

The Necessity of History for Philosophy – Even Analytic Philosophy.

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Philosophers who identify with the “continental” mode of doing philosophy often remark on the ahistorical attitudes of *analytic* philosophers. However, if the contributors to a collection of essays on analytic philosophy and the history of philosophy are at all representative,¹ it would seem that historians of philosophy trained in the analytic tradition and working within predominantly analytic departments also think of analytic philosophers as at best indifferent to and at worst antipathetic to the historiography of philosophy. To give but two examples, Tom Sorell describes analytic philosophy as “not only unhistorical but anti-historical, and hostile to textual commentary,”² while John Cottingham talks of the “disdain felt by contemporary analytic philosophers for the history of their subject.”³

Of course, history-based courses are often encouraged as a normal part of philosophical education, but I suggest that for many their pedagogic value is thought to reside in features that are not, from a contemporary point of view, of particular *philosophical* interest. For example, they might be thought as appropriate for beginners in philosophy, because of their neat and perhaps exotic exemplifications of various common philosophical approaches, attitudes and forms of argument. Or they might be considered as pedagogically valuable because written with a literary *flair* not common in the average journal article—think of Rousseau for example. But these are issues in the *pedagogy* of philosophy rather than philosophy itself, and even where the history of philosophy is engaged with in this way, it is, I suggest, often done so within what could be described as an *ahistorical* spirit. Thus classic works from the past are commonly taken as responses to problems—say, the problem of skepticism or the mind-body problem—that are themselves assumed to be *timeless* and *ahistorical*. If the “historians”, that is, those *philosophers* who chose to do philosophy from a predominantly historical perspective, protest along this line, this only goes to show that they actually *do* belong to the genus “*historicus*”. Toleration of their presence in a philosophy department might be the most they can expect.

If the attitudes of analytic philosophers to the work of their historically

¹ Tom Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers (eds), *Analytic Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

² Tom Sorell, “Introduction” to Sorell and Rogers (eds), *Analytic Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, p. 1. “The tradition [in which philosophy takes the form of history of philosophy, as in France and Germany] is alien to most philosophers in the English speaking world. Philosophy written in English is overwhelming analytic philosophy and the techniques and predilections of analytic philosophy are not only unhistorical but anti-historical, and hostile to textual commentary.” *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³ John Cottingham, “Why Should Analytic Philosophers Do History of Philosophy”, in Sorell and Rogers (eds), *Analytic Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, p. 26. Catherine Wilson of the widespread assumption that “intellectual historians are intellectually inferior to non-historians” (p. 67).

oriented colleagues *are* as negative as the experiences recounted above seem to indicate, we might ask, “Why?”. I approach this question in the first instance not in the sense of asking for *historical* reasons—treating this as an historical question would be to already adopt the attitude being resisted by the analyst. Rather, the question is posed as a way of trying to get of sense of the sorts of reasons that *might* be offered by analytic philosophers to justify this purported hostility and suspicion. What is it about the way of practicing philosophy in the analytic mode that appears to make historical questions be experienced as external intrusions, when this doesn’t seem to be the case in contemporary continental philosophy? It is in this spirit that in the following section I suggest some factors that might go into a *prima facie* case *against* the place of history in philosophy, and after that turn to the more general issue of how such an attitude might be regarded within the project of analytic philosophical considered more generally. I will suggest that the anti-historical attitude is most likely grounded in an approach to philosophy that I call “autonomous normativism”, and that is *itself* at odds with an equally deeply entrenched *naturalist* orientation within analytic philosophy. From the perspective of naturalist inclinations, the approach of autonomous normativism may look to be grounded in an underlying *super-naturalist* account of human cognition. This seems to mean that attempts to construe the normativity of thought in ways that *accommodate* some form of naturalism should work to undermine the sorts of intuitions underlying analytic philosophy’s anti-historical attitudes as well. However, I go on to suggest a stronger case for history than this. Using the example of Wilfrid Sellars’s attempted reconciliation of normative and naturalist dimensions approaches to the mind, I suggest that such an approach, if successful, would actually open up a *necessary* place for historical considerations in the mind’s reflection on its own capacities. If one takes this reflection as the core of philosophy, it thereby suggests the necessity of an historical dimension for philosophy itself.

1. *A prima facie case against an historical approach to philosophy*

A case against a substantively philosophical role for history might be thought to include arguments dismissing claims for its relevance on the one hand, and arguments focusing on the dangers of an unnecessary historical turn on the other. Regarding the former, Daniel Garber seems to put his finger on a type of justification that many analysts might feel for an anti-historical attitude when he notes that “analytic philosophy doesn’t mix well with this history of philosophy” because “what seems to count in analytic philosophy is the argument, not its pedigree”.⁴ Here the reply by his anti-historical opponent will most probably be: “Exactly! Isn’t that simply the *appropriate* attitude of philosophy? Isn’t that what we *value* about it?” From this attitude, philosophers are interested in simply whether views are right or wrong, and the way to settle competing philosophical claims is to examine them in relation to supporting and opposing arguments.⁵ But to adopt an *historical* approach to a view, to

⁴ Daniel Garber, “What’s Philosophical about the History of Philosophy”, in Sorell and Rogers (eds), *Analytic Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, p. 130.

⁵ Simon Glendenning discusses the limitations of the “argumento-centric” character of analytic philosophy, especially in relation to ethics in “Argument All The Way Down: The Demanding Discipline of Non-Argumento-centric Modes of Philosophy” in Jack Reynolds, James Chase, James Williams and Edwin Mares (eds), *Postanalytic and Metacontinental:*

be interested in where it comes from, is to adopt an approach that will be taken to be largely indifferent to the question of its truth or falsity.

Proponents of a sharp “argument rather than pedigree” position might treat the history of philosophy as fine *in its place*, that is, within the discipline of cultural history. The worry here would be that only confusion can come from mixing these different genres, an issue that will be important for those concerned to keep lines of philosophical argument clean and uncluttered. It is my guess that many analytically trained philosophers would find it difficult to locate the actual theses being argued for within a work such as Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*,⁶ a work from the continental tradition that both exemplifies and argues for an historical approach to philosophy. Thus it might be thought, for example, the Gadamer’s *unnecessary* course through the history of the discipline in this work simply blurs the (presumably) *epistemological* point being made. In short, analytic philosophers work hard to keep their argument clear, and if thought unnecessary, the layer of history in a philosophical work will just be regarded as an obstacle to the achievement of clarity.

A variant of this objection may have it that the insistence on history within philosophy effectively privileges past philosophical views over present ones by demanding that historical figures have a place in the curriculum, and that this attests to an attitude of slavish antiquarianism or even a type of “ancestor worship”. Cottingham finds such an attitude in Gilbert Harman’s reported warning against treating historical texts as “sacred documents that contain important wisdom”.⁷

Such an attitude already presupposes what I referred to as the “ahistorical spirit” above: the idea that philosophers throughout history can be seen as offering competing answers and solutions to the *same* questions and problems. If we consider that the historiography of philosophy is unlikely to stray outside of the fairly narrow range of philosophers in the western tradition, it is easy to come to the conclusion that surely philosophers alive *now* constitute the vastly greater part of what could be considered the European philosophical community stretching from, say, the Greek pre-Socratics to the present.⁸ In comparison to the entire philosophical community existing through history, surely the pool of philosophers from which “historical” figures are drawn will be tiny. Contemporary philosophers have to *earn* a place in the debate; why should a group of thinkers be afforded a privileged presence simply because the quite accidental status of having come earlier?

It is significant here that the critique of slavish antiquarianism is hardly unique to philosophers from the time of the “analytic turn”—a fact made clear by the repeated appearance of Descartes as representing an anti-historical attitude throughout the volume in question. It is surely the attitude of a broader cultural stance that came to be known as “the Enlightenment” and that was presaged by classic early modern

Crossing Philosophical Divides (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 71–84.

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2004).

⁷ Quoted by Sorell, in *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸ There are, it would seem, over current 10,000 living members of the *American Philosophical Association* alone. See “History of the APA”, on the website of the American Philosophical Association, < <http://www.apaonline.org/?page=history>>.

philosophers. It is an attitude neatly expressed by the sixteenth-century philosopher that Cottingham quotes, Francisco Sanches: “To say ‘thus spake the Master’ is unworthy of a philosopher”.⁹ Could it be that even the development of the history of philosophy within analytic philosophy, with its predominantly early modern focus, has paradoxically served to *reinforce* the anti-historical prejudice? In this respect, comments by John Searle in the 1990s on the softening of the negative “history of mistakes” attitude to the history of philosophy within the analytic community are suggestive. Searle reports on the development of “a feeling of the historical continuity of analytic philosophy with traditional philosophy in a way that contrasts sharply with the original view of analytic philosophers, who thought that they marked a radical, or indeed revolutionary break with the philosophical tradition”.¹⁰ In this way, the anti-historical forces might, oddly enough, be thought of as turning the tables on the “historians”, claiming to be the upholders of *tradition*. The early analytic philosophers had certainly represented themselves as breaking with Hegel-influenced approach of the preceding generation, a generation that could then be portrayed as having taken of a wrong turn. Reconnecting with an *earlier* tradition, the anti-historical attitude of the analysts thus becomes portrayed as the default attitude of philosophy itself, with the much-maligned Hegelian direction taken by Anglophone philosophy in the latter second half of the nineteenth century being held up as a warning.¹¹

If the anti-historical mode has been the default mode of the practice of analytic philosophy, then it is not surprising that one does not often encounter specific *defenses* of this attitude: defenses typically occur in the face of contestation and uncontested attitudes tend to “go without saying”. So short of surveying the opinions of philosophers I don’t know how representative this “prima facie case” might be, but I suspect that considerations *something like these* lie beneath the surface of the indifference-to-hostility that historians of philosophy apparently encounter from their non-historical colleagues. On the face of it these look like genuine worries, so, we might ask: what’s wrong with the generally anti-historical attitude? Why should history of philosophy *per se* have any claim within the discipline of philosophy or within the curriculum?

To make a start here, in the following section I attempt to set up the framework within which a case for the necessity of an historical dimensions for philosophy might be made, and made from *within* the general parameters of analytic philosophy itself. I do this by locating the anti-historical attitude in relation to what I see as a deep divide running through the history of analytic philosophy itself—a divide between two opposed methodological attitudes that I label “autonomous normativism” and “exclusive naturalism”. Autonomous normativism is an attitude founded on the belief that the problems of analytic philosophy are, as Jonathan Cohen

⁹ Quoted by Cottingham, “Why Should Analytic Philosophers Do History of Philosophy”, p. 25

¹⁰ John R. Searle, “Contemporary Philosophy in the United States”, in Nicholas Bunnin and Eric Tsui-James (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 20.

¹¹ I have suggested elsewhere that the break initiated by Russell and Moore with the generation of their teachers quickly came to function as a type of “creation myth” within analytic philosophy, distorting the actual historical story profoundly. See, “Introduction” to my *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

has put it, “all normative problems connected in various ways with rationality of judgment, rationality of attitude, rationality of procedure, or rationality of action”.¹² We might think of this attitude as continuous with that expressed by Frege’s *anti-psychologistic* stance in logic: “laws of thought” should not be confused with empirical *regularities* within psychological processes. In contrast, the attitude of naturalism appeals to the intuition that when we talk of judgment, attitude, procedure and action in his way, we are thereby talking about *our* activities—that is, the behaviors of the members of a natural species. “Exclusive” or “scientific” naturalists, impressed by the achievements of the natural sciences in our understanding of the natural world, thus wish to limit the investigation of these behaviors to the methods of the natural sciences, leaving no room for “normative facts”.¹³ The strongly naturalistic orientation of Carnap or Quine may here be taken to exemplify this side of the divide.

In its favoring of “argument” rather than “pedigree”, I am suggesting, the anti-historical attitude expresses the orientation of autonomous normativism. This is the stance that, in a different context, was labeled by Mark Sacks as the “egological” conception of the subject, which “regards the subject as one whose core normative structures are autonomous, independent of contextual features”.¹⁴ To accept such a conception, Sacks had written, “is to render the subject independent of environmental features, such that the individual can be stripped of all contextual coloration to reveal what it essentially is”.¹⁵ “Autonomous normativism” is more commonly directed against *naturalistic* anti-normativist stances, reflecting the fact that the challenge to the normative stance has much more commonly come from proposed naturalistic models of explanation in analytic philosophy than from historical ones, but were historically expressed challenges to autonomous normativism to be more common, one might expect “naturalism” to be linked to a parallel “historicism” in the way that Edmund Husserl had done in the early twentieth century in his normativist defense of phenomenology as a “rigorous science”.¹⁶

Of course, “exclusive naturalists” will most likely be critical of the role of history in philosophy for *another reason*—the reason being that history is not natural science. But I am not really concerned to *defend* the historical turn against such naturalists, just as I’m not concerned to defend it against autonomous normativists. I will be content to rely on normativist objections to exclusive naturalists and naturalist objections to autonomous normativists here, on the supposition that the contrary

¹² Jonathan L. Cohen, *The Dialogue of Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 49.

¹³ De Caro and Macarthur put the issues here succinctly: “Plausibly, the sciences describe how things are, particularly the causal powers of causal regularities that exist in the world, lawlike or otherwise. Consequently, if one follows modern Scientific Naturalism in supposing that natural science, and only natural science, tells us what there is in the world, then there seems to be no room for the existence of normative facts—or at least this will be so insofar as they cannot be reduced to the kind of objective, casual facts with which natural science deals.” Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism and Normativity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 1.

¹⁴ Mark Sacks, “Subject, normative structure, and externalism” in Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar (eds), *The Story of Analytic Philosophy: Plots and Heroes* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, (New York: Harper 1965).

attitudes of autonomous normativism and exclusive naturalism are really located at the extremes of a spectrum within analytic philosophy: many normativists will surely want to accommodate some form of naturalism just as many naturalists will want to accommodate some form of normativism. Such an accommodationalist position includes the position described by De Caro and Macarthur as “Liberal Naturalism” in their “Introduction” to a volume addressing the naturalism–normativity debate.¹⁷ Liberal Naturalism is meant to include a wider variety of accountings for the world than those found in “Scientific Naturalism” (my “exclusive naturalism”), accountings that include *historical* ones. But while Liberal Naturalism provides a *possible* role for history in philosophy, I will argue the stronger case for a necessary role. The argument will proceed in terms of the necessary of history in philosophy for the accommodation of *both* normativist and naturalist intuitions.

My way of proceeding will be the following: after having filled out some of the picture sketched above in section 2, in section 3 I turn to the attempt of the mid-twentieth century analytic philosopher Wilfrid Sellars to accommodate the normativity of thought within a generally naturalist picture of human existence. Here I suggest a feature of Sellars’s approach that was not, to my knowledge, particularly thematized by Sellars himself.¹⁸ Sellars’s approach opens up an *essential* place for historical considerations in the activity of reflecting on human rationality in virtue of the way that he attempts to combine normative and natural perspectives because, in his picture, the human mind is treated in part as an *artifact* that is constructed *within* a natural entity, and artifacts are surely the *paradigm* of things to be understood historically, that is, understood in relation to the sorts of human activities in the context of which they are produced and function. In the final section, section 4, I try to develop implications for this thought further by locating it in relation to two approaches from the history of philosophy—those of Friedrich Schiller and C. S. Peirce. Both thinkers raise issues that bear on the conditions of rationality when this historical, artifactual dimension of the mind is acknowledged. They are issues that, I will suggest, could only be rationally navigated with the help of history.

2. An initial response to the anti-historical case

Let us start by examining some responses by historians of philosophy to the types of complaints conjectured above. In the collection under discussion, in face of accusations of antiquarianism directed at the historian of philosophy, John Cottingham invokes a “*tu quoque*” which can appear rather weak but which contains an important truth. Cottingham, a major historian of early modern philosophy, is also editor of an analytic philosophical journal (the journal is *Ratio*), and in the latter capacity attests to constantly being struck “by the number of submitted articles that to

¹⁷ The term seems to come from John McDowell’s paper, “Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind”, in Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 95.

¹⁸ In contrast, Robert Brandom has developed a picture of the historical trajectory of philosophy from Sellarsian premises. See, for example, “History, Reason, and Reality” in Robert B. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 78–108. Sellars himself was clearly an exception to any anti-historical ethos within philosophy, his own work clearly manifesting a deep interest in the history of philosophy.

all intents and purposes begin and end with “Thus spake the master’. Except the ‘master referred to is not Aristotle, but Quine, or Davidson, or Wittgenstein, or Searle, or Fodor’.¹⁹ That some analysts may themselves be slavish followers of exemplars does not, of course, legitimate this same attitude in historians, but here one should not too hastily equate with slavish sanctification issues that might more realistically be thought of as conditions for the undertaking of any complex and cumulative, collective intellectual enterprise. Cottingham’s appeal to the work of Thomas Kuhn in the philosophy of science as a model suggests a more interesting way of taking his point.²⁰

Kuhn’s approach to the normative structure of science was not to try to deduce it from normative first principles but to proceed empirically on the basis of studies of what scientists do: normative considerations are thus meant to accommodate historical reality. One basic feature of his approach was that progress in the natural sciences depends on the establishment of broad patterns of consensus against which critical evaluation and argument is able to function. Sciences come into their own with exceptional breakthrough works—Newton’s *Principia* is surely the paradigm of the *paradigm-establishing* work—that come to play the role of normative exemplar for the development of the discipline. In normal science, particular questions can now be posed and investigated only because some type of relatively consistent and stable disciplinary matrix means that participants are no longer “talking past” each other. Mutual criticism can only meaningfully take place, it is sometimes said, against a background of agreement. Of course, that paradigmatic texts in science do not actually function as “sacred texts” is shown by the scientific revolutions that are the part of the approach for which Kuhn is most well known. But for our purposes here I am interested in the complementary side to his thesis—Kuhn’s account of *normal* science. If philosophy is *like* natural science, as many analytic philosophers like to think, and if its “revolutions” occur only as *exceptional interruptions* to “normal” intra-paradigmatic progress, then some degree of the “thus spake the master” *contra-enlightenment* attitude—the provisional quarantining of highly successful parts of the discipline from critical scrutiny to allow their development—is to a certain extent to be expected. This at least takes some of the punch out of the analysts’ “sacred documents” objection; the question now might become how broadly or narrowly to construe the “paradigm” that supposedly constrains the normal everyday practice of philosophy.

In a recent study of the contrasts of analytic philosophy to the more historically oriented continental approach, James Chase and Jack Reynolds have commented on the analytic philosophical community in ways that strongly suggest the “normal science” parallel. Contemporary analytic philosophy, they argue, “can be seen as a common dialogic enterprise characterized by a degree of internal interactivity and responsiveness, which aims to promote a certain kind of ‘inferential connectivity’”. The communications of analytic philosophers are thus “in part designed to bring out the inferential connections between pieces of philosophical work produced by different philosophers. Hence, for example, the ubiquity, within analytic philosophy, of devices of common reference.... A *ceteris paribus* concern for

¹⁹ Cottingham, “Why Should Analytic Philosophers Do History of Philosophy”, p. 26.

²⁰ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, fourth edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), first published 1966.

common reference lets more be wrung out of the connection-making practices of the analytic tradition; real debate on local matters is furthered by defeasible agreement on starting places, it becomes possible to ‘join’ different pieces of work to draw further inferences from them, and so on”.²¹ This, as they point out, is achieved at the cost of a certain “dialogical conservatism” and a non-engagement with the more historically sensitive approach of their continental colleagues.

In commenting on existing attempts within the analytic tradition to characterize analytic philosophy in terms of patterns of connectivity within which claims are linked, Chase and Reynolds note that while these sorts of patterns are usually accounted for *causally*, “there is a *normative* aspect to such connectivity as well”.²² This is the normative dimension that is presupposed by the analysts’ case for the philosophy–history divide as conjectured above. After all, isn’t philosophy concerned with claims in terms of their *argumentative* connections, and thereby skeptical of the relevance of “pedigree”? And isn’t “pedigree” just a way of referring to causal provenance? Of course, as suggested earlier, it is not difficult to see why analysts might want to conceive of such patterns in causal terms. But unfettered naturalism runs counter to that equally deeply entrenched attitude I have called “autonomous normativism”. Natural scientists *explain*, typically by appealing to causal considerations, and *anti*-naturalistic analytic philosophers will conclude from this that unfettered naturalism in philosophy undermines its own practice by producing skeptical consequences.

Perhaps among the clearest examples of normative anti-naturalism in such debates would be that offered by Alvin Plantinga, whose methodological anti-naturalism is continuous with his anti-naturalist metaphysical—in this case theological—commitments.²³ But *this* attitude, of course, does not characterize the entire range of those suspicious of unfettered naturalism for its anti-normative consequences. Like Plantinga, David Macarthur argues that scientific accounts of the mind lead to radically skeptical consequences,²⁴ but Macarthur uses this to argue for

²¹ James Chase and Jack Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy* (Durham: Acumen, 2011), p. 5. This approach is developed in James Chase, “Analytic Philosophy and Dialogic Conservatism”, in Jack Reynolds, James Chase, James Williams and Edwin Mares (eds), *Postanalytic and Metacontinental: Crossing Philosophical Divides* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 85–104.

²² Chase and Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental*, p. 5, emphasis added. Chase and Reynolds refer to Jonathan Cohen’s, *The Dialogue or Reason*, and Hans-Johan Glock’s, *What is Analytic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) as examples of this attitude to the nature of the analytic philosophical community. (Chase and Reynolds, p. 257 note 3. See also, Chase, “Analytic Philosophy and Dialogic Conservatism”, p. 95.)

²³ See, for example, Alvin Plantinga, “How Naturalism Implies Skepticism”, in Antonella Corradini, Sergio Galvan and E. Jonathan Lowe (eds), *Analytic Philosophy Without Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 29–44. Macarthur also uses the skeptical consequences of scientific naturalism to argue against it: In contrast to Plantinga, however, this criticism is developed by Macarthur into a case for a more encompassing “Liberal Naturalism”. David Macarthur, “Taking the Human Sciences Seriously”, in De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism and Normativity*, pp. 123–141.

²⁴ “Radical skepticism is not, as naturalists tend to think, a dispensable feature of the new scientific account of man but its natural corollary.” David Macarthur, “Naturalism and Skepticism”, in Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 123.

the broader, “liberal” naturalist position, which is equally opposed to super-naturalism as is scientific naturalism.²⁵ However, from a normativist perspective that wants to *avoid* the suggestion of supernaturalism, exactly how to bring normative and naturalist considerations together is not obvious. At the very least, naturalism-accommodating normativists would presumably want to restrict relevant norms to ones, the following of which would *not* presuppose supernatural capacities. Even from this general consideration, the “egological” conception of the subject implicit in the anti-historical expression of autonomous normativism might seem to be a worry. The view that thinkers can *entirely transcend*, or in some sense can even *aim to transcend* the constraints of the *Zeitgeist* into which they were born and raised, is a view that is difficult to maintain without the idea of humans have powers that *do* outstrip those compatible with our finite natures.²⁶ Moreover, from the position of liberal naturalism, analytic philosophy’s affinity with the anti-historical attitude of *classical early modern philosophy* might itself appear as a worry: Descartes’ picture of the mind is surely the prototype of the “egological” conception, his dualism providing a convenient way of separating causal from normative considerations: the extended world *qua* what could be known by the mind was the domain of causality, while the ontologically separate mental realm was the domain of the normative. While Cartesian dualism is hardly an approach that sits easily with any sort of naturalist approach to the mind,²⁷ to some naturalists it is not clear how to keep *normativity* in play *without* the assumption of entities like the Cartesian mind.²⁸

From within the continental tradition, a general parallel to the idea of the restrictedness of “normal” science in the Kuhnian approach can be found in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s discussions, in *Truth and Method*, of the role of “prejudice” or “prejudgment” [*Vorurteilen*] in all cognitive claims, and in his advocacy of a central role for “classic” works in philosophy.²⁹ For Gadamer, questions can be posed within

²⁵ “What makes Scientific Naturalism and Liberal Naturalism both versions of *naturalism* is that neither countenances the supernatural, whether in the form of entities (such as God, spirits, entelechies, or Cartesian minds), events (such as miracles or magic), or epistemic faculties (such as mystical insight or spiritual intuition).” De Caro and Macarthur, “Introduction” to De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism and Normativity*, p. 3.

²⁶ The idea that this might not even be an intelligible aim is suggested by a comparison to Richard Rorty’s way of putting the question about aiming at “the truth”. The notion of truth cannot be equated with that of justification, but in what sense could any inquirer *aim at* something beyond the justification of their views? See, Richard Rorty, “Is Truth a Goal of Enquiry? Davidson vs. Wright”, *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol 45 (1995), pp. 281–300, reprinted in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers III* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 19–42.

²⁷ The persistence of the Cartesian conceptual framework within an environment otherwise critical of any Cartesian dualism is a complaint not uncommonly made by internal critics of analytic philosophy. John Searle, for example, has described contemporary materialist philosophy of mind as the “finest flower of dualism” (John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p. 26), while Hilary Putnam talks of the “Cartesianism cum materialism” of contemporary functionalist theories of mind. Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

²⁸ This “dilemma” of Liberal Naturalism, that is, how it not be “a form of Super-naturalism in disguise”, is discussed in Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini in “Is Liberal Naturalism Possible?”, in De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism and Normativity*, pp. 69–86.

²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Part II, 4, 1 (B), “Prejudices as conditions of understanding”.

a cognitive domain only against a background of historically variable factors that pre-structure the sorts of questions that can be asked—“prejudices” that are not *simply* open to critical conscious scrutiny and that, in this sense, are more like de-facto dispositions to respond in predictable ways. Indeed, the ubiquity of “prejudices” for Gadamer forms part of his case for the internal role given to historical consciousness (that he calls “effective historical consciousness”) *within* philosophy, as it is only the challenge of questions coming from a different philosophical “horizon” that can force the philosopher’s *own* prejudices out into the open. This type of external provocation is necessary because, on this model, the mind is not simply transparent to itself, and individual reflection is not enough to unearth the range of collateral beliefs with which one’s conscious claims are inferentially connected. It is only on being confronted with and challenged by a thought resting on a set of prejudices *different to* one’s own that exactly what might need to be justified in one’s own approach comes into view.

Gadamer articulates his account of prejudice against a background of Heidegger’s phenomenological approach to intentionality and a type of demetaphysicalized version of Hegel’s concept of “spirit”,³⁰ which are reasons why his account would be unlikely to get much of a hearing among the analysts, but perhaps some broadly analogous conception could be developed within the sorts of approaches to the mind more likely to be found in contemporary analytic philosophy? After all, the key feature of the conception of mindedness *behind* Gadamer’s appeal to the notion of “prejudice” is surely what from a moderately naturalistic analytic philosophy of mind would be a relatively uncontroversial thesis about the mind’s lack of total Cartesian “self-transparency” owing to the operation of causal processes that somehow underlie the normative dimensions of reasoning. It is for this reason that I turn to the work of Wilfrid Sellars, a major analytic philosopher from the middle of the last century, who attempted to combine “normative” and somewhat naturalistically “dispositional” issues by exploring the normativity of cognitive function in relation to an account of the rule-governed nature of language. But Sellars approach, I will suggest, also posits a necessary place for *historical* considerations in understanding how naturalistic and normative perspectives could come together. My intention is not to use Sellars here in such a way that any argument for the necessity of history for the practice of analytic philosophy is made to depend on the details of his account. Rather, his approach will be used to suggest the general features of a model that might illustrate a way in which natural and normative considerations can be seen to be linked in ways such that historical considerations become essential. In short, it will be used to suggest the basis for an argument for the centrality of historical considerations for philosophy for the attempt to bridge the divide between natural and normative perspectives within analytic philosophy.

3. Wilfrid Sellars on norms, nature and the rational community

Wilfrid Sellars advocated an approach to the mind that modeled the “internal” capacity to apply concepts in judgments on the *externally* expressed and thereby publically assessable capacity to apply predicates in acts of asserting. Adopting a broadly pragmatic orientation towards language, meaning and knowledge, Sellars

³⁰ Ibid., Part II, 4, 1, (A) (i), and Part I, 1, 1 (B) (i).

considered an assertion as a type of utterance in which some purportedly known propositional content is placed in what he called the “logical space of reasons”,³¹ and is thereby *understood* by others to consist of a move in a particular kind of language game—the game of giving and asking for reasons: “In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says”.³² Talk of a “space of reasons” here is just a way of talking about the relevant *relations* between the contents of such assertions in question, the propositions asserted, that we should distinguish from the acts, *assertings*, that we also call “assertions”. The relations between the contents asserted, but not necessarily those between the *assertings*, are to be regarded as *rational* ones—relations such as those of antecedence and consequence, or compatibility and incompatibility. Such relations are normative relations, relations that we as speakers ought to hold our *assertings* to, if we want to be rational. Sellars’s point was that such normative relations structuring the space of reasons should not be confused with causal empirical ones between the *assertings* themselves, might be thought of as giving life to Kant’s critique of Locke’s “physiological” derivation of mental representations and the confusion of “*quaestio facti*” with “*quaestio juris*”.³³ But Sellars did not conceive of the norm governed practices as simply able to be uncoupled from the physical constitutions of and the causal processes operating within those individuals in which they were instantiated.³⁴ It was important for him that the capacities for rule following

³¹ Thus Sellars states the intention to map, within the coordinates of a “psychology of rule-regulated behavior ... a true *via media* ... between a rationalistic apriorism and what, for want of a better term, I shall call ‘descriptivism,’ by which I understand the claim that all meaningful concepts and problems belong to the empirical or descriptive sciences, including the sciences of human behavior”. Wilfrid Sellars, “Language, Rules and Behavior,” in Sidney Hook (ed), *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom* (New York: Dial Press, 1950), reprinted in Wilfrid Sellars, *Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds: The Early Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, ed and intro, J. F. Sicha (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1980), pp. 129–30.

³² Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, with an Introduction by Richard Rorty and a Study Guide by Robert Brandom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 76.

³³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A86–7/B119.

³⁴ In this sense, Sellars is often thought of as influencing a variety of materialist accounts of the mind later popular in analytic philosophy such as functionalism. Functionalists in philosophy of mind sometimes see functionalism itself as satisfactorily addressing the question of the relation of natural to normative issues, but from the perspective developed here the very modeling of the mind on computational devices suggests the artifactual level of “second nature”, and there is thus raised the further question of how such a functioning device is to be understood in relation to our evolutionarily given selves—our underlying “first” natures. From the other direction, Robert Brandom insists on a functionalist philosophy of mind that must be understood as a *normative* rather than a “causal–dispositionalist” functionalism in relation to the norms implicit in cognitive practices in that the “roles in question are to be specified in a normative vocabulary” (Robert B. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 12). However, it seems to be the adoption of the typical functionalist idea of the indifference of the “software” to the “hardware” in which it is instantiated that allows Brandom to abstract away from the specificity of the “causal-dispositional” layer of actual humans. Sellars’s picture, I suggest, insists on the specificity of the mediating layer serving “ought-to-dos” and implicitly raises the relations of “functions” at this level to those of our evolved first-natures, but like

were ultimately instantiated within dispositions to respond to the world that were, from another point of view, entirely natural.

Thus from the normative point of view of an interlocutor, in making an assertion, for example claiming that *this a is F*, my utterance is not to be understood as simply some complicated type of causal outcome, as in a conditioned response. The act *is* this, but at the same time is a “move” in the normative language game for which I as interlocutor can be held responsible. If an interlocutor has reason to doubt the claim they can suspend any uptake of those communicated claims and demand evidence. Sellars was critical of the idea that the correctness of assertions could be understood *representationally*, that is, in terms of the putative correspondence of the assertion to some “state of affairs”, the *being-F of a*. Like Kant, Sellars refused this idea of representation as *self-evident and primary*, and rather posed the question of the *ground* of the type of relations we *take to be* “representational”. For Kant it was the fact of a judgment’s belonging to the so-called “transcendental unity of apperception”, for Sellars it was the utterance’s functioning as a move within the normative space of reasons.³⁵ Nevertheless, while distinguishing the normative act of assertion from the naturalistic conditioned response, the inculcation of such responses plays a crucial part in the processes that ultimately result in the ability to exercise those conceptual capacities when playing in the space of reasons. Players of the games of asking for and giving reasons, requiring such conceptual capacities thus have to be subject to two different kinds of normative requirements. They have to hold themselves to the socially normative rules characterizing the concepts they use—they have to hold themselves to “ought-to-dos”, but they have *to be constituted* in such a way that they have *appropriate* dispositions to respond to the world in a way presupposed by the exercise of such conceptual abilities—they have to fit the requirements of various “ought-to-be”s.³⁶ We might, at first pass, take these latter states to be analogous to Gadamer’s “prejudices” or “prejudgments”.

These “ought-to-be”s, *qua* “oughts”, are normative, of course, but not in the same sense as the former. I should not be thought of as “following” or as “holding myself to” ought-to-bes, they are just part of my dispositional “nature”. But the

Brandom Sellars also insists on the non-reducibility of “normative vocabulary” from any functionalist picture. Chauncey Maher uses the term “normative functionalism” to more broadly capture the orientation of the various members of the “Pittsburgh School” in *The Pittsburgh School of Philosophy: Sellars, McDowell and Brandom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

³⁵ Rather than basing the mind’s rationality on some native capacity to “represent reality”, Sellars, like the earlier pragmatist, C. S. Peirce, locates the rationality of rational thought in its self-correcting nature. The openness of the practice of asserting to the demand for reasons means that *norms* operative and enforceable at any particular time can, in principle, *themselves* be brought into question and reasons demanded of *them*, although, of course, this could not be done all at once. If found wanting, these norms are then open to being replaced by *better* ones. And among these norms (ought-to-dos) must be those that pertain to the constitution of the agents in the system—the agents who come to embody these practices. This in turn will give a complexity to the evolution of thought here.

³⁶ See, for example, Wilfrid Sellars, “Language as Thought and as Communication”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Jun., 1969), pp. 506-527, and “Meaning as Functional Classification (A Perspective on the Relation of Syntax to Semantics)”, *Synthese*, 27 (1974), pp.

dimension of “naturalism” introduced here is not one that can be easily isolated from historical considerations. Sellars gave as one example that of an *artifact*, a clock that *ought* to strike on the quarter hour. The ought here is not an ought-to-do—a rule *for the clock* to follow. A clock does not “follow” rules in this sense: if functioning correctly, it simply does what it has been designed to do. And being artifacts, clocks do not possess “natures” in the straightforward, “natural” sense; they are given the “natures” they have by their makers, but in providing clocks with their *ought-to-bes*, clockmakers *do* follow rules (ought-to-dos). *Clockmaking* is a genuinely rule-governed human activity.

In other examples, Sellars talked of animal trainers as inducing “pattern-governed behavior” in animals in analogous ways to the way he described the clockmakers constructing their artifacts.³⁷ The behavior of a trained animal, that of a dog who has been trained to sit up, say, at a particular command, “exhibits a pattern, not because it is brought about by the intention that it exhibit this pattern, but because the propensity to emit behavior of the pattern has been selectively reinforced, and the propensity to emit behavior which does not conform to this pattern selectively extinguished”.³⁸ Trained animals are part-nature, part-artifact, in this regard—an analysis that Sellars will extend to humans in terms of the patterned behavior underlying the game of asking for and giving of reasons. On Sellars’s model, we are to think of ourselves qua players in the normative game of the asking for and giving of reasons as, in the first instances, something like clocks or trained animals. The capacity to apply concepts in assertions in rule-governed ways is dependent upon the possession of appropriate dispositions—for example, the ability to use the concept “red” in describing the colours of objects will be dependent upon the possession of the disposition to respond to red things with a noise recognizable by speakers of English as a token of the word “red”. At *this* level, this could be thought of a disposition shared by, say, a trained parrot, but what the parrot lacks is the ability to be a player in the game of the asking for a giving of reasons, hence the parrot’s squawk can never function within an act of *describing* a colour. Many of these dispositions will have had to have been inculcated, and the inculcation of those dispositions would have been, in the first instance, up to others, such as parents and teachers. In my early years, that I acquire the appropriate “ought-to-be”s underlying language use constitutes the appropriate “ought-to-do”s *for them*: it is part of *their* responsibility as creators of an appropriately functioning human artifacts. But, of course, once I have passed some sufficient threshold in the acquisition of these capacities I will be able to subject *myself* to the same sorts of training that my parents and teachers had earlier subjected me.

This *artifactual* dimension of trained natural beings adds history to the process: both the conceptions of how artifacts ought to be, and the directly “ought-to-do” rules with which they are coordinated, are clearly historical. Of course “nature”

³⁷ “If patterned governed behavior can arise by ‘natural’ selection, it can also arise by purposive selection on the part of trainers. They can be construed as reasoning. Patterned-behavior of such and such a kind *ought to be* exhibited by trainees, hence we, the trainers, *ought to do* this and that, as likely to bring it about that it *is* exhibited.”

Wilfrid Sellars, “Meaning as Functional Classification”, p. 423.

³⁸ Sellars, “Meaning as Functional Classification”, p. 423.

must ultimately constrain *both ought-to-dos* and *ought-to-bes*. A dog can be trained to sit up or jump on a particular commands, but it cannot be trained to *fly* on command. Normative considerations should not be in conflict with the natural world, and this is a fact that should be taken seriously in reflecting upon our own normative behavior.

The details of any plausible account here would be massively complex, but the resulting picture would be one that involves both normative, historical and natural factors connected in ways that are at base relatively simple.³⁹ It is in this sense that we might see Sellars as pointing to a picture of the mind that is able to answer they types of needs that Chase and Reynolds postulate in relation to the operations of a philosophical community. If we think of the job of philosophers as importantly including the task of exploring of “inferential connectivity” existing among the contents of philosophical claims in the way Chase and Reynolds suggest operates in analytic philosophy, then such debates will be seen as in principle extendable to beliefs about the nature of the norms governing the system itself. We might expect the inferential connections here to be complex enough, but we must not forget that beliefs about these norms are in turn going to be connected with beliefs about the nature of the *ought-to-bes* to be reproduced in those who are fashioned into being appropriate agents within the system. It is hard to see how historical accounts of our epistemic practices are going to be quarantined here, or how historical questions are to be kept neatly separable from first-order philosophical ones.

Clearly some philosophers in the past have reflected on these sorts of “ought-to-be”s required for the generation of those historical artifacts that we think of as “philosophers”. But as examples of such programs as Plato’s proposals for the education of the “guardians”,⁴⁰ or James Mill’s actual program for the education of his son John Stuart,⁴¹ attest, clearly substantive issues arise here. We are talking here about the inculcation of *ought-to-bes* as a type of “second nature”⁴² within beings, i.e., humans, that have their own “original” natures *qua* bearers of their own *evolved* “pattern-governed behavior”. How are we to know a priori that these dispositions are going to harmonize?

³⁹ There is some similarity between the Sellarsian picture I am suggesting here and the “subject naturalism” offered by Huw Price in *Representation without Mirrors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). (On parallels between Price’s approach and that of Sellars see the review of *Representation Without Mirrors* by Willem deVries in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, <<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/25939-naturalism-without-mirrors/>>. Price sees this as an ultimate victory for naturalism, however—a view I have criticized from a more Hegelian point of view in “Two Directions for Analytic Kantianism: Naturalism and Idealism”, in De Caro and Macarthur *Naturalism and Normativity*, pp. 263–85).

⁴⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 376d.

⁴¹ John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, 1873).

⁴² This idea with Aristotelian and Hegelian roots has recently been brought into contemporary debate by John McDowell in *Mind and World* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994). My use of the notion here, however, presupposing Sellars’s *ought-to-do / ought-to-be* distinction is meant to be more specific.

4. Functional diversity among “ought to be”s and “pattern-governed behaviors” and the consequences for the limits of reflection

A clear example from the history of philosophy of this kind of critical reflection on the potential hazards of attempts to “rationalize” the workings of society or the individual by the inculcation of *ought-to-bes* meant to serve *rational* rule-following practices is to be found in Friedrich Schiller’s simultaneous reflections on the political program of the Jacobins in the French Revolution and the conception of morality found in Kant’s philosophy in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.⁴³ Published just after the Jacobin terror, Schiller’s “Letters” noted the implicit picture common to Kant and Robespierre: to become a “member of the tribunal of reason” one must raise oneself “from an individual into a representative of the species”,⁴⁴ thereby speaking and acting as that “ideal man, the archetype of a human being” that each individual carries within himself.⁴⁵ But a reason and morality that was optimal from a normative point of view may in fact be *antagonistic* to human nature itself. Appealing to the actual *life* led by subjects, both individually and collectively, Schiller, who had undergone a medical training, thus warned of the dangers of the external *imposition* of this egologically conceived self on a “living” body.⁴⁶

Schiller’s suggestion effectively was that individual organisms as well as communities of organisms have their own *native ought-to-bes*, ones that we would now think of resulting from the process of evolution, that simply may not be compatible with those new ones inculcated in the process of an individual’s becoming the “archetype of a human being”. But we need not restrict ourselves to any potential opposition between “first” and “second” natures, as surely equally important will be potential conflicts among *different* dimensions of any culturally produced “second nature” itself. In many respects, Schiller’s warnings against the potential hazards of those very processes of enculturation, that, in laying down a “second nature” differentiate humans from the rest of nature, had been taken up by Hegel in his own account of the relations of nature and “spirit”, and also inform Gadamer’s warnings about any Enlightenment “prejudice against prejudice”. In short, if we keep in view the idea of human rational functioning as secured by processes including the inculcation of particular forms of “pattern-governed behavior” and their associated “ought-to-be”s, may it not be the case that these can enter into conflict with those serving *different* functions?

⁴³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Letter 2, Paragraph 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Letter 4, Paragraph 2.

⁴⁶ This Natural State (as we may term any political body whose organisation derives originally from forces and not from laws) is, it is true, at variance with man as moral being, for whom the only Law should be to act in conformity with law. But it will just suffice for man as physical being; for he only gives himself laws in order to come to terms with forces. But physical man does in fact exist, whereas the existence of moral man is as yet problematic. If, then, Reason does away with the Natural State (as she of necessity must if she would put her own in its place), she jeopardises the physical man who actually exists for the sake of a moral man who is as yet problematic. Ibid., Letter 3, Paragraph 3.

When one thinks of the conditions of rational thought from such a perspective, and, say, focuses on the *inculcation of responses* within the bodies of those agents—processes of *training*, rather than *reasoning with*—one is more likely to come up with historical accounts that tend towards those found in say, Michel Foucault or before him, in the likes of Marx or Nietzsche. Broadly, such approaches will point to the way certain beliefs can be shaped by forces serving quite different functions to than those pertaining to the growth of knowledge—in a loose sense, “ideologies”. Of course, there has developed many different ways in which history will be appealed to with the array of continental approaches, but rather than travel down any of these paths, I again want to keep to the most shared features of such approaches that might serve to keep closer to an analytic perspective, especially that of Sellars. Thus I will take the example of Charles Sanders Peirce who, in the classic paper, “The Fixation of Belief”, pointed to functions, other than those found in any “rational” process of belief-fixing, that might be served in such processes.⁴⁷

Peirce, like many philosophers, was concerned with the problem of doubt, but approached the phenomenon of doubt in a direct and practical way. If one focuses on human beliefs as states upon which humans are likely to act, then doubt can be dysfunctional to the extent that it paralyzes action. On the other hand, doubt also provides the occasion for the sort of inquiry that leads to further knowledge. In this latter sense, doubt, in Peirce’s account, plays a role akin to those communicative interruptions in Sellars that constitute demands for reasons. But clearly, inquiry leading to the *rational* resolution of doubt is not the only way that the paralyzing effects of doubt can be overcome: opinion will be thus open to a variety of mechanisms for its “fixation”.

At it simplest, one may simply learn “to turn with contempt and hatred from anything that might disturb” belief, but this, notes Peirce, may conflict with “the social impulse”.⁴⁸ One solution to this problem, then, is simply to raise the method of tenacity to the level of the social group: “Let the will of the state act, then, instead of that of the individual”.⁴⁹ This is, of course, not a rational way to resolve the diversity of belief, but from the perspective of the needs of the social organism, as it were, it is an effective way of assuring a *harmony* among individuals’ dispositions to act, the sort of harmony that is needed for any coordinated action to succeed. This is how organized faiths operate and “for the mass of mankind ... there is perhaps no better method than this. If it is their highest impulse to be intellectual slaves, then slaves they ought to remain”.⁵⁰ The “social impulse” may, however, cut in at a higher level,

⁴⁷ Charles Sanders Peirce, “The Fixation of Belief”, in Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (eds), *Selected Philosophical Writings*, Volume 1 (1867–1893) (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 109–23.

⁴⁸ “The man who adopts [the method of tenacity] will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him, in some saner moment, that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief. This conception, that another man’s thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one’s own, is a distinctly new step, and a highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed, without danger of destroying the human species. Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other’s opinions; so that the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community.” *Ibid.* p. 116–7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 117–8.

with individuals reacting to the *particularity* of the views that their culture holds in contrast to other cultures, and so to bring their *own* collective beliefs into question, leading more to an attitude more like that of the enlightenment: “Let the action of natural preferences be unimpeded, then, and under their influence let men, conversing together and regarding matters in different lights, gradually develop beliefs in harmony with natural causes. This method resembles that by which conceptions of art have been brought to maturity. The most perfect example of it is to be found in the history of metaphysical philosophy”.⁵¹

This method for the fixation of belief, the so called, “a priori method” which Peirce thinks typifies philosophy, will itself have problems, however, because in giving expression to “natural preferences” it will still be dictated to by *something about the nature of the inquirers themselves* rather than by the objects of inquiry. The suggestion seems to be that it is only when we feel the restriction on our beliefs as coming from without, as might be in the context of the “method of authority” for example, that we can perceive it as giving expression to the particular, and hence arbitrary, factors in belief-fixing. But with the “a priori method”, which reflects the change to the conditions of the culture of “enlightenment”, for example, the belief is being fixed by something in our own natures—perhaps underlying Sellarsian *ought-to-bes*, or Gadamerian *prejudices*—that, because we identify with them as ours, are not perceived as arbitrary and contingent.

Peirce concludes with an endorsement of experimental science as the only way of so “fixing belief” that overcomes this problem, despite the fact that clearly enough Peirce was not an advocate of “exclusive naturalism” in philosophy. But here I want to focus here upon Peirce’s conviction of the limitations of the “a priori method” itself, that is, that the limitations of the dialogical openness of the game of the asking for and giving of reasons that he sees as itself insufficient for the rational fixation of belief because of the role of “natural preferences”, because the “a priori method” is, for the most part, the method of analytic philosophy itself. We might recall the later Wittgenstein’s claim that at some point the “giving of reasons” comes to an end: “If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: ‘This is simply what I do.’”⁵² To say, “This is simply what I do” is surely to report on the “patterned behavior” that is “emitted” by one’s inculcated “ought-to-bes”. Wittgenstein seemed to treat this as an internal limitation of philosophical method, but of course he had in mind philosophical method without a historical dimension.

Scientific or “exclusive” naturalists sometimes criticize analytic philosophy for the role played by shared intuitions in philosophical judgment,⁵³ a criticism that might be thought as repeating Peirce’s criticism of the reliance of the “a priori

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 118.

⁵² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), § 217.

⁵³ See, for example, James Ladyman and Don Ross with David Spurrett and John Collier, *Every Thing Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). While sympathetic to Quine’s naturalization of epistemology, the authors point out that “it does not imply that our everyday or habitual intuitions and cognition are likely to track truths reliably across all domains of inquiry”. P. 2.

method” on “natural preferences”.⁵⁴ Thus we might think of exclusive naturalists as following Peirce’s story to the step beyond the “a priori method”, and permit *only experimental* ways of fixing belief, but in doing this the naturalist comes up against the problem of eliminating normative considerations *entirely* from philosophy. But here the accommodating naturalist has another response. They can ask after the *history* of such forms of intuition and the forms of “patterned behavior” with which they are correlated.⁵⁵ Often this direction is criticized on the basis of the worry that, like scientific naturalism, it leaves all “normativity” behind, but simply showing that a type of philosophical intuition or a form of relevant “patterned behavior” underlying a philosophical judgment has a causal provenance is not, *per se*, a reason to dismiss it as justified on normative grounds. It might reflect just those *ought-to-bes* or *prejudices* that, from our current set of beliefs, are the *right* ones for inculcation in a rational being.⁵⁶ The point is, that without bringing these considerations in to focus we have no way of knowing whether they are justified or not from the perspective of their role in reason. Historical reflection on the circumstances in which these intuitions, dispositions, forms of patterned-behavior and so forth might lead us to think of these as serving quite different functions from rational ones and give us call to reassess them, just as we come to learn to reassess the value of many other dispositions we had hitherto assumed to be both “natural” and “justified”. But presumably this cannot be known *a priori* as if open to rational reflection alone.

5. Conclusion

Philosophers value the idea of philosophy as an activity of intellectual inquiry that is free from constraints of all forms except the one—the constraint of having good *reasons* for the various beliefs and other commitments to which one holds oneself. But the holding of oneself to this norm can seem to presuppose a picture of oneself—the picture that, following Sacks I have been calling the “egological” picture—that, when taken in the form of a philosophical theory, many would regard as *not* being based in good reasons. This situation, I have been suggesting, can be seen as a manifestation of the problematic way that analytic philosophy, as a philosophical form continuous with modern “enlightened” culture, is fed by both “normativist” and

⁵⁴ Thus Ladyman et. al. speculate that human intelligence and “collective representational technologies (especially public languages) ... evolved mainly to enable us to navigate complex social coordination games” and that “there is no reason to imagine that our habitual intuitions and inferential responses are well designed for science or for metaphysics”. Ibid. They reject the anti-naturalist idea of “[a]ttaching epistemic significance to metaphysical intuitions for two reasons. First, it requires ignoring the fact that science, especially physics, has shown us that the universe is very strange to our inherited conception of what it is like. Second, it requires ignoring central implications of evolutionary theory and of the cognitive and behavioural sciences, concerning the nature of our minds”. Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁵ John Dewey might be thought of as having developed Peirce’s insights in just this direction. The picture of Dewey sketched by Peter Godfrey-Smith in “Dewey, Continuity, and McDowell” (in De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism and Normativity*, pp. 304–21) has such a role for historical narrative exploring “how the ‘habits of thought and action’ involved in our use of normative concepts relate to other facts about us and how these habits function as human cognitive tools”. Ibid., 316.

⁵⁶ Thus Gadamer, for example, thinks that on reflection “prejudices” may turn out *to be* justified.

“naturalist” intuitions that can easily contradict each other. Adopting unilaterally normativist or naturalist positions seems doomed because unilateralism here can only be understood as involving the unreasoned for *suppression* of the opposing intuition rather than its *reasoned* elimination. Some sort of accommodationist perspective seems called for, but how to see this as working is far from clear.

I have pointed to Wilfrid Sellars as one philosopher from the analytic tradition who attempted to address the co-existence of our normative and natural dimensions, and whose solution relies on the idea of there being a mediating “artifactual” layer, a “second nature”, that is *like* our evolutionary produced *first* natures in consisting of dispositions to respond (rather than intentions to act) and behavior that is “patterned” (rather than conscious and *rule-following*), and yet that is open to shaping *by* our conscious rule-following behavior (in the first instance, the conscious rule-following behavior of others). And yet while this nature is shaped by the overtly normative rule-following behavior, at the same time, like nature in general, it necessarily constrains this overtly rule-following behavior “from below” and constrains it in ways *not* open to straightforwardly conscious evaluation. To the extent that it is shaped by conscious rule-following behavior, this second nature can be seen as artifactual, and like all artifacts, this layer of our functioning selves is to be understood *historically*—that is, understood *via* some narrative about the particular human activities in which artifacts are produced and in which they function.

I have used the examples of Schiller and Peirce to point to approaches compatible with such a Sellarsian starting point. The insights of Schiller give us reason to think that *certain* norms of reason may be incompatible with our natures, or that more generally there may be conflicts among the various functions served by our induced second natures, and the insights of Peirce give us reason to think that the sources of our normative intuitions brought to philosophy may not be directly open to reflection and may be grounded in functions other than the ones they purportedly serve. In terms of the account Peirce offers in “The Fixation of Belief”, the natural sciences are offered as the paradigm of a way fixing belief that overcomes the problems of philosophy’s “a priori method”, but such a solution leads to skeptical consequences, as accommodating “liberal naturalists” point out. But we can also investigate the production of our second natures from a distinctly *historical* point of view, trying to understand the *actual* functions they have served and ask the question of how such functions relate to their functioning in rational processes.⁵⁷ In the first instance, the sort of history relevant to this form of inquiry would be the history of philosophy itself, as it is there that we first get a sense of the very different forms of normative intuition that philosophers have brought to philosophical inquiry.

⁵⁷ In “Dewey, Continuity and McDowell” Peter Godfrey-Smith is critical of McDowell’s use of the idea of second nature in the way that discourages questions concerning a “scientific treatment of the evolution of culture”. *Ibid.*, p. 316. In contrast, *Sellars’s* separation of ought-to-dos from ought-to-bes allows the more Deweyan project of a history of the “‘habits of thought and action’ involved in our use of normative concepts” that Godfrey-Smith has in mind.