

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Stylistic appearances and linguistic diversity

Filippo Contesi^{1,2,3}¹Department of Philosophy, University of Barcelona, Spain²LOGOS Research Group in Analytic Philosophy, Barcelona, Spain³Barcelona Institute of Analytic Philosophy, Spain**Correspondence**

Filippo Contesi, Department of Philosophy, University of Barcelona, Carrer de Montalegre, 6–8, Desp. 4009, Barcelona 08001, Spain

Email: filippo.contesi@gmail.com**Abstract**

Philosophy is beginning to pay problems of linguistic justice the attention they deserve in today's heavily interconnected and migrant world. Contemporary philosophy itself, however, has a particular problem of linguistic justice that deserves metaphilosophical attention. At least in the philosophical tradition that is mainstream in much of the world today, viz., analytic philosophy, methodological and sociological mechanisms make it the case that the voices of non-(native) Anglophone philosophers are substantially less heard. Among the mechanisms responsible for this situation, argues this paper, is the emphasis given by influential philosophical institutions to linguistic style and appearances as signs of clarity, precision, and rigour in the treatment of philosophical problems. Such an emphasis is not justifiable, in part because it deprives philosophy of a wider variety of perspectives. The paper concludes by presenting and motivating a recent initiative that aims to foster greater linguistic and cultural diversity within the profession.

KEYWORDS

analytic philosophy, appearances, Barcelona Principles, clarity, cultural diversity, English, lingua franca, linguistic justice, native language, philosophy, precision, rigour

1 | ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE

The role of language has for a while been seen as important in philosophical investigations. Indeed, it is traditionally seen as central to the philosophical tradition that is the most likely candidate as the current mainstream philosophical tradition: viz., analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophers, in particular those associated with the “linguistic turn,” have often seen language as the key to understanding the world philosophically.¹ The overt emphasis on

¹The expression “linguistic turn” was probably used for the first time in Bergmann 1953 but was widely popularized by Rorty 1967.

language in analytic philosophy has, however, diminished in recent decades. Much analytic philosophy published in influential journals today is not philosophy of language but philosophy of mind, epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and so on. Indeed, analytic philosophy is ever more embracing topics it was originally furthest from: analytic phenomenology, analytic idealism, analytic philosophy of religion, and so forth. Moreover, the methods employed by contemporary analytic philosophers do not necessarily conform to twentieth-century stereotypes of logical or ordinary language analyses.

Nonetheless, I argue, the emphasis on language is still covertly crucial in establishing what the ideal analytic philosophical contribution looks like, and hence in influencing which papers are published in the most influential analytic philosophy journals. This, however, has undesirable consequences on the internationalization of analytic philosophy. At a moment when academic globalization and migration should be standard, analytic philosophy remains too balkanized and unjustifiably burdened with structural barriers for non-native Anglophone philosophers. This is in part a consequence of, on the one hand, analytic philosophy being for a long time overwhelmingly practised in Anglophone countries and, on the other, the subsequent adoption of English as the lingua franca of much of academia. By now, of course, analytic philosophy has long been practised outside Anglophone countries. This calls for a change in the way analytic philosophers understand language in a globalized world, to avoid the “linguistic turn” in philosophy stagnating and turning into a “linguistic rut.”

The definition of analytic philosophy is a notoriously vexed question. That is perhaps not completely surprising if one considers that the definition of philosophy itself is heavily contested. There are, however, particular definitional difficulties that are proper to analytic philosophy. It is not clear, for instance, whether analytic philosophy of the early days is in completely the same tradition as the tradition practised today in a large number of philosophy departments worldwide. If the tradition is the same, there still appear to be significant differences among the philosophical views of different practitioners, working on so many different topics. Indeed, there were significant differences between the philosophical and metaphilosophical views of many of those whom we typically recognize as the founding fathers of the analytic philosophy tradition (see Wagner 2010).

It is, however, frequently quite possible to recognize a work of philosophy as belonging (or not) to the analytic tradition. Moreover, and more important for the purposes of this paper, current works of philosophy that we recognize as analytic often share a sufficient number of traits to make them recognizable as belonging to the philosophical tradition that started in the early twentieth century and that we call “analytic.” In my view, one important set of common traits of current works of analytic philosophy, especially those that are most valued, concerns style and the appearance of clarity, precision, and rigour.

1.1 | Preston

Let me start by considering three major views of the nature of analytic philosophy. The first is Aaron Preston's view that analytic philosophy exists only “as a social group rather than a philosophical group” (Preston 2007, 159). Preston's view is that analytic philosophy started with a common emphasis on the importance of language to philosophical inquiry. That emphasis on language was, in Preston's view, already an illusory commonality, since key figures of early analytic philosophy were in reality in sharp disagreement as to what the importance of language was to philosophy. Moreover, continues Preston, analytic philosophy lost even that (illusory) commonality beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day. According to Preston, analytic philosophy has in this second, post-linguistic, phase lost any properly speaking philosophical commonality. Instead, it remains only as a social group of scholars who act against common adversary groups of scholars, such as Continental philosophers.

Preston's social-institutional view has important merits. Institutional definitions have indeed been used with some success in attempting to define other long-lived, complex, and ongoing cultural and social phenomena, as in the case of art (see Dickie 1984). Moreover, Preston's view correctly captures the initial emphasis of analytic philosophy on language, as well as the later decrease in (overt) linguistic emphasis. Finally, analytic philosophy certainly identifies itself in large part in terms of a social group that is opposed to other groups within philosophy. The main worry I have with Preston's view is that it might obscure additional commonalities within *current* analytic philosophy.

For instance, to the extent that analytic philosophy is a social group, one might expect its members to have common features among themselves that go beyond their being part of the group. Indeed, one can identify some such features as a common emphasis on Anglophone texts, a common provenance from elite education institutions based in (majority) Anglophone countries, and so on.² Indeed, Preston himself stresses the Anglo-centricity of the analytic approach: "At present ... the very fact that [analytic philosophy] exists as something to be discussed under a single name is historically and hence unalterably—I am tempted to say necessarily—connected to its career in the British and American universities" (Preston 2007, 1). Moreover, analytic philosophy has substantial influence within and outside Anglophone countries. Arguably, in fact, the analytic approach is now the mainstream approach globally (see Burge 2010, 115, 17). To exercise such a wide influence, analytic philosophy is likely to need means that go beyond simple social contacts. For instance, analytic philosophers might leverage the prestige that accrues from their association with elite universities, or the overall quality or interest of the work that they produce or have produced historically, or the conformity to certain standards of presentation of their work, such as a common appearance or style. My own view is that all of the above are indeed means by which analytic philosophy maintains its cohesiveness and exercises its influence. As will become progressively clearer in what follows, in this paper I stress the role of language and style.

1.2 | Glock

A second major view of the nature of analytic philosophy is Hans-Johann Glock's, according to which analytic philosophy is "a tradition that is held together *both* by ties of influence *and* by a family of partially overlapping features" (Glock 2008, 223). Glock's definition, like Preston's, is motivated by the lack of substantial commonalities in philosophical views or methods that they see within the history of analytic philosophy over the past century or so. Also in common with Preston's view is Glock's appeal to a relatively anodyne *definiens*. Since there are no substantial commonalities ("there is no plausible analytic definition" of analytic philosophy; Glock 2008, 217), Glock's solution is to embrace an historical-cum-family-resemblance definition.

One worry here is that Glock's view, although more substantial than Preston's, has plausibility to the extent that it is so anodyne. As analytic philosophy is an extended, human, and cultural phenomenon, it is not very surprising that it might be social, historical, and held together by family resemblances (cf. García-Carpintero 2011 for converging considerations). Glock does briefly sketch some ideas (Glock 2008, 223–30) about what he calls the "contours" of the analytic tradition, identifying certain links between classical analytic philosophers as well as methodological and stylistic resemblances between them. Having said that, his sketch is quite skewed towards the earlier part of the history of analytic

²In what follows, I use "Anglophone countries" as a shorthand phrase to refer to countries where English is the majority native language.

philosophy. The latest figure of his “family tree of analytic philosophy,” for instance, is Kripke, who produced his most influential work from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Again, one wonders whether there might be anything more detailed that can be said about current analytic philosophy.

Nonetheless, there are a few other aspects of Glock's account that are relevant for my purposes here. First, Glock mentions four criticisms of current analytic philosophy: “scholasticism, disengagement from other disciplines and the public, factionalism and the exclusionary demeanour towards non-Anglophone and non-analytic philosophy” (Glock 2008, 246). About the latter, he says: “The exclusionary demeanour of the Anglophone mainstream is indisputably an intellectual disadvantage when the grounds of exclusion are linguistic or geographic rather than philosophical. Two mutually reinforcing factors are in play—the declining interest in foreign languages among the Anglophone educational elites and the increasing switch to English as the global academic language. Given these factors it is unsurprising that Anglophone philosophers take little notice of analytic texts in languages other than English. But it is a pity that there are so few translations of worthy texts, and an even greater pity that even work that has been translated tends to be ignored” (Glock 2008, 253–54). Glock's remarks here give an accurate picture of the current situation of analytic philosophy. They extend Preston's view of the Anglo-centricity of analytic philosophy to the present day, multiple decades after the spread of analytic philosophy outside Anglophone countries. Moreover, they are in line with recent data by Schwitzgebel and colleagues (2018), who found that only 3 percent of the sources cited by the twelve most prestigious analytic philosophy journals were originally written in a language other than English. This is in sharp contrast to philosophical literature published in elite non-Anglophone journals, which features a much more linguistically diverse range of citations (20–51 percent of sources were originally written in the same language of publication, 30–44 percent were originally written in English, and the remaining ones in another language).

Indeed, such Anglophone insularity has wider scope than mere language of publication. Glock continues his aforementioned criticism by saying, “In so far as non-Anglophones are noted by the Anglo-American mainstream, they tend to be non-analytic philosophers. [In] hard-core analytic departments in the Anglophone world, even second-rate continentals are better known than accomplished analytic philosophers like Beckermann, Bouveresse, Garcia-Carpintero [*sic*], Künne, Marconi, Recanati or Tugendhat, to name but a few” (Glock 2008, 254). Implicit here perhaps, among other things, is that the geographical labelling of the “Continental” tradition of thought can itself cause the perpetuation of national dichotomies between those philosophers who can excel in one and those in the other tradition. Note, however, that Glock's criticism seems to be concerned at least as much with *non-native* Anglophones as with non-Anglophones. Many of the analytic philosophers cited have generally presented their work in English, and therefore ought to count as “Anglophone.”

1.3 | Some more data

Terminological quibbles aside, the substance of this second aspect of Glock's criticism is again backed by recent data. For instance, non-native English speakers wrote only about 5 percent of the five hundred papers and books that were most cited by articles published between 1993 and 2013 in the four most prestigious Anglophone analytic philosophy journals.³ In addition (and in line with the data in Schwitzgebel et al. 2018 cited earlier), only

³This percentage includes all philosophical sub-disciplines (including logic and philosophy of science), as well as all those speakers who grew up in countries, such as India and Israel, where English is taught very early at school. The journals considered are: *Philosophical Review*, *Journal of Philosophy*, *Nous*, and *Mind*.

2 percent of those five hundred works were non-Anglophone classics (such as Aristotle, Frege, Kant; see Contessa 2014; Healy 2013). Moreover, only 7 percent of the two hundred most cited contemporary authors (born in or after 1900) in the standard-setting *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* are (or were) non-(native) Anglophones. Only one of them (Sartre) is obviously non-Anglophone, and only three (1.5 percent) were born in or after 1940 (Schwitzgebel 2010).

Such dearth of attention paid to work by non-native Anglophone and non-Anglophone philosophers is striking, considering that only about 6 percent of the current world population lives in majority Anglophone countries. How can the mainstream approach to philosophy be so influenced by Anglophone practitioners? A number of factors are likely to be at play here. Perhaps primary among these is the analytic/Continental split in philosophical traditions that occurred in the earlier part of the twentieth century. For a long time the split remained geographical and linguistic as well as more strictly speaking philosophical. For a number of decades, however, analytic philosophy has been a substantial part of the philosophical landscape in European and other non-Anglophone countries. Another factor might be found in the now widespread adoption of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy. That, however, can at most explain the dearth of non-Anglophone sources, by reducing the percentage of recent philosophical publications in languages other than English. What it does not (directly) explain is the dearth of influential publications written by non-native Anglophones.

Indeed, both non-native Anglophone philosophers and philosophers affiliated with non-Anglophone countries publish much less in high-profile analytic philosophy venues. According to Yen and Hung (2019), native Anglophone scholars made up about 69 percent of all authors who published their research in a sample of eighteen well-ranked analytic philosophy journals between 2013 and 2017. Anglophone-country affiliation tracked native Anglophone status closely, with 73 percent of authors being affiliated with at least one Anglophone-country institution. Moreover, the next most frequent native language in the sample was German, with about 7 percent of authors. Overall, 84 percent of authors were native speakers of a Germanic language (including English).

These percentages are even more striking because the list of journals was selected not only on the basis of perceived prestige but also to cover different geographical regions (different Anglophone countries and the Netherlands) and philosophical sub-disciplines (generalist, logic, and ethics). For instance, although it was explicitly based on Leiter's (2015) rankings, the list of ten generalist journals contained six of the Leiter top-ten journals, in addition to the only two top-twenty journals based in a non-Anglophone country (*Synthese* and *Erkenntnis*) and to another top-twenty journal with a declared interest in linguistic diversity (*European Journal of Philosophy*).⁴ Indeed, *Synthese* and *Erkenntnis* had the lowest percentage of native Anglophone authors among all ten generalist journals, immediately followed by the *European Journal of Philosophy*. The list of eighteen journals also contained four logic journals. These logic journals had a much lower percentage of native Anglophone authors: 42 percent. Interestingly, moreover, this percentage resulted from the average between the higher percentage of native Anglophone authors who published in the two logic journals based in an Anglophone country (62 percent and 44 percent) and the lower percentage of those who published in the two logic journals based in the Netherlands (38 percent and 24 percent).

Native Anglophone philosophers and those who are based in Anglophone-country departments and centres are also overwhelmingly represented in the most prominent journals.

⁴Although currently edited in the United Kingdom, the *European Journal of Philosophy* is unusually culturally diverse in its stated aims among current high-profile philosophy journals. Its webpage states that the journal was created as "a forum to which all philosophers, both inside and outside Europe, can turn to rediscover the variety of philosophical traditions in Europe"; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14680378/homepage/productinformation.html> (last accessed on 2 October 2022). All its papers are published in English, but the journal also accepts manuscript submissions in French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

According to the data in Schwitzgebel et al. 2018, for instance, 96 percent of editorial board members of the fifteen top philosophy journals are primarily affiliated with an institution based in an Anglophone country.⁵ Since Schwitzgebel and colleagues did not provide fine-grained analyses of those data (especially in terms of non-native speakers), I conducted additional analyses on their datasets.⁶ My results show that non-native English speakers made up less than 11 percent of the editorial board members of those fifteen journals.

Notably, however, this percentage includes data about *Synthese*, which at the time was ranked no. 15 among top philosophy journals. In the datasets in Schwitzgebel et al. 2018, *Synthese* had by far the biggest percentage of non-native-Anglophone editorial board members (61 percent) and the lowest percentage of Anglophone-country-affiliated members (58 percent). Indeed, on that top-fifteen list, *Synthese* was the only journal to be based outside an Anglophone country. (Also worth noting is that *Synthese*'s greater percentage of non-native Anglophone editorial board members appears to correlate with its greater percentage of publications written by non-native Anglophones, mentioned earlier.) Excluding *Synthese*, the percentage of non-native Anglophone editorial board members drops to 8 percent. Correspondingly, the percentage of Anglophone-country-affiliated board members goes up to 98 percent. Finally, restricting the analysis to the top ten journals on that same ranking, the percentage of editorial board members working primarily in Anglophone countries stays at 98 percent, while the percentage of non-native Anglophones diminishes further, to 7 percent.

Since the data in Schwitzgebel et al. 2018 were based on a (now) slightly out-of-date ranking, however, I also collected data on the composition of journals' current editorial boards. I used the Leiter 2022 ranking of "best 'general' philosophy journals." The top ten journals in this 2022 ranking overlap to a significant extent with those of Leiter's (2013) ranking. I found a slight decline, however, in Anglophone-country affiliation, from 98 percent to 97 percent. At the same time, there was a slight increase in the percentage of non-native Anglophone editorial board members, from 7 percent to 11 percent.⁷

As I said earlier with respect to Preston, the overwhelming presence of native Anglophone philosophers in elite venues can be explained in various ways. At least three seem prominent as possible explanations: better quality of their work, their association with elite institutions, or their possession of other features such as their conformity to common practices, for instance, to a common language and style.

1.4 | Leiter

Style, in fact, is the element on which a third characterization of analytic philosophy focuses. This is the view that accompanies the currently most influential ranking of Ph.D. programmes in philosophy: *The Philosophical Gourmet Report (PGR)*.⁸ The *PGR* was created more than two decades ago with the name "A Ranking of US Graduate Programs in Analytic Philosophy" but expanded its scope soon after to become "A Ranking of Graduate Programs in Philosophy in the English-Speaking World" (Leiter 1995). Indeed, as analytic philosophy becomes increasingly mainstream worldwide, the *PGR* is arguably still the most

⁵The data in Schwitzgebel et al. 2018 here report on the top fifteen journals in Leiter 2013's ranking ("Top Philosophy Journals, Without Regard to Area").

⁶I am very grateful to Eric Schwitzgebel for providing me with the datasets and to Ravi Thakral for his help with the analyses.

⁷Such percentage changes might perhaps be seen as a consequence of more recent initiatives highlighting the poor representation of non-native English speakers in analytic philosophy: e.g., Mizrahi 2013, Wolters 2013, Contessa 2014, Ayala-López 2015, Contesi and Terrone 2018a and 2018b, and Contesi 2021. See infra for a discussion of the lattermost initiative.

⁸<https://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/>

influential ranking of philosophy departments worldwide. On his “Leiter Reports” web blog, moreover, its founding editor, Brian Leiter, also edits very influential rankings of Anglophone publishing venues for analytic philosophy work. In the section of its website entitled “What the Rankings Mean,” the *PGR* has for the past twenty or so years characterized analytic philosophy as follows: “‘Analytic’ philosophy today names a style of doing philosophy, not a philosophical program or a set of substantive views. Analytic philosophers, crudely speaking, aim for argumentative clarity and precision; draw freely on the tools of logic; and often identify, professionally and intellectually, more closely with the sciences and mathematics, than with the humanities” (Leiter et al. 2021a). Similarly, in the section entitled “What the Rankings Mean,” the *PGR* says: “With the demise of analytic philosophy as a substantive research program since the 1960s, ‘analytic’ simply demarcates a style of scholarship, writing and thinking: clarity, precision and argumentative rigor and substance are supposed to be paramount. Thus, ‘analytic’ philosophy is now largely coextensional with good philosophy and scholarship, regardless of topic or figure” (Leiter et al. 2021b).⁹

The *PGR* is on the right track in identifying style as a distinctive feature of current analytic philosophy. Moreover, there are significant connections between the analytic style and the English language that play an important role in explaining native Anglophone dominance in contemporary analytic philosophy. The emphasis on style, however, deserves some further clarification.

First, Leiter and colleagues designate a variety of different phenomena as “style,” not all of which are necessarily best called “stylistic.” Clarity and precision are perhaps the most distinctively stylistic of them, but even clarity and precision can refer either to styles of writing or to *features* of thought or argumentation (cf. Glock 2008, 173). That is even more true of argumentative rigour, substance, the use of logical tools, and identification with the sciences.

The features delineated by Leiter and colleagues are indeed a central aspect of (current perceptions of) the ideal analytic philosophy contribution. Moreover, they are in a sense what the current and earlier stages of analytic philosophy have in common. The difference, however, between those earlier stages and what might be called the current “late stage” of the tradition is that the earlier emphasis on clarity, precision, and rigour has increasingly become a matter of mere style—rather than a manifestation of corresponding virtues in the underlying method and substance. In other words, *apparent* clarity, precision, and rigour (as opposed to *actual* clarity, precision, and rigour) have come to be considered more and more as the central features of the ideal analytic philosophy contribution (cf. also Roffé 2021). As a consequence, the conclusion in Leiter et al. 2021b that analytic philosophy is “largely coextensional with good philosophy” is increasingly less true than it was in the past.

Of course, stylistic features such as the clarity and explicitness of the way in which arguments are presented are pro tanto good-making features of a philosophical contribution. Indeed, analytic philosophy played an important role historically in contrasting the trend towards obscurity of expression that engulfed too large a part of so-called Continental philosoph(ies). Such Continental thought started to conceal its lack of substance and rigour behind language that was too difficult to understand and almost impossible to refute. These traditions were

⁹The *PGR* also contains a couple of statements that might seem to contradict this emphasis on style. Leiter et al. 2021b says (my emphasis), “[T]here remain differences in styles and methods of philosophical work [within philosophy], but *those differences are no longer illuminated by the analytic/Continental divide.*” And Leiter et al. 2021a also states: “[*W*]hat distinguishes analytic philosophy even more than ‘style’ is its adoption of the research paradigm common in the natural sciences, a paradigm in which numerous individual researchers make small contributions to the solution of a set of generally recognized problems” (my emphasis). These statements, however, have, within the respective pages of the *PGR*, less prominence than the statements emphasizing style. Moreover, other commentators have similarly focused on style in accounting for the *PGR* view of analytic philosophy (e.g., Preston [2007, 9]).

indeed attacked for their obscurantist styles from early on, even before English became analytic philosophy's lingua franca (one thinks, for example, of Rudolf Carnap's [1959] ridiculing of the phrase “das Nichts nichtet” [“the nothing nothings”]; see Schliesser 2017). The attacks continued until at least the Sokal hoax (see Sokal 1996).

It is also worth noting, however, that whether a philosophical contribution explicitly and clearly presents arguments in support of a claim can only to a limited extent determine the content conveyed by that contribution. That is because arguments, whether or not clearly and explicitly formulated, have been present in philosophical contributions since the beginning of philosophy. Neither Socrates, Plato, Pascal, Kant, nor most of the philosophers in our canon of classics expressed their ideas in today's analytic style. That did not stop them from supporting their views with arguments, or from making substantial contributions to philosophy.

2 | APPEARANCES AND STYLE

Why did analytic philosophy become so interested in the appearance or style of its presentation? In part, it was the consequence of the natural decadence of human enterprises over time. Merely going through the motions of some activity that used to be genuinely valuable can allow a movement to maintain its standing over time. But more than a hundred years after its inception analytic philosophy is unlikely to be in a very healthy state unless some radical work of reconstruction is done to it. Such reconstruction was not ever attempted in a sustained fashion.

Indeed, two tendencies inherent in analytic philosophy since its inception were pursued beyond their usefulness. Again, these tendencies were initially two of the crucial features that made analytic philosophy valuable and successful. One was its emphasis on language. The other was the modelling of its methods and aims on those of mathematical logic and the sciences more generally. Indeed, those two tendencies informed how many analytic philosophers aimed to achieve their values of clarity, precision, and rigour. With time, the two tendencies in question lost their theoretical appeal. Both the method of conceptual analysis and the close identification with the sciences lost favour among many analytic philosophers. Nonetheless, the emphases on language and on the scientific model remained over time as a feature of analytic philosophy's self-styling.

That often manifested itself in a heightened attention to the precision of language, as if words and sentences were mathematical equations that the philosopher had to get exactly right to make their sentences true. Since at least Rota (1991), however, such an understanding of philosophy has been denounced by some as a caricature of the nature of both philosophy and mathematics. Nonetheless, it continues to be a central part of the way analytic philosophers write. As Christine Korsgaard recently put it, “Many philosophers try to write in what you might call perfectly true sentences. A perfectly true sentence already contains all the qualifications it would need to make it perfectly true. It is unassailable” (Korsgaard 2022, 24–25).

Moreover, analytic philosophy's ever-increasing victory over the Continentals, at least in most philosophy departments and in the eyes of many funding agencies, has meant less competition for those in the analytic camp with the Continentals, thus allowing a relaxing of the standards that distinguished the former from the latter. Indeed, the more substantial differences between Continental and analytic philosophies have been progressively evaporating. For instance, notice how a large part of the perceived absurdity of the 1996 Sokal hoax paper was its claim that a quintessentially physical phenomenon (quantum gravity) was a social and linguistic construction. Social constructionist theories of phenomena that were successfully accounted for by science, were, at that time, seen as absurd exaggerations on the part of

Continental philosophers. Now, however, social constructionist theories are much more widely accepted within analytic philosophy (see, e.g., Haslanger and Ásta 2018).

Another factor that likely played a role in the emphasizing of appearances of clarity, precision, and rigour over their actual counterparts was the increase in competition among philosophers within Anglophone countries. This resulted from the over-production of doctorates and the shrinking of faculty that has characterized academia—academic philosophy perhaps more than most—since the second half of the twentieth century. Crucially, this increase in competition has meant, for instance, a much higher number of submissions to scholarly journals. In analytic philosophy, however, this was not accompanied by sufficient changes in editorial policies or by a sufficient increase in the number of articles published by the most prestigious journals.

Indeed, the prestige of a philosophy journal came to be identified with how low its acceptance rate was. Acceptance rates at prestigious philosophy journals are especially low, hovering in many cases around 5 percent, with peaks of about 1 percent in the case of the most prestigious of them all (the *Philosophical Review*). Moreover, this is in stark contrast to many scientific disciplines (see Weinberg 2018). Also in contrast to many scientific disciplines, philosophy journals continue to be run by a small number of active academics rather than by administrators.¹⁰ Unlike administrators, however, academics typically have to fulfil, and are in large part evaluated in terms of, many of the usual activities of academics generally (such as publishing and teaching).

All this combines to make the time spent on evaluating journal submissions very short. Moreover, the incentives for being careful with each submission are low, since journal editors are in large part evaluated for their own careers as academics (for example, for their own research), as opposed to the quality of the papers that are published in their journals or how well those journals are run. That is even more the case for journal referees, who have in the current system almost no incentive to put time into evaluating manuscripts with a careful eye to quality. Referees are, in fact, generally not paid or significantly held to account for their decisions; nor is acting as a referee especially important in academic career progression.

As a consequence, the attention to mere appearances of quality becomes overwhelming. Standards are very much needed to gatekeep an increasingly competitive market and to differentiate between those who belong to the in-group and those who belong to the out-group. Such standards, however, have to be applied quickly and without as much regard to the content as in the past. In these circumstances, first impressions become very important. As a philosopher recently wrote: “As journal editors receive fresh submissions, the first thing they do is scan them for external markers of conformity to the group's internal rules and orthodoxy: specific terminology, references to the group's authorities, favourite themes and topics, and even certain turns of phrase and rhetorical tropes” (Brădăţan 2022). Such a take is echoed by Rini: “[P]hilosophers are people who write under extreme stylistic constraints, meant... to satisfy journals [*sic*] referees' vague and empowered sense of what *looks like* a work of philosophy” (Rini 2022).

In addition to it being generally bad for philosophical quality, this situation is especially hard on non-native Anglophone philosophers.¹¹ First, success in philosophy will depend on one's qualities as a writer rather than as a philosopher. Consequently, the better the grasp and

¹⁰See also Pronskikh 2018 for a study of linguistic policies at physics journals.

¹¹Non-native speakers have substantial structural barriers to overcome, regardless of the particular language and context. Such barriers are made worse by the relative lack of remedial attention paid to linguistic discrimination in contemporary societies. See, e.g., Lippi-Green 2012 and Politzer-Ahles et al. 2020. The mainstreaming of analytic philosophy and the latter's self-styled universalistic and scientific nature make the case of English and mainstream philosophy perhaps especially urgent, but philosophers who are non-native speakers of other languages also have substantial structural barriers to overcome in more local contexts (see also my section 3).

experience one has of a particular language, the more likely it is that one will make it in academic philosophy. Since the lingua franca of philosophy is English, non-native Anglophone (prospective) philosophers have a huge structural barrier to overcome.

Moreover, the present situation will exclude valuable contributions written by philosophers who are not in the know about the particular style that is prized at a particular time (such as the time when they submit an article for publication). Such stylistic preferences, in fact, are by no means completely obvious to all. Unlike the sciences, where there are long-standing widespread practices of, for example, sub-dividing a contribution into pre-determined sections (“Introduction,” “Methods,” “Results,” “Discussion,” and the like), philosophy remains in principle a fluid discipline stylistically. Thus, the contributions that are excluded will tend to come from authors who are outside the philosophical circles which are considered most prestigious at that time, and which typically run the most prestigious journals.

Such circles are, and have been for decades, centred around philosophers, journals, and university departments that currently figure most prominently in influential rankings and collections, such as the *PGR* and the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. As we have seen, an overwhelming majority of those people and institutions are native English speakers and are based in Anglophone countries. Moreover, the data also suggest the existence of strong relationships between those people and institutions. Not only do prominent philosophers tend to spend (or have spent) most of their academic careers in prominent universities and departments in Anglophone countries, they also tend to have been educated, at both the undergraduate and the graduate level, at elite institutions in Anglophone countries (see Schwitzgebel 2019; De Cruz 2018). Since higher-education systems are still in large part continuous with lower-level education systems (elementary school, high school, and so on) at the national level, this means that the vast majority of such philosophers continue to be native Anglophones (see Contesi and Terrone 2018b, 8).

In addition to considerations of injustice, the resulting waste of philosophical talent is bad because philosophical talent is unlikely to be concentrated in one set of countries or one language. Furthermore, lack of linguistic diversity impedes the competition of ideas coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Indeed, the very attention to language that is proper to analytic philosophy is at odds with its general neglect of the philosophical insights that may come from knowledge of different (natural) languages.

Finally, excessive emphasis on style and appearances will slow down or exclude more innovative contributions. Such contributions tend to be more difficult to write than ordinary, “brick-in-the-wall” contributions because they push the limits of what is already well understood. Expressing them in the ideal Anglophone argumentative style *du jour* will require even more time and effort. This will be more true the less that ideal language and that ideal style come naturally to the author.

3 | LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

I have argued that native Anglophone philosophers continue to be the most prestigious representatives of analytic philosophy even at a time in which the analytic tradition is mainstream in so much of the world. This is in important part due to structural asymmetries of influence, which in turn are enabled by the current understanding of the linguistic fashion in which the ideal analytic philosophy contribution is presented. The current situation has some of its roots in the historical development of the analytic tradition. But it must be remedied, as it unjustifiably narrows the pool of philosophical talent that is given opportunities and attention.

To remedy this current predicament, it is essential to foster greater linguistic diversity in Anglophone philosophy. To that end, I recently formulated a set of principles, the “Barcelona

Principles for a Globally Inclusive Philosophy” (the BP), which ask the following of philosophers and philosophical institutions:

1. To evaluate, as a rule, publications, presentations, proposals and submissions without giving undue weight to their authors' linguistic style, fluency or accent;
2. To collect, to the extent that it is feasible, statistics about non-native speakers' submissions (to journals, presses and conferences), and/or to implement self-identification of non-native speaker status;
3. To include, to the extent that it is feasible, non-native speakers within journal editorial boards, book series editorships, scientific committees etc.;
4. To invite, to the extent that it is feasible, non-native speakers to contribute to journal special issues, edited collections, conferences etc.;
5. To provide, to the extent that it is feasible, educational and hiring opportunities to non-native speakers. (Contesi 2021)¹²

Since their publication, the BP have circulated widely among Anglophone analytic philosophers. At the time of this writing, they have been signed by more than seven hundred academics in more than thirty-five countries. They were followed by an institutional call, which has so far been endorsed by twenty-seven philosophical institutions. Among them are the Aristotelian Society, the European Philosophy of Science Association, Minorities and Philosophy UK, the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *Philosophical Psychology*, and the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*.¹³

The aim of the BP is to provide a roadmap for achieving greater linguistic diversity in Anglophone philosophy. They were formulated as general principles (as opposed to more detailed guidelines) for two orders of reasons. First, being a bottom-up initiative, they needed to be supported by the largest number of people to be able to foster any change. Secondly, guidelines often risk being unwieldy for such varied and complex phenomena as the institutional organization of philosophy. Different contexts will often have different needs, so optimal strategies are best formulated on a case-by-case basis. Finally, the principles were formulated without any reference to particular languages, although the BP manifesto overall refers to the specific problems facing non-native Anglophones. Non-native Anglophone philosophers are not the only group of philosophers who experience structural problems of linguistic exclusion. Similar problems also affect philosophers who work in countries with majority languages of which they are not native speakers. The BP still apply to the latter kind of cases, even though the main focus at present is the representation of non-native Anglophones in mainstream philosophy.

Looking at the rationale behind the particular principles, (1) states a principle of linguistic tolerance, which asks philosophers to exclude unjustified expectations about linguistic appearances in philosophical texts from the evaluation of their philosophical contents.¹⁴ Versions of principle (1) have been implemented in their instructions to referees by such journals as the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, and the *Journal of Philosophy of Emotion*.¹⁵ The BP did, however, also receive some objections to (1). On the one hand, some philosophers and institutions raised the worry that the principle might be vacuous, in so far as obviously no one would willingly give something undue (or unmerited) weight. On the

¹²Stohlman-Vanderveen 2021 provides further details of the inception of the BP.

¹³See <https://www.ub.edu/biap/bp/> (last accessed on 3 October 2022).

¹⁴Some of the scholars writing on English as a lingua franca (see, e.g., Seidlhofer [2005]) have put forward similar recommendations.

¹⁵See, e.g., <https://aap.org.au/editorial-policy#language> (last accessed on 3 October 2022).

other hand, often the same people and institutions raised the worry that although (1) would generally be good practice, it could not be implemented in occasional cases in which form and content are inseparable.

As to the first objection, there certainly is a way to understand principle (1) as a sort of practical truism. On that understanding, however, principle (1) is still useful as a way of reminding those who evaluate philosophical contributions that there is, in many cases, the danger of giving too much weight to appearances over substance. The second objection is, in a way, the opposite of the first. Instead of giving too much weight to the qualification “undue,” the objection practically ignores it. In fact, it brings as counterexamples those alleged cases in which form and content are inseparable. Even granting the existence of such cases, however, principle (1) does not prevent evaluators from giving linguistic style, fluency, and accent their *due weight* in those cases.

Principle (2) aims to raise awareness about, and increase the study of, the current representation of non-native speakers in philosophy. It also suggests a possible means of implementing data collection of submissions by non-native speakers—that is, by self-identification at the moment of submission. Such self-identification would be in line with current self-identification requests (such as of the author's title, institutional address, gender) that are already in place in various academic contexts. Indeed, such self-identification might also be used in the implementation of principle (1), for example to help evaluators decide what weight to give to linguistic fluency (see Contesi and Terrone 2018b, 6–7).

The remaining three principles, (3) to (5), directly ask for more opportunities for non-native Anglophone speakers in educational institutions, on journal editorial boards, at academic conferences, and in related contexts. Such opportunities would increase linguistic diversity where it is lacking. Indeed, it is reasonable to believe that some such opportunities would also themselves help to foster greater linguistic diversity. For instance, the data mentioned earlier concerning the journal *Synthese* (section 1.3) suggest that greater linguistic diversity among editorial board members fosters greater linguistic diversity of authors published in journals.

Although the BP might not eliminate all linguistic injustice in philosophy (for one thing, non-native speakers will still be required to learn and employ a language different from their native ones), they push towards remedying it. Alternative approaches to fostering linguistic diversity in philosophy, by contrast, have significant disadvantages.¹⁶ A first alternative approach to the BP, which is to some extent the one currently adopted, is to level the playing field by using native Anglophone friends or colleagues, or professional editing services, to adapt one's contributions to the Anglophone analytic style. This, however, imposes a serious burden on non-native English speakers, at least in economic terms. At best, such an approach changes the nature of the injustice, from linguistic to economic or social. The alternative of offering editing services to all non-native English speakers wishing to contribute to philosophy would certainly be much more attractive. But that would require a level of economic investment on the part of academic institutions that does not appear likely in the foreseeable future.¹⁷

A second alternative approach would be to encourage a divergence from the common vehicular language model. Each philosopher would write in their own native or preferred language (see Pérez 2018). This approach, however, would risk engendering a “Tower of Babel problem.” Such a problem might prove deleterious to philosophical progress, especially in the current interconnected world. Counterbalances to this problem could perhaps be widespread

¹⁶See Contesi and Terrone 2018b, Chapman et al. 2021, and Contesi et al. 2022 for more discussion.

¹⁷See Van Parijs 2011 for a detailed and influential presentation of ways to offset the costs of the adoption of a common language.

translation efforts.¹⁸ Such efforts would not be even remotely plausible unless they were attempted only between a limited set of languages. In addition to the problem of the expenses involved, however, this would raise problems of unfairness towards neglected or minority languages. Moreover, a preferred language into which to translate would likely emerge, again giving rise to a (possibly new) lingua franca.

A final alternative approach would be to replace English with a different lingua franca. For instance, it is sometimes suggested that Esperanto constitutes a more neutral language than English, since it is not associated with a single nation or ethnicity (see Gobbo and Russo 2020). Nonetheless, this would mean that a lot of philosophers who currently speak English non-natively would need to learn an additional language to participate in the conversation. Moreover, an alternative global infrastructure would need to be built to teach the new lingua franca non-natively, either to everyone in the world or to those who would like to participate in philosophical discussion. Finally, the native versus non-native problem would likely present itself again. Whatever the new lingua franca of academic philosophy (or academia more generally) were to be, those who can afford it would be incentivized to learn it natively (perhaps in addition to their national language). This would again create linguistic unfairness.

I have argued that the current mainstream approach to philosophy, in its current stage, suffers from a dearth of linguistic (and consequently cultural) diversity. This situation has various causes, one of which I have identified as the insistence on a style of presentation of philosophical ideas that stifles diversity and, in particular, makes it unjustifiably harder for non-native English-speaking philosophers to have the same opportunities and global recognition as their native counterparts. I have concluded by presenting a current initiative, the Barcelona Principles for a Globally Inclusive Philosophy, that aims to address these problems. Only time will tell whether and how the BP will achieve sufficient change. Whatever the right solution may turn out to be, however, it is imperative that analytic philosophy heed the plea issued to the Athenians, more than two thousand years ago by the perennial *myōps* of the Western philosophical tradition: that he be heard “as if [he] were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country” (Plato 2009; cf. Stohlman-Vanderveen 2021).

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¹⁸See also Schliesser 2018 for a defence of the importance of philosophical translators.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Filippo Contesi is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Barcelona and a senior member of the LOGOS Research Group and of the Barcelona Institute of Analytic Philosophy. He has published work in aesthetics, linguistic justice, and the philosophy of affects in several journals and books, most recently "The Affective Nature of Horror," "A Taxonomy of Disgust in Art," "Balance or Propel? Philosophy and the Value of Unpleasantness," and "Linguistic Justice and Analytic Philosophy."

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