

Is there still (if there has been at all) an analytic-continental divide?

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“Philosophical Schools in the second half of the XX century”

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Abstract – In this paper I reconstruct the nature, origins and survivals of the divide between ‘analytic’ and ‘continental’ tradition—the famous dualism which allegedly affected the development of philosophy in the second half of the XX century. I also present a theory of it, stressing that its intra-philosophical causes are to be found in the mutual resistance between critical (transcendental) and semantic (logical) approaches in philosophy. I conclude by noting that good philosophers (more or less knowingly) are and have always been sensitive to the transcendental and logical aspects of the philosophical work.

Keywords: Analytic Philosophy – Continental Philosophy – Birth of Modern Logic – Transcendental Philosophy

1. Introduction

The ‘analytic-continental divide’ is a historiographical and metaphilosophical label frequently used to interpret the situation of academic philosophy in the second half of the XX century. It intends to capture a dualism between the analytic (A hereafter) tradition, especially active in English-speaking countries, and the leading currents of European philosophy at that time, globally called ‘continental’ (C). The divide possibly originated in the late XIX century,¹ but it became clearly observable in the last decades of the XX. As Michael Dummett wrote in 1993, ‘we have reached a point at which it is as if we are working in different subjects’.²

Nowadays philosophy is a globalized set of specialized disciplines, so one may say there are no philosophical systems, schools or traditions anymore (see Sect. 4). And yet, the conceptual couple is still adopted to explain the intuition of a difference between metaphilosophical views that can be traced back to the old dichotomy.³ In my diagnosis,

¹ See P. Simons, “Whose Fault? The Origins and Evitability of the Analytic-Continental Rift”, in A. Biletzki (ed.), *Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide*, in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Special Issue, vol. 9, n. 3, pp. 295-311.

² M. Dummett, *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press 1993, p. 193.

³ The A-C dualism frequently appears in historical reconstructions and definitions of A philosophy, as in H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, pp. 61-88; M. Beaney (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford:

this happens because the underlying problem is still unsolved. What is this problem? Can/should we solve it?

The literature on the theme is quite rich⁴, but it is sparse and not convergent, there is no clear assessment of what the conceptual couple ultimately means and why it still captures relevant metaphilosophical concerns. So I first offer a synthetic account of the nature, origins and survivals of the dualism. The reconstruction will enlighten that what some observers called ‘the great divide’ has involved a series of historical and cultural factors, but the deepest elements of mutual resistance between the exponents of the two traditions have been strictly intra-philosophical, and they can be identified by the diverging consequences of two metaphilosophical *turns*: the *transcendental turn*, and the *logical turn*. The two turns have been inherited and developed (also critically) in the two traditions, and respectively informed C and A conceptions of philosophy.⁵

The ‘logical turn’ was launched by Russell at the beginning of the XX century, the transcendental turn was conceived by Kant, and began to inform European philosophy at the beginning of the XIX. I speak of ‘turns’ because they created the canons, the methodological tendencies, the basic metaphilosophical conceptions of the two traditions. In both cases, there have been revisions and criticisms (not by chance, we speak of ‘traditions’ and not of ‘schools’: see 2.1). Some of the main lines of the transcendental-idealistic approach (Kant and Hegel) have been rejected by C philosophers; and in the central decades of the XX century A philosophers criticized ‘the received view’ (Russell’s basic realism or descriptivism). But undeniably, the mutual ignorance or underestimation of each turn generated what has been called ‘the divide’, because the transcendental (critical) philosophy stemming from Kant and developed by Hegel was conceived (by A as well as by C philosophers) as incompatible with the logical (semantic) approach to philosophy launched by Frege and Russell. With this interpretation, we get a largely shareable if not quasi-canonical image of the two traditions, and we can begin to reflect on what we ought to do nowadays (if something is still to be done).

Oxford University Press 2013, pp. 49-50; S. Soames, *Analytic Philosophy in America. And Other Historical and Contemporary Essays*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014, p. 7; B. Dainton and H. Robinson (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*. London: Bloomsbury 2014, pp. 569-570.

⁴ Some texts of the last twenty years: A. Biletzki (ed.), *Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide*, Special Issue of *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 9, 3, 2001; C. Prado (ed.), *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*. Amherst (NY): Humanity Books 2003; B. Babich “On the Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy”, in Prado, *A House Divided*, cit., pp. 63-103; N. Levy, “Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the differences”, *Metaphilosophy*, 34, 2003, pp. 284-304; B. Leiter, M. Rosen, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, pp. 1-4; Søren Overgaard, “Royaumont Revisited”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18, n. 5, pp. 899-924; B. Babich, *La fin de la pensée? Philosophie analytique contre philosophie continentale*, Paris: L’Harmattan 2012; S. Overgaard, P. Gilbert, S. Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 115-144; J. A. Bell, A. Cutrofello and P. M. Livingston (eds.) *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide: Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford: Routledge 2016; G. D’Oro and S. Overgaard, *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, 2017 (specifically R. Piercey, “The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide”, pp. 274-292); R. Hanna et AL., *The End of Analytic and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes or no? And if Yes, Then What’s Beyond?*, Special Issue of *Borderless Philosophy*, 5, 2022.

⁵ On the definition of ‘transcendental’ or ‘transcendentalism’ (as referred to Kant and/or medieval philosophy, and not to the American movement centred around R. W. Emerson), there is no clear accordance. For a recent account, it is advisable to refer to the essays collected in S. Gardner and M. Grist (eds.), *The Transcendental Turn*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015.

In the next section, I specify the main methodological features of the A-C theory, I briefly reconstruct a possible ‘history’ of the divide and explore the opposed aspects of A and C (as they appeared in the late XX century). In Section 3, I give some details about the underlying problem, then, in Section 4, I say something about the current conditions of the A-C question. In the last section I summarize the main theses, then I indicate (very briefly) how ‘good philosophers’ are nowadays.

2. A-C?

What do we mean, exactly, when we talk about the historical and still partially surviving dualism between A and C? What are (have been) exactly A, and C? Why do we speak of an incompatibility between them? There is no clear accord about these questions. I will try to give answers, but some peculiarities of the *A-C theory* are to be specified in advance, to avoid misunderstandings.⁶

2.1. WHAT KIND OF THEORY IS THE A-C THEORY?

The conceptual couple seems faulty at first, as apparently we oppose a philosophical school (A) to a territorial determination (C). Bernard Williams famously noted the oddity of the bipartition: ‘a strange cross-classification—rather as though one divided car into front-wheel drive and Japanese’.⁷ In fact, the weird asymmetry is justified. The use of C is historically grounded, as after Nazi seizure of power the European exponents of what was going to be called ‘A philosophy’ moved to America and England, and what remained in Europe was what was later called ‘C’.⁸ But evidently, the term has no strict geographic reference.

The second relevant point is that in speaking of A and C we do not speak of philosophical ‘schools’, but *traditions*. The ‘traditionalist conjecture’ (typically adopted in A-reconstructions of A philosophy) has been discussed.⁹ To make the term more precise, I suggest intending by ‘tradition’ a group of different trends or schools, whose members altogether acknowledge themselves (or are able to acknowledge themselves) as engaged in the same subject, and share, over time, a certain canon. So to have a tradition, we should have *mutual acknowledgment*, relative *persistence*, and shared *canonical references*. Consequently, there could be more or less closeness and affinity among exponents of a tradition, but in virtue of their mutual acknowledgment they can conceive and practice a substantially identifiable idea of what philosophy is and should be, and this idea over time works as *distinctive*, hence eliminative of others.

⁶ My account differs from the one proposed by R. Piercey in the quoted essay about ‘the methodology’ of the divide. The main difference is related to the characterization of A and C, so that for instance he holds Richard Rorty was an ‘A’ philosopher, while in my view he was not.

⁷ Bernard Williams, “Contemporary Philosophy: A Second Look”, in N. Bunnin and E. P. Tsui-James (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell 2003, p. 23.

⁸ In this respect, as noted by Michael Friedman: the divide was generated, and consolidated, ‘in the extraordinary uneasy political climate of the early 1930s’ (M. Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer and Heidegger*, Chicago: Open Court 2000).

⁹ S. Lapointe, “On the ‘Traditionalist Conjecture’” (in A. Preston (ed.), *Analytic Philosophy. An Interpretative History*, Routledge, New York 2017) especially pp. 284-285.

Third, as I have mentioned at the beginning, the ‘A-C divide’ is a *historiographical* and *metaphilosophical* label.¹⁰ Like any other distinction involving history and culture, it concerns *ideal-typical* predicates, that is, predicates that have no clear and strict reference to empirically observable properties but denote the various combination of different features subsisting to certain (various) degrees in one or another object.¹¹ If you prefer, ‘real-world’ philosophers have some *family resemblances* which authorize us to locate them in one or the other field.¹² This means that not all philosophers we may call ‘A’ or ‘C’ instantiate paradigmatic cases. As we will see in the sub-section 2.3, we can locate one or another author in the A or C side by referring to a list of idealtypical requisites and to identify some philosopher as A or C the joined subsistence of at least *two* of the issues in the list (in particular *canon* and *style*), could be enough.¹³

Finally, we can approach the A-C theory with a variety of aims, and maybe the main reason one is interested in historical and metaphilosophical subjects of this kind is that one thinks something is to be done. So we have a project in what Nicholas Rescher has called *normative metaphilosophy*:¹⁴ we are interested in a (relatively) neutral reconstruction of what philosophy is, but in consideration of what it ought to be. Now the most obvious utility of a research on the ‘A-C question’ is to solve what can be called *the bridge problem*, intended as the problem of providing some encounter or synthesis or combination of the two approaches. Various strategies of this kind have been proposed. But we will see that not all features of the A and C ways of conceiving and practicing philosophy are (were?) perfectly acceptable. Which means that the bridge project might not be profitable for the progress of philosophy: the risk of producing contaminations, or hybrids in which faults outweigh benefits cannot be excluded.¹⁵

2.2. WHO ARE (WERE) A AND C?

¹⁰ Useful clarifications about the notion of ‘metaphilosophy’ are given by S. Overgaard, P. Gilbert, S. Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, cit., and G. D’Oro and S. Overgaard (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, cit. Specifically for the A-C question: R. Piercey, “The Metaphilosophy of the Analytic-Continental Divide”, cit.

¹¹ The notion of *ideal-typical* objects and predicates, launched by Wilhelm Dilthey, is a critical concept of hermeneutical historicism. See on this J. Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1994, transl. from German edition 1991), pp. 76-90.

¹² The Wittgensteinian notion of *family resemblances* is used by H.-J. Glock to characterize the apparently vague notion of ‘A philosophy’ as implying ‘overlapping similarities’ more than ‘common characteristic marks’ (*What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, cit., p. 42). I think the reference to idealtypes is more useful, methodologically, at least in history-sensitive analyses. For instance R. Piercey in the quoted essay holds that looking at the divide as a metaphilosophical issue we can find similarities between A and C, such as the reference to history, and the idea of philosophy as an ‘ameliorative’ enterprise. But if we keep to A and C as idealtypical predicates, we have that these two views are typically C, and are generally ignored by A.

¹³ I have specified this point in F. d’Agostini, “From a Continental Point of View. The Role of Logic in the Analytic-Continental Divide” (In A. Biletzki, *Bridging the Analytic Continental Divide*, cit., pp. 349-367), see in particular pp. 350-352.

¹⁴ ‘Prescriptive or normative metaphilosophy is the inquiry that deliberates about what is to be thought regarding the conduct of philosophizing’ (N. Rescher, *Metaphilosophy. Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective* London: Lexington Books, 2014, p. 14).

¹⁵ ‘While there might be a premium on reconstructing philosophy as a unified sphere of discourse, this must not go at the expense of rigour, clarity, scholarship and intellectual honesty’ (H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, p. 260).

Who are (were) A and C? Can we consistently identify them? Here is a substantially plausible reconstruction.

A I – Frege, Russell, Moore (1900-1920)	C Neo-Kantianism-Neo-Hegelianism Phenomenology (1900-1920)
II – Wittgenstein - logical positivism (1920-1940)	Heidegger - existentialism (1920-1940)
III - Analytic philosophy of language (1950-1970)	Critical theory, structuralism, hermeneutics (1950-1970)
IV - Post-analytic-philosophy (1970-1990)	Post-structuralism- post- modernism (1970-1990)
V – The self-acknowledgment of A tradition, the rebirth of metaphysics and philosophy of mind (1990-2000)	A+C, speculative realism, transhumanism (1990-2000)

There have been other currents, schools and philosophical systems in the XX century, but we are only interested here in those which generated the appearance (or effectiveness?) of the A-C dualism.¹⁶

I – At the origin of the A story we have Frege, Russell, Moore and their grounding action during the first decades of the century. About the birth of A tradition the canonical version is that

Frege’s creation of quantificational logic and the rebellion of Russell and Moore against British idealism are the two most significant events in the emergence of analytic philosophy.¹⁷

Note the two elements: the discovery of *modern logic*, and the rejection of *idealism* (which altogether became rejection of the transcendental-dialectical approach in philosophy). Note also that in virtue of the former, A philosophers are identified by what they embrace (logic), in virtue of the latter, they are identified by what they reject (transcendental idealism). The two aspects have been the first grounding components of what we may call the *A paradigm*, as opposed to C (Sect. 3).

On the C part, as correlative to A, we ought to consider the revitalization of Kant’s and Hegel’s philosophical approach, in neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism, both conceived at the turn of the century, and variously active in the subsequent twenty years. And we also have the birth of the phenomenological school, launched by Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (1900). The so-called ‘first’ Husserl is sometimes considered a quasi-A

¹⁶ The periodization and characterization of the mentioned schools or currents have no absolute categoricalness. There might be overlapping, the dates are not to be assumed as referring to sharp time boundaries, and some issues in the table mark a tendency more than a single and uniform line of thought.

¹⁷ M. Beaney, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, cit. p. 9.

philosopher,¹⁸ but at least from 1905 onward Husserl acknowledged the ‘transcendental’ nature of his phenomenology. These facts considered, we may confirm that what (at least nominally) Russell and Moore rejected was revived and re-launched in a significant part of European philosophy.

II – The second phasis marked the first expression of a somewhat ‘A style’ as opposed to a ‘C style’. Frege-Russell semantics, developed by Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* (1921), offered the ‘logical construction of the world’ launched by neopositivism, and inspired a number of authors in Central Europe, all variously engaged in creating a new image of logic, philosophy and scientific rationality. On the C side, we have Heidegger, who belonged to the ‘second’ phenomenological school. His *Being and Time* (1927) became canonical for that version of phenomenology called ‘existentialism’, and later (in the III and IV phases) for hermeneutics and the developments of structuralism.

The first symptom of the A-C incompatibility has been often considered Carnap’s harsh criticism of Heidegger’s *What is metaphysics?*, in the famous article published in *Erkenntnis* in 1929. Carnap showed that Heidegger’s metaphysics (rather metaphysics in general) was based on a logical misunderstanding (what he calls ‘the material way of speaking’), and he noted that the ‘new logic’ created by Frege and Russell could easily reveal the mistake. By the help of the new logic a new ‘scientific philosophy’ was going to emerge.

We get another distinctive aspect of C philosophy as opposed to A. While the latter developed by assuming a specific logical and subordinately meta-scientific concern, the former has been marked by ignorance or rejection of the new logic (Frege-Russell semantics), and by a programmatic criticism of the primacy of ‘scientific’ rationality in modern culture. We have thus the duality or symmetrical opposition between A and C: *what the former embraced, was rejected by the latter, and vice versa.*

III – The third phasis was characterized by the official birth of a new philosophical school named ‘A’ philosophy, and hence the first public acknowledgment (especially in C philosophy) of the divide. The first document we have of an open confrontation between A and C is the 1958 international conference of Royaumont about *La philosophie analytique*, in which exponents of C philosophy (in particular, phenomenology and existentialism) encountered some of the most important A philosophers.¹⁹ The idea of A-C working in terms of ‘traditions’, and not of specific currents or schools was already clear. And it was clear the mutual resistance of the two perspectives. As it seems, the conference was not a complete success. Charles Taylor – who attended the meeting – later wrote: ‘the dialogue did not come off’.²⁰

I have mentioned *critical theory*, intending the School of Frankfurt, and its developments in the work of Karl O. Apel, Jürgen Habermas and other authors. The first critical theory had a definitely Hegelian inspiration and expressed a paradigmatic ‘C spirit’. From the Seventies onward, things slightly changed. While the original critical theory was distinct from and somehow opposed to neopositivism and all its consequences, Apel and Habermas began a fruitful dialogue with A philosophy. But their proposal has remained irreducibly ‘C’; A philosophers, at least the most typically ‘A’ of them, have generally ignored it. I also mention *structuralism* and *hermeneutics*. The

¹⁸ See P. Simons, “The origin and inevitability of the analytic-continental split”, cit.

¹⁹ L. Beck (ed.) *La philosophie analytique*, Paris. Minuit 1962. The number of important authors who took part in the conference is impressive: on the A side we have among others J. L. Austin, W. V. O. Quine, G. Ryle, F. Strawson, B. Williams; on the C side J. Wahl, M. Merleau-Ponty, C. Perelman, C. Taylor, among others.

²⁰ See S. Overgaard, “Royaumont Revisited”, cit., p. 914.

latter was launched by Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960) and became mostly important for our concern later. The same to a certain extent holds for *structuralism*. The mathematical and logical movement called with this name emerged in the Fifties, but its philosophical inheritances became later some of the most unequivocally 'C' expressions of the dualism.²¹

IV – From the Seventies onward we see the most paradigmatic C philosophy to appear, and it was dominated by what Hans-Joachim Glock has called 'the twentieth century avant-garde movements inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger'.²² Most part of the classical literature about the divide was published in this phase. Historical-cultural facts have been decisive. With the advancing of globalization, exponents of post-structuralism and hermeneutics became known in territories previously colonized by A philosophy (especially in the United States), so that the *stylistic differences* (see 2.3) appeared in all clarity. C philosophy revealed itself as the philosophy of 'humanities', of literary criticism, of art, of architecture and cinema.

The confrontation was not profitable for A nor was it for C. The last two decades of the century can be labelled as an age of 'post'. Under the impact of the 'European' style of philosophizing, and the influence of the self-critical work launched by Richard Rorty, A philosophy has been led to reconsider its own identity. A new process of self-awareness began, and one of the first steps was the collection with the title *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, edited by J. Rajchman and C. West.²³ It was intended to illustrate the 'end' of a certain conception of language, being and thought, which was typical of the most traditional A tradition, and which most clearly opposed A to C. On the other side, the extra-philosophical success of C philosophy favoured the deconstructive and relativistic drift called *postmodernism* (basically a socio-cultural more than philosophical movement). Even some C-philosophers formed in the Nietzsche-Heidegger line of thought began to see the damages of these extra-philosophical uses of philosophy.²⁴

V – In the last decade(s) of the century the 'reaction' of A philosophers against the spread of C expressed itself also in terms of a self-reconstructive effort. It is not by chance that the most well-known historical surveys of A philosophy, conceived from a definitely A perspective, appeared at the end of the XX and at the beginning of the XXI century. But the increasing processes of globalization and specialization of philosophy were making the conceptual couple less evident. So the A-novelty in this period concern philosophical disciplines: the new attention to mind and consciousness and the rebirth of ontology and metaphysics, on new bases. On the C part of the story, we have first the diffusion of A philosophy in European countries once colonized by some versions of C (French, Italy, Spain, Germany). So one may say the novelty in European philosophy has been the emerging of A+C positions, i.e. what Beall, Cutrofello and Livingston call a 'synthetic' attitude. Globalization obviously favoured this synthesis, and many C philosophers nowadays can be labelled as A+C in some sense. The other two lines I mention are only some of the most recent C-tendencies. However, there are also reasons to believe the territory of philosophy nowadays is no longer (strictly) A,

²¹ Significantly, hermeneutics and structuralism, like A philosophy, have been crucially interested in language and logic: but the hermeneutical conception of language and the structuralist use of logic has been different from A ideas about logic and language.

²² H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, cit. p. 17.

²³ J. Rajchman and C. West (eds.) *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

²⁴ See G. Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation* (Stanford University Press, 1997, from the Italian edition 1994).

nor is it C, and it is not even A + C, but there is a sort of ‘explosion’ of programs, styles, products (Sect. 4).

2.3. THE DUALISM

Which were the real elements of the divergence? The A-C distinction, as it especially appeared in the last three decades of the XX century, involved two series of canonical authors; two ways or styles of arguing and writing; two ways of relating philosophy to science, to culture generally intended (literature, cinema, art), or the public sphere (politics, and public debate); two different ways of conceiving the philosophical practice. More generally and altogether, two conceptions of what philosophy is and ought to be, of what philosophers do and should do. We would say: two *normative metaphilosophies* in the specified sense.

Let’s consider these aspects in detail, and in contrastive terms.

1. *Canons* – Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, other European classics, typically belong to the C canon, and are generally ignored, misinterpreted or underrated by A philosophers; Hume, Frege, Russell, Quine, Austin and other authors belong to the A canon and are generally underrated, ignored or misunderstood by Cs.

NB – the non-belonging of certain authors to a canon means they *can be ignored*, which does not mean they *cannot be studied*, nor means they are *not criticized* by people in the tradition. There has been a variety of anti-Hegelianisms in C tradition, but Hegel has always been an inevitable reference. An important movement in A tradition arose from the rejection of Frege and Russell’s semantics, the so-called ‘received view’, but the view was criticized just because it was ‘received’.

2. *Styles of arguing and writing* – ‘Styles’ includes different features:²⁵

2a- A philosophers address their colleagues, as any scientist does, C philosophers have the ambition of addressing the ‘universal audience’ (a traditional feature of philosophical discourse according to Perelman’s and Olbrechts-Tytecha’s *Traité de l’argumentation*, 1958).

2b- A philosophers feel the need of specifying any thesis or theory by examples (‘cases’) and open arguments; Cs often present challenging theories without worrying so much about the explicit justification of what they claim: they adopt more *associative* than *argumentative* strategies.

2c- As a consequence, A philosophers preferably author articles or short papers, about specific well-determined problems,

²⁵ About the scientific and epistemic role of style in logic, mathematic and philosophy in general see P. Cantù, “What is axiomatics?”, in *Annals of Mathematics and Philosophy*, vol. 1, online version 30.07.2022.

while Cs publish books and wide explorations of wide themes (such as ‘the end of modernity’, ‘the crisis of reason’).

Altogether, A philosophy is distinctively characterized by ‘a piecemeal approach’ to problems, ‘encouraging small-scale investigations rather than grand system-building’.²⁶

3. *Relations to the extra-philosophical* - The consequences can be already inferred, but again I suggest distinguishing.

3a- A philosophers underrate the dialogue with *culture*, so with art, cinema and the humanities (‘soft’ sciences), which is favoured by Cs; they prefer to dialogue with natural or formal (‘hard’) sciences, ignored by Cs or considered (in some cases) as belonging to an ‘anti-philosophical’ paradigm.

3b- *Science* and *common sense* (‘intuition’) offer shared premises for A arguments, while are irrelevant for Cs; reference to current *socio-cultural facts* gives typical premises (and legitimation) to C arguments, while are hardly mentioned by As.

3c- A philosophers underrate or ignore *public philosophy*: a philosophical practice systematically interacting with public debates, which is typical of Cs and of European culture in general.²⁷

3d- As a consequence, A philosophers tend to think that one thing is what philosophers say as *professionals*, and another is their public engagement as intellectuals; there is no difference of this sort in the C tradition (or if it were, it would be blurred and easily crossed).

These aspects confirm that ‘unlike analytic philosophy, continental philosophy has never turned away from culture, tradition, literature. By contrast, analytic philosophy has tended to think about language in abstraction from such matters’.²⁸

4. *The use of logic and the use of history (of philosophy)* – This is a point which I consider most significant.

4a - For Cs the history of a philosophical issue or concept is ‘a substantial and even indispensable element for the analysis’, while As tend to treat concepts ‘as if they were ahistorical entities’.²⁹ Cs normally ignore or even resist the use of formal

²⁶ M. Beaney, “What is Analytic Philosophy?”, cit., p. 19.

²⁷ The philosopher as ‘public intellectual’ is especially present in French (and Italian) culture. ‘Les philosophes’ of the XVII century have turned into ‘les intellectuels’ in the XIX, and ‘les maîtres à penser’ of the late XX.

²⁸ C. B. Sachs, “What Is To Be Overcome? Nietzsche, Carnap, and Modernism as the Overcoming of Metaphysics”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 28 (3), 2011, p. 303.

²⁹ C. Dutilh Novaes, “Conceptual genealogy for analytic philosophers” (in Bell et Al., *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, cit., pp. 75-108). So that ‘one’s stance towards genealogical projects can be seen as one of the main differences between so-called continental and so-called analytic

logic in philosophy, whereas modern logic has been grounding for the birth and development of A philosophy.

4b - As a consequence, A and C differ in *educational strategies*: As normally favour logic and the study of argumentation, whereas Cs consider the history of philosophy as didactically primary.

NB - What is lacking in A metaphilosophy is not 'history' or 'historiography' as such, but the meta-scientific (heuristic and explanatory) role of history of philosophy for philosophy. In contrast, for most of European philosophers the history of philosophy offers invaluable resources for the progress of philosophy.³⁰

Each distinction is arguable, and has been discussed,³¹ but the A-C dualism well captures the situation of philosophical research in the late XX century. At that time, the effects of the divide were clear and unquestionable. To mention a marginal but significant example, if someone wanted to know something about a philosophical problem, and if they wanted to receive exhaustive information, one had to refer to two main bibliographical repertoires: the *Philosopher's Index*, and the *Répertoire bibliographique de la philosophie*, the former mainly recording A researches, the latter mainly C, with poor or null intersection.³² So, besides being an interesting phenomenon of historical and cultural relevance, the divide represented a practical problem: a question one ought to solve, if one wanted to consider 'philosophy' a reasonable part of our collective knowledge.

philosophers' (p. 77).

³⁰ Michael Beaney discusses the prejudice of A's ignorance of history ("Analytic Philosophy and Ahistoricism", in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, cit., pp. 35-38), but he refers to historiography, and not to history as a method or resource for philosophical analyses, i.e. the commitment to what Charles Taylor has called 'the historical thesis about philosophy' (see R. Piercey, cit., p. 277). Gary Gutting ("Philosophical Progress", in Cappelen, Szabò Gendler, Hawthorne, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*, cit., Ch. 17) criticizes the fundamentally 'C' 'engagement with the history of philosophy', but clearly is not speaking of history as a resource for solving philosophical problems (and for metaphilosophical and methodological considerations). That the meta-scientific role of the history of philosophy is underrated in A tradition is one of the 'wrong' aspects of that tradition has been significantly noted by Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, Barry Smith (three A philosophers who know European philosophy well), "What's Wrong in Contemporary Philosophy?", *Topoi*, 25 (1-2), 2006, pp. 63-67. An efficacious even if evidently reductive version of the idea is given by T. Williamson, *Doing Philosophy. From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018): 'If you really ignore all past philosophy, that includes the past thirty years [...] with luck, you would reinvent the wheel. Alternatively, you might invent the square wheel' (p.104).

³¹ I have explored and discussed each distinctive criterion in "From a Continental Point of View", cit. See also Barry Dainton and Howard Robinson, "What is Analytic Philosophy?" (in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, edited by B. Dainton and H. Robinson, London, Bloomsbury 2014, 569-574), pp. 569-570. A clear presentation of all the reasons the characterization of A philosophy in contrastive terms is arguable but somehow inevitable, is given by Hans-Johann Glock, "Geography and Language", in H.-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, cit. pp. 61-88.

³² Another marginal but significant case is the use of different citation systems: in paradigmatic A cases, author-date; in many C cases the notation system, which is still generally preferred in the humanities.

3. The underlying problem

In the reconstruction of Sect. 2.2, we have seen that what Russell and Moore (and later A philosophers) rejected and what they embraced were what Cs, respectively, embraced and rejected. And I suggest they were, respectively, the *transcendental* and the *logical* conception of philosophy.³³ (They can be labelled differently: we may also speak of a *critical* and a *semantic* turn, but as I will explain in a while, the former term is too wide, the latter too narrow.)

3.1. IS PHILOSOPHY AN ‘EXCEPTIONAL’ SCIENCE?

The first step of my interpretation consists of seeing the A-C dualism as an effect of the institutional and meta-scientific *weakness* of philosophy in late modernity. This was basically the underlying problem: the dualism has been the expression of the uncertain status of a subject named ‘philosophy’ in the late modern settlement of science.

Philosophy has been considered a ‘non-normal’ (vague unspecified ambiguous) subject since the beginning of its history. Aristotle himself spent many pages (14 or 11 books named *meta-ta-physika*) in trying to fix the nature of what he variously calls ‘first science’, or ‘first philosophy’ or simply ‘philosophy’: the science of the ‘first principles’ generally intended (*Met. I*), or ‘the science of truth’ (*Met. II*, 993a), or also the paradoxical science whose specificity consists in dealing with ‘non-specified’ objects (see *Met. IV*, 1003b). But any epoch has its own metaphilosophical difficulties. And there are reasons to believe that in late modernity the science or intellectual activity called ‘philosophy’ risked disappearance. ‘Science’ (as cultural fact and set of academic subjects) definitely distinguished from ‘philosophy’, and its specialized sectors and technological applications gained a new cultural relevance.³⁴

I am not saying that the A-C question is interpretable as the conflict between, respectively, a scientific and an anti- or extra-scientific philosophy. Theories about the scientific (normal) or non-scientific (non-normal) nature of philosophy are sparsely present in both traditions. Yet, considering the distinctive factors I have mentioned in Sect. 2.3, we can see well that A philosophy *is more easily adaptable to the system of ‘normal’ sciences*, and to the consequent requirements of specialization and methodological accuracy (see 4.2). In the C tradition, instead, the idea of *the anomalous status of philosophy has been generally accepted*, on occasion defended, and progressively *radicalized* in the central decades of the century. Why has this happened?

The diagnosis I intend to favour is that while C philosophy has inherited (and in some cases emphasized) Kant’s idea of *self-critical reason*, i.e. a kind of rationality (and a consideration of science) that includes and implies the critique of reason, A philosophers have been extraneous to this idea, so have remained substantially faithful to the principles of rationality ruling modern science, technology and common sense.³⁵

³³ One may say that my reconstruction in 2.2 is opinionated. But I would say it corresponds to a largely shared interpretation of the dualism. See more details in “From a continental point of view. The role of logic in the analytic-continental divide”, cit., pp. 354-357.

³⁴ This is a Heidegger-inspired account of the situation of philosophy in late modernity close to the one proposed by G. Vattimo in *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy* (Stanford University Press, 1997, from Italian edition 1990) and *The Responsibility of the Philosopher* (ed. F. d’Agostini, Engl. Transl. W. McCuaig, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, ed. orig. 2000).

³⁵ Historical and cultural facts justified the typically C move from ‘self-criticism’ to ‘self-

If we adopt this line of thought, then the interpretation of the A-C dualism changes: we do not simply have a ‘scientific’ or ‘normalized’ philosophy (A) as opposed to an anti-scientific or ‘non-normal’ (C), rather we have a deeper reason of divergency.

3.2. THE TWO TURNS: PHILOSOPHY AND THE SELF-CRITICISM OF REASON

Adopting this line of thought, we can see that the controversial point is the position of philosophy among sciences, and thus, the first origin of the A-C divide is located in the age in which German thinkers tried to give philosophy the status of a specific science. Or rather: they tried to redefine the nature of ‘science’ in general, by locating philosophy in it, with a new foundational role. This role was intendedly given by the idea of *self-critical*—transcendental, and later dialectical—reason.

A philosophers may have some difficulty in accepting this narrative. In A-mainstream account, the ‘transcendental’ view has been most frequently seen as a position in metaphysics or in epistemology, but it was a wider program.³⁶ Kant’s philosophy launched a new conception of self-reflective reason, including a particular philosophy of science with meta-scientific relevant consequences.³⁷ And his legacy also conveyed, specifically with Hegel, the idea that philosophical discourse deserves a particular (dialectical, dynamic) logic.

In this diagnosis, *the first intra-philosophical reason* of the A-C dualism has been the resistance of A philosophers against this attempt to ground philosophy on critical bases: the resistance against Kant’s seminal idea of philosophy as a critique of reason (wherein ‘critique’ in transcendental sense means *grounding*, i.e. explanation and justification). There is no need here to give details about the transcendental turn. For now, we can keep to the basic thesis: that what has been called the Anglo-American ‘allergy’ to transcendentalism³⁸ has been the first source of the divide. The particular status of philosophy in relation to science established by Kant (and by the consequent *deutsche Bewegung*) was not acknowledged and accepted in the birth and development of A tradition.

3.3. THE TWO TURNS: A NEW METAPHYSICS FOR LOGIC AND PHILOSOPHY

In fact, the ‘allergy’ would have been rapidly overcome, if there had not been, at the end of the XIX century, a similar and equally influential metaphilosophical turn. The second intra-philosophical cause of the split is related to the role of formal logic in grounding the A tradition, providing a new method and a new image of philosophy.

destruction’ or ‘deconstruction’ of reason. Face to the ruinous effects of totalitarianisms the idea that ‘there was something wrong’ in Western rationality seemed evident. See classically Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (first German edition 1947, English translation London, Verso, 1989); and Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press, 1963. Revised and enlarged edition, 1965.

³⁶ As. Gardner and M. Grist stress, ‘the transcendental turn should not be identified with any specific epistemological or metaphysical doctrine, but rather concerns the fundamental standpoint and terms of reference of philosophical inquiry’ (S. Gardner and M. Grist, “Introduction”, in Gardner and Grist, *The Transcendental Turn*, cit., p. 1).

³⁷ See the reconstruction of the transcendental-idealistic metaphilosophy in *Die Begründung der Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus* (edited by E. Ficara, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann 2011). The *Wissenschaftslehre*, the doctrine of science, has been a crucial motive in the development of German philosophy.

³⁸ O. Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking* (1987, Engl. transl. J. Bailiff, Humanity Press 1997).

The ‘logical view’ for A philosophy did not simply imply the explanatory and heuristic role of mathematical symbols and structures to approach philosophical problems; it has not been strictly or exclusively the idea of promoting some kind of generalized ‘logician philosophy’, ‘formal philosophy’ or ‘scientific philosophy’ either. As Ernst Tugendhat has stressed in his *Lectures on analytic philosophy*³⁹ the logical consideration of language offered new methodological suggestions for conceptual analysis, basically launching the predicative account of concepts (Frege’s theory of quantification, and of predicates-concepts as *functions*) but it also gave new grounding ideas in ontology and in metaphysics.

Even more radically, I would say that the new logic in the A tradition provided a *paradigmatic turn*, as complete and fruitful as was the one provided by transcendentalism: new ideas in metaphysics and epistemology, but also new methodological resources, new terminology, and consequently, a new way of locating philosophy with respect to science and culture in general. Philosophy discovered a new ‘exactness’, at the same time the opportunity of approaching old questions and programs, while locating itself in the general development of late-modern scientific spirit. All this, clearly, generated the stylistic and methodological A-features I have listed in 2.3 as opposed to C.

3.4. THE RIVALRY

Was there true incompatibility? Maybe no, there was not. But significantly (also for the above mentioned historical and cultural reasons) the two turns have developed in irreducible rivalry.

The new logical approach was launched and conceived in opposition to the transcendental turn: or rather, to what of transcendentalism had been absorbed in English-speaking world. Russell found in Peano’s and Frege’s new mathematical logic an antidote to the confounding vagueness of the theories of British idealism and of traditional (European) philosophy, and this was also the intuition at the basis of neo-empiricism.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in the transcendental-idealistic (and hence phenomenological) tradition, logic was considered an extra-philosophical discipline (following Kant’s suggestion), or there has been a clear distinction between formal and transcendental logic (Husserl conceived them as respectively objective and subjective), or a declared enmity towards the logical approach (held ‘intellectualistic’, reductive, mechanic, fundamentally of no use in philosophy: ‘formulette’, in Benedetto Croce’s words, ‘technique of specialists without conceptual awareness’, in Theodor W. Adorno’s words). What is worse, the same meaning of ‘logic’ in C philosophy began to diverge from the meaning used in A tradition. While A philosophers have accepted the idea that there is no other ‘logic’ than mathematical (symbolic) logic, basically conceived as ‘the science of validity in virtue of forms’, for many C philosophers ‘logic’ has been conceived as ‘science of pure thought’, or of ‘the a priori elements of thought’ (as in the old terminology adopted by Kant), or of ‘the concept of concept’ (in Hegel’s view).⁴¹

³⁹ Ernst Tugendhat, *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy. Lectures on the philosophy of language* (1975, Engl. transl. P. A. Gerner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982), p. 5 and pp. 170-76.

⁴⁰ What consolidated Russell’s and Moore’s ‘rebellion’ has been a complex series of cultural and practical factors, such as the resistance of pre-transcendental empiricism; bad translations; the objective difficulty of German classical thinkers’ language; and eventually, the above seen historical circumstances, which definitely strengthened the rejection.

⁴¹ I have specified all this in F. d’Agostini, “From a Continental Point of View. The Role of

4. *The divide today*

The point is not that there have been two turns, but that each of them was grounded on the rejection of the other. The logical turn, extremely important for the history of philosophy and culture of the XX century, has been misrepresented, ignored or underrated in the development of C philosophy. And in the same way, the transcendental turn, equally important for the self-understanding of philosophy in the age of science and information, has been ignored, misinterpreted or underrated in the A tradition. Now we can begin by seeing what remains of this mutual resistance nowadays.

4.1. END OF A AND/OR C?

Theories about the end of the A-C dualism are of various kinds.⁴² One may say it has disappeared

- because of the disappearance of A and C separately (each term becoming obsolete)
- because of the end of the incompatibility between them; or also
- because one tradition (in particular A) wiped out the other.

There might be reasons in favour of all of these options. (And there is also the normative version of the end-theory: if the divide has not ended up, it must end now.)

In his Introduction to *The Future for Philosophy*, Brian Leiter gives a well-argued presentation of the first hypothesis: the A-C interpretation of philosophical facts is obsolete for the vanishing of both A and C.⁴³ In *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*,⁴⁴ we find a version of the second diagnosis: the editors claim the old distinction makes no sense, because there can be a 'synthetic' philosophy, given by joined consideration of A and C products, themes, authors; and what is more, such a synthetic view is already practiced, nowadays. Recently, a special issue of the online journal *Borderless Philosophy* is devoted to "The End of Analytic Philosophy and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes or No? And if Yes, Then What's Beyond?".⁴⁵ The shared point of the articles is a normative end-theory of the third kind: what distinguishes A philosophy, ultimately, is the idea that 'professional philosophy' is the only philosophy one has to consider, which is uselessly diminishing for all practices that are not A.

In fact, if we look at the current conditions of philosophy we cannot say A and C have totally disappeared as such (jointly or separately). Rather, we have now paradigmatic examples of A and C (say, respectively: Timothy Williamson, Judith Butler); A-formed philosophers who consider and read C (for instance Graham Priest,

Logic in the Analytic-Continental divide", cit.

⁴² A general and detailed consideration of the relevance of the distinction is also given by Glock, 2008: 1-22. The contemporary failure of 'geolinguistic conceptions' is also well pictured there, on pages 80-88.

⁴³ B. Leiter, 'Introduction: The Future for Philosophy', in B. Leiter (ed.) *The Future for Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 1-23).

⁴⁴ J. A. Bell, A. Cutrofello and P. M. Livingston, *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, cit.

⁴⁵ R. Hanna et Al., *The End of Analytic and/or Continental Philosophy, Yes or no?*, cit.

Penelope Maddy) and C-trained philosophers that read and consider A (such as Günter Abel, Markus Gabriel). And we also have many A+C philosophers, people who are not necessarily bridge-builders, but show, *de facto* or *de jure*, the implausibility of the old distinction, combining authors, styles or approaches of the two traditions (some examples: Nicholas Rescher, Christopher Norris, Robert Brandom). But to have clearer ideas, we should still consider the third position, and the current situation of philosophy in general.

4.2. A WITHOUT C?

In favour of the third hypothesis, we can say that two unquestionable facts have occurred in the recent development of academic philosophy:

- Analytic philosophy has become ‘the dominant kind of philosophy in the English-speaking world’.⁴⁶
- English has become, definitely, the official philosophical language, all over the world.

The connection of these two facts might be worrying: the dominant philosophy is the one which speaks the dominant language. Could it import some problems for the science-discipline we still call ‘philosophy’? As a matter of fact, many relevant things might get lost. Without the rich plurality of European languages, the best expressions and novelties of C philosophy risk disappearing. One would say that if there has ever been an ‘A-C war’, then A has simply won, and even if nominally there is still ‘C’ philosophy, its impact in academic philosophy is becoming marginal.

‘The success of analytic philosophy’ is justified, according to Michael Beaney, because it is ‘democratic and meritocratic’. There might be reasonable doubts about both features. If we keep to the characterization of A and C suggested in Section 2.3 we can find an alternative and more realistic explanation of the dominance of A philosophy. All the mentioned distinctions do confirm that the metaphilosophical approach of A philosophy is more adaptable to the procedures and methods of normal science than C philosophy. The ‘scientific’ settlement of academic philosophy—in the way in which it is practised nowadays—gives clear advantages to A philosophers, while is obvious hindrance for Cs.

Science in principle does not admit of any *universal audience* (2a); in strictly ‘scientific’ perspective the largely ‘sociological’ reflections of *public philosophers* are seen as belonging to pop-sociology or to an extra-philosophical activity (3b); *wide C themes* – such as the nature of ‘modernity’ or ‘the crisis of reason’ – are held irrelevant (2c); *genealogical* and *historical* considerations are useless in formal or natural (hard) sciences and are admitted only in specific historiographic territories (4). And yes, science as such is ‘democratic and meritocratic’ *in principle*, because it is ruled by truth, so it is (should be) indifferent to powers and privileges, but *in practice*, science is (to a certain extent must be) ruled by epistemic oligarchies and selective criteria that can (should) be discriminatory. And finally, philosophy speaks English, everywhere, just because *English is the language of science*, everywhere, as Latin was in medieval times. Maybe it is a good thing or it is not, but it is a fact, and its simple occurrence imports relevant changes for philosophical

⁴⁶ M. Beaney, “What is Analytic philosophy?”, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, cit., p. 11. Scott Soames writes ‘by the mid-1960s the analytic tradition had become the dominant philosophical force in America’ (S. Soames, *Analytic Philosophy in America*, cit. p. ix).

styles and practices. The negative consequences are foreseeable: the destiny of theories and theses produced in the ‘periphery’, or ‘semi-periphery’ of the English-speaking world is uncertain.⁴⁷

4.3. IS THERE STILL ‘PHILOSOPHY’?

Now my question is: is really ‘A’ the kind of philosophy we still ‘A’? In fact, the real problem is whether, once we admit the ‘victory’ of A philosophy, this dominant ‘A’ has really any kind of identity or enjoys any shared metaphilosophy, and it is not clear whether there is still ‘A’ philosophy in any non-nominal sense. The big volume edited by Beaney (1161 pages) shows that actually there still are A philosophers, and as I have said (4.1) it is basically true, but as far as I can see, they are ‘A’ mainly because there is a certain acknowledgment of their belonging to A tradition, but it is not clear whether these ‘A’ philosophers really enjoy shared ideas about why they are doing what they do, and how they can do it ‘well’.

As a distinguished A philosopher, David Chalmer, has declared recently:

After all, we are still learning to do philosophy well. To see how far it can take us, we have to keep doing philosophy⁴⁸

This is an interesting and honest observation. A-literature nowadays seems to be unusually interested in metaphilosophical themes and research, but the field of normative philosophy is still unexplored and extremely uncertain a territory. This should not be surprising: to have it one would require a *reflexive*, *universalistic* and *prescriptive* attitude, which is hardly adoptable by the ‘piecemeal approach’ of A philosophy and with the specialized language of science. But note that, namely, the combination of reflexive and normative attitudes has been typical of the C-accounts of philosophy inspired by the transcendental program.

In this respect, if we consider the two factors I have mentioned at the beginning: the *globalization* and *specialization* of philosophy, we can see how the divide is doomed to encounter a simultaneous and paradoxical survival and disappearance. Actually, the A-C dualism involved differences concerning mentalities, languages, cultures. But in the global world incompatibilities of this kind are not relevant. And in the current specialization of the philosophical research, ‘generalist’ debates that animated late-modern culture do not make much sense. The field of philosophy is now a wide area of disciplines that parallel each other, often without any mutual acknowledgment of their respective results. One could consistently say that the A-C divide postulates the

⁴⁷ This problem has been frequently treated, by sociologists and philosophers of science, but it does not seem these studies have had some impact in metaphilosophy. ‘The material and institutional constraints affecting researchers in economically disadvantaged parts of the globe’ ought to stimulate a decisive revision of the institutional principles that rule sciences and disciplines in general, as it is clarified in K. Bennett, (ed.) *The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing. Discourses, Communities and Practices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2014). About this see the seminal work of A. S. Canagarajah, *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), the problem has been tackled later by many other authors of different perspectives. See also Canagarajah, ‘The End of Second Language Writing?’ (*Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22, 2013, pp. 440–441).

⁴⁸ D. J. Chalmers, “Why Isn’t There More Progress, in Philosophy?” In T. Honderich (ed.) *Philosophers of Our Times*. Oxford University Press 2015: 347-370.

existence of ‘philosophy’ as a general subject, but there is no more ‘philosophy’ nowadays. There are philosophical disciplines that work with poor or null communication, sometimes adopting different methods, canonical authors, basic tenets etc. And since there is no A-C without (general) philosophy, we may state that there is no A-C because there is no ‘philosophy’ anymore.⁴⁹

5. Summary and conclusion

I have interpreted the A-C problem as the result of the uncertain status of philosophy in late modernity, and I traced back the meta-philosophical differences between A and C to the dualism between the transcendental turn and the logical turn, respectively occurred in contemporary philosophy: at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and at the beginning of the twentieth. The two turns have conveyed diverging ideas of philosophy. They have positively framed two different images of reason (in principle and for a certain time as based on two different conceptions of language).

I have suggested that today the differences between A and C (as ideal-typical properties) are definitely more shadowed, and there are contaminations and integrations, due to the general process of globalization of philosophy. There are reasons to favour an idea of philosophy as a sort of *exploded* territory,⁵⁰ wherein A philosophy survives, but more nominally than substantially, or as a perspective that is not able to correct its own ‘explosion’. All this happens in the context of an alleged dominance of A philosophy, so that C philosophy has no say in the matter, and thus, its traditional resources of critical and foundational rationality cannot help.

Chalmers’ doubts about ‘doing philosophy well’ are justified because, as we see in the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology* there is no accordance about philosophical methods⁵¹ and for universal admission philosophy has no definite episteme (subject matter).⁵² So Chalmers is right in thinking that what A philosophers can do is going on doing what they do. What I would add, is that the vagueness and wideness of the discipline and the unsupported ‘going on’ of philosophers are the first reasons of the impressive redundancy of the field. The philosophical jungle remains unexplorable, until philosophy regains its own identity, and as it seems, the dominant philosophy cannot provide any solution.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Rescher has claimed that philosophy is a lively sector of studies nowadays, but the current conditions of philosophical practice make the role of ‘philosophers’ unthinkable, so there is a lot of philosophy, but no ‘philosopher’ as such (see Nicholas Rescher, “Philosophy Without Philosophers”, in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 53, 3 2016: 213-214). I overturn the diagnosis: there are many (at least nominal) ‘philosophers’, but no trace of the field they are held to share.

⁵⁰ I use ‘explosion’ in the meaning of paraconsistent logicians and dialetheists, to mean a general trivialisation whereby everything becomes true, everything is proved (and the problem does not only regard philosophy). See G. Priest, F. Berto, Z. Weber, “Dialetheism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/dialetheism>.

⁵¹ H. T. Cappelen, J. Szabó Gendler, J. Hawthorne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016 testifies the non-convergent plurality of philosophical methods. Exploring the many and not convergent definitions of ‘methodology’ Dever 2016 discovers that there is no definite answer even about the meaning of the term: ‘there is no obvious and straight forward fitting of an account of Philosophical Methodology onto the way in which philosophers use “methodological” talk’ (p. 25).

⁵² In the authoritative picture provided by Williamson in various works (see for instance T. Williamson, *Doing Philosophy*, cit. 141-142) philosophy postulates a set of different methods to be applied to an unspecified variety of subject matters.

All this may answer the question proposed by the title of this article: yes, there has been an A-C problem, and yes, such a problem still survives (in some sense). But I would like to conclude by suggesting that ‘good philosophers’ have never been strictly A or C: they have always practiced some transcendental- and logic-sensitive philosophy, even if without naming the two aspects in this way. So nothing is to be changed in the action of good philosophers, nowadays. Rather, something is to be changed in how ‘philosophy’ is culturally and institutionally conceived. Because if there still are ‘good’ philosophers (in the intended sense), but the dominantly A philosophers do not have clear and shared ideas about what doing philosophy well means, then these good philosophers and their products might pass unnoticed or be systematically ignored.

In the current ‘information explosion’ or ‘data flood’ which affects philosophy (just like any other science or discipline), the resources for selecting what is ‘philosophically’ good or bad, right or wrong, are exploded too. (Explosion is a *conservative* property: if a system is exploded, then the means to normalize it are exploded too.) Maybe the development of philosophy (and of science in general) will find some optimal *eskaton*, thanks to the internal wisdom of human history. This is a Hegelian thesis that is not easily acceptable (on ground of our experience). What we can do, for now, is to promote normative metaphilosophical reflections, and try to establish, with a certain categoricalness, what ‘doing philosophy well’ means. A reconsideration of the A-C question may help us in this direction.

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