Politics and the definition of analytic philosophy

Author: Terence Rajivan Edward

Abstract. I introduce the obvious thought that who counts as an analytic philosopher and what counts as analytic philosophy is partly determined by what may be called political factors. It may be the case that work T428 would ordinarily count as analytic philosophy, but it cannot be counted without admitting work C88+ and there is an interest in preventing work C88+ from being admitted.

Draft version: Version 1 (20th December 2022)

What counts as analytic philosophy? Overlooking the subtleties of Hans-Johann Glock’s research, there seem to be two main options.

(a) It is work which engages in a dialogue with a certain tradition of texts. That will usually, if not always, be by referring to members of that tradition: Frege, Russell, Rawls, etc.

(b) It is work that competently makes use of certain methods, such as premise-by-premise reconstructions.

I favour (b), which is like favouring the inevitable I know. Anyway, both of these options leave out political factors, in a broad sense. It seems as if one can be an analytic philosopher given either option while being a person whom the community of analytic philosophers is profoundly opposed to for whatever reason: you are a Nazi, etc.

The natural way of taking into account such factors, if there is any natural way, is to accept a shifting definition. In one situation, your work might be counted as analytic philosophy. But once it becomes apparent that it can only be so counted by including an anticipated work by
so-and-so, then it is no longer counted. T428 used to be analytic philosophy until C88+ was anticipated! (The anticipated author of C88+ has recently raised the bar for what it takes to be a philosopher of psychology who is not part of her team, by the way. Whatever JF did, it is not enough. Perhaps that information is the only real gain of this paper.)

Reference