of the origin and the relevant lines of influence, is quite capable by itself to delineate as much as we need "the diachronic continuities and discontinuities within the analytic tradition, [and] … the *synchronic* identity of the movement" [p. 223]. In the second place, such a properly developed historical characterization is quite enough to then be used to explain in what sense "philosophers that do not form part of analytic philosophy … can be more or less analytic, and may be among the precursors of analytic philosophy" [*ibid*]; as I mentioned before, this would be a use of the concept explained as a metonymical transfer.

As I suggested, this discrepancy may ultimately be minor and terminological; what Glock means with his claim that analytic philosophy is "a tradition that is held together *both* by ties of influence *and* by a family of partially overlapping features" is perhaps what I mean by saying that it should be given an adequate genealogical characterization, which, as such, will have to mention that "family of partially overlapping features" in describing the origins of AP and the lines of influence among analytic philosophers. This is what is to be expected, given the great amount of agreement with his views that I have already had the opportunity to emphasize in this review; but I thought it might be helpful to take the opportunity to ask him whether this is so.[*]

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NOTES

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[1] Hans-Johann Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* Cambridge, CUP, 2008.

[2] Stecker (2003) and Davies (2001) are good recent reviews of the state of the art.

[3] Adajian (2010) develops criticisms along these lines, and suggests a "natural kind" proposal based on Richard Boyd's Homeostatic Property Cluster account of biological kinds.

[4] I use the scare-quotes here for similar reasons to the ones in the case of its application to characterizations of artworks; I will similarly drop then henceforth.

[5] Assuming this is the stand we take on the disputed topic of what exactly is the origin of AP, following the quotation from Sluga a few paragraphs back, as Glock in fact does in the section immediately following the one we are commenting, on "the contours of the analytic tradition".

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RESUMEN

Tras un examen crítico de diversos intentos para caracterizar la tradición analítica en filosofía, Hanjo Glock defiende en el libro aquí comentado que la filosofía analítica es "una tradición a la que mantienen unida tanto las líneas de influencia como una familia de rasgos que se solapan parcialmente". En este trabajo se cuestiona la necesidad de apelar al componente de "parecidos de familia", arguyendo en contra de esto que una caracterización genealógica es bastante (en parte mediante la comparación con intentos análogos para definir el arte, los géneros y tradiciones artísticas). Sin embargo, señalo al final que las diferencias entre nuestros puntos de vista pueden ser meramente terminológicas, por cuanto, propiamente entendida, la caracterización genealógica debe necesariamente mencionar una "familia de rasgos que se solapan parcialmente" al describir los orígenes de la filosofía analítica y las líneas de influencia entre filósofos que constituyen la tradición.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *filosofía analítica, genealogía, parecidos de familia, tradiciones intelectuales, definiciones*.

ABSTRACT

After a critical examination of several attempts to characterize the Analytic tradition in philosophy, in the book here discussed Hanjo Glock goes on to contend that Analytic Philosophy is "a tradition that is held together both by ties of influence and by a family of partially overlapping features". Here I question the need to appeal to a "family resemblance" component, arguing instead (in part by drawing on related attempts to characterize art, art genres and art schools) for a genealogical characterization. Nonetheless, I point out that the difference between these two views might end being merely terminological, for, properly understood, a genealogical characterization will have to mention a "family of partially overlapping features" in describing the origins of Analytic Philosophy and the lines of influence among analytic philosophers.

KEY WORDS: *Analytic Philosophy, Genealogy, Family Resemblance, Intellectual Traditions, Definition*.