On the emergence of American analytic philosophy

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the reasons for the emergence and dominance of analytic philosophy in America. It closely examines the contents of, and changing editors at, The Philosophical Review, and provides a perspective on the contents of other leading philosophy journals. It suggests that analytic philosophy emerged prior to the 1950s in an environment characterized by a rich diversity of approaches to philosophy and that it came to dominate American philosophy at least in part due to its effective promotion by The Philosophical Review’s editors. Our picture of mid-twentieth-century American philosophy is different from existing ones, including those according to which the prominence of analytic philosophy in America was basically a matter of the natural affinity between American philosophy and analytic philosophy and those according to which the political climate at the time was hostile towards non-analytic approaches. Furthermore, our reconstruction suggests a new perspective on the nature of 1950s analytic philosophy.

Key words: Analytic philosophy, American philosophy, twentieth-century philosophy, history of philosophy

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1. **Introduction**

The present paper contributes to what can be called the external history of twentieth-century philosophy. Rather than focusing on how the push and pull of argumentation affects the spread of philosophical ideas, and without denying that this push and pull has a role to play in explaining the spread of such ideas, we consider the influence of journal capture by proponents of specific approaches to philosophy on journal contents. More specifically, we describe (Sections 2i and 2ii) the changing contents of *The Philosophical Review (PR)* during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. We also contextualize (Section 2iii) these changes by looking, in a less detailed way, at the philosophical environment in which they occurred, including at the contents of *Mind, the Journal of Philosophy (JoP)* and other philosophy journals over this period. We then describe (Section 3) the changes in *PR*’s editors during the 1940s and try to learn about how these changes influenced the journal’s contents. Finally (Section 4), we consider how the emerging picture contributes to our understanding of the history of American philosophy and of the nature of mid-century analytic philosophy.

Our choice of *PR* as our primary focus was guided by our presumption that it was among the three most influential journals in the English speaking world during the relevant decades, a presumption that is bolstered by which journals take note of publications in other journals, by the prominence of authors in journal editions, by the prominence of journal editors and by reports of journal reputation at the time (see, e.g., Edgar S. Brightman’s survey of American philosophy during the Second World War (1947)). The other two journals that shared *PR*’s top three status were *Mind* and *JoP*.

In order to track the changes in the contents of *PR*, we classified its articles using classifications of approaches to philosophy that were provided in survey and methodological articles in *PR* during the relevant period. What we found is a journal that published work exhibiting a wide variety of approaches

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1. Our naming convention is to use first names only when first introducing someone.
to philosophy (e.g., classical pragmatism, process philosophy, idealism, non-Western philosophy) and that did so until about 1948, when mid-century analytic philosophy comes to dominate the journal.

The speed of the shift at PR, along with the absence of a similar, simultaneous shift in other publication venues, strongly suggests that its immediate cause is a change in editorial policy. This is confirmed by looking at the changes in the philosophy faculty at the Susan Linn Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University, the school from which PR’s editors were drawn during the period being considered. Our examination of the changes at Cornell, along with a consideration of the broader context in which philosophy in America was done in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, allows us further to conclude that the changes in editorial policy are not themselves primarily the result of the changing political climate in America or the passing away of rival approaches to philosophy. What appears to be more central to the changes is the replacement of editors who were open to a wide variety of approaches to philosophy—that is, who adopted what we will call ‘philosophical pluralism’—by editors without pluralist approaches to philosophy, a replacement that may have been helped by the pluralism of the first of these groups.

Our reconstruction of the developments in PR, of the context in which these occur and of their effects, suggests a history of mid-twentieth-century American philosophy that, in one or more respects and in various degrees, is different from existing ones (Schneider 1946, Robinson 1946, Skorupski 1993, Baldwin 2001, McCumber 2001, Kuklick 2001, Thomas 2001, Villemaire 2002, Reisch 2005, Kuklick 2006a, Soames 2008, Isaac 2011, Beaney 2013 and Misak 2013). It suggests that analytic philosophy emerged in America at a time characterized by philosophical pluralism and a widespread commitment to addressing meta-philosophical issues related to such pluralism. It also suggests that analytic philosophy came to dominate American philosophy partly by analytical philosophers taking control of key institutions within academic philosophy and using these to promote analytic philosophy, and that crucial steps in the direction of such control occurred before 1950. The reason for the growing dominance of analytic philosophy appears to have been, at least in part, the suppression, by institutional means, of
existing diversity and, possibly, the exploitation of American pluralism. The dominance of analytic philosophy was not just a matter of an inherent affinity of American philosophy for analytic philosophy, good arguments, more cogently stated doctrines or the lack of alternatives. Nor, at least in its initial stages, is the emergence of analytic philosophy in America a matter of political climate. Finally, the centrality of the exclusion, at an institutional level, of alternatives to mid-century analytic philosophy suggests that the latter might partly be defined by such exclusion.

2. The Philosophical Review: 1930-1960

i. 1930-1948: pluralism

The most fundamental distinction philosophers writing in PR make about approaches to philosophy in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s is the distinction between speculative and critical philosophy (see, e.g., Conger 1946, Murphy 1947, de Laguna 1951a and Frankena 1951). The distinction is, as these authors understood it, roughly as follows: Speculative philosophy tends to focus on the provision of substantial, broad claims about the natures of the universe and humanity. Critical philosophy, by contrast, tends to try to limit its substantive, philosophical commitments and spends much of its time criticizing speculative philosophy or making explicit/reconstructing existing scientific or common-sense knowledge. Not unrelated, the approaches associated with critical philosophers are those of epistemological, linguistic or logical analysis, the latter of which includes rational reconstruction. In the speculative philosophy camp, PR’s writers place Absolute idealism, classical – including Deweyan – pragmatism, (some variants of) neo-Kantianism, speculative forms of realism such as Thomism, process philosophy, phenomenology and more. In the critical camp, we find new and critical realism, (logical) positivism, and early analytic philosophy, that is, various forms of linguistic philosophy that flourished during the first 50 or so years of the twentieth century and that were in the tradition of George E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig
Wittgenstein. Mid-century analytic philosophy is also a form of critical philosophy; it draws primarily from positivism, critical and new realism, and the closely allied early analytic philosophy, but is also influenced by pragmatism.

The distinction between speculative and critical philosophy extends to ethics. According to Frankena (1951, pp. 44-5), speculative philosophers tend to rely on metaphysics in justifying their ethics and, further, tend to be normative or practical in their ethics; by contrast, critical philosophers are concerned primarily with linguistic analysis of ethical claims and avoid, or tend to avoid, making normative claims. Similarly, Brightman (1947) emphasises that, for speculative philosophers, there can be no gap between philosophical contemplation and action.

Looking at the overall contents of *PR* in the 1930s and 1940s indicates that the speculative tendency to make substantive claims and the critical tendency to avoid doing so corresponds well with the above classification of philosophical approaches into speculative and critical ones. Of importance to what follows, Deweyian pragmatism counts as speculative. Grace A. de Laguna (1951a, pp. 15-16) argues for the speculative status of Dewey’s work by noting the similarity of Dewey’s metaphysics to Peirce’s speculative metaphysics. Dewey confirms her perspective in the pages of *PR* (1937) when he endorses a variant of Alfred N. Whitehead’s speculative approach. David W. Prall (1938), who is close to Dewey in approach, exemplifies the speculative philosopher’s tendency to link philosophical speculation and practice.

What is remarkable about the content of *PR* in the 1930s and through until about 1948 is not just that it includes substantial representation of all the approaches to philosophy mentioned in the last three paragraphs, but that it includes much material that is – beyond its classification as either speculative or critical – hard to classify even given the long list of approaches above.
Thus, alongside the already cited work in classical pragmatism, one finds positivist contributions, such as those by Moritz Schlick (1936) and A. Cornelius Benjamin (1942). But one also finds work that combines classical pragmatism and positivism, for example, the work of Charles W. Morris (1938).

Perhaps more interestingly, while PR includes work that is paradigmatically speculative (e.g. work by Whitehead (1932)) and work that is paradigmatically critical (e.g. the work by the already mentioned Schlick), it also includes work that aims to develop forms of speculative philosophy that incorporate critical approaches to philosophy in novel ways. Arthur E. Murphy (1943 and 1947), for example, proposes that philosophers should busy themselves with providing speculative frameworks for science but that the generality of these frameworks be limited to individual domains within science, for example, to biology, and thus should be much more limited than was standard in speculative philosophy. On his view, it is the job of critical philosophy to determine how to circumscribe the application of speculative philosophical frameworks.

One also finds more individualistic philosophical approaches in PR. Thus, Katherine Gilbert engages closely with poetry in arguing that philosophy can learn from poetry about the relationship between language and thought as well as about how different parts of language interrelate (1947). De Laguna’s justification of democracy (1946) has Neo-Kantian anthropological philosophy as an important source, but also draws on British, Hegelian idealism and George H. Mead’s pragmatism. George W. Hartmann (1944) offers an early example of experimental philosophy when he aims to advance the discussion of pacifism by surveying American philosophers about their views and arguments on the matter.

This diversity of approaches to philosophy becomes particularly noticeable in the 1940s, when many papers on philosophical methodology appear in the journal. In these papers, the goal tends not to be to find some justification for existing approaches to philosophy. Rather, the goal is to forge new approaches to philosophy. Murphy’s work, already mentioned, is a case in point. Another is work by Daniel S. Robinson. Robinson (1946) declares that pragmatism, idealism, realism, positivism and
scientifically engaged speculative philosophies such as Whitehead’s process philosophy were all obsolete by the end of the Second World War. According to Robinson, what is called for is a new philosophy for the Atomic Age. The approach Robinson starts to develop in his paper is hard to buttonhole, but is reminiscent of European phenomenology in the way it is willing to reconceptualize familiar experience and is, at the same time, different from European phenomenology in the philosophical and cultural background it explicitly draws on.

Edwin A. Burtt takes things further (1946) by arguing for a philosophical approach that somehow allows for, or incorporates, all existing philosophical approaches and is not dogmatic about philosophical approaches. Indeed, Burtt’s pluralism extends beyond approaches in Western Philosophy, as he makes clear in his “How can the Philosophies of East and West Meet?” (1948). Conger (1946) is another philosopher who defends a similar form of pluralism in the pages of PR.

During the 1930s and 1940s, PR also provides regular surveys of the state-of-the-art in French and German philosophy, though the surveys of the latter stop abruptly, and unsurprisingly, in 1938. In 1948 the journal publishes (Vol. 57(6)) a symposium on Oriental philosophy where authors from India, China and America discuss the relationship between Western, Indian and Chinese philosophy. It is in this context that Burtt’s paper about the philosophies of East and West is published. Indian philosophers writing in India publish full-length papers in PR throughout the period we have been discussing (see, e.g. Sircar (1933), Srinivasa Iyengar (1939) and Raju (1947)).

A further role of PR during the period under consideration was the publication of proceedings and presidential addresses of the American Philosophical Association (APA). The addresses that were published fit comfortably into the regular output of the journal. In particular, the addresses are diverse in their contents, much as PR is.

As for specializations within philosophy, these are broadly represented in the journal. It includes the history of Western philosophy—ancient, Medieval and modern—ethics, aesthetics, social philosophy,
philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of science, philosophy of economics, philosophy of logic and mathematics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of education and more.

The ethics in *PR* includes reflection on the nature and epistemology of ethical claims, but also normative ethics. The contributions to normative ethics regularly aim to address what were then current concerns and are often informed by psychology, sociology and the metaphysics of society and of humans. One prominent concern is the role of philosophy in society and, in particular, in American education, following the social changes America was undergoing as a result of war and of the revolutions in science. Thus, for example, 1945 sees a special edition (54(3)) that collects the opinions of American philosophers on the role of a liberal education. Another prominent concern is the nature and justification of democracy along with the challenges posed by non-democratic forms of government that threatened it, including the increasing corporatization of American society. De Laguna’s already mentioned (1946) attempt to provide a philosophical justification for democracy, for example, rests on an empirically informed metaphysics of humans and their relations to society, and delivers claims about inherent problems that are supposed to exist in societies where democracy is limited. (Other examples of socially relevant instances of speculative philosophy in *PR* include Sisson (1940), Gurvitch (1943) and Spiegelberg (1944).)

*ii. 1948–1960: a sudden shift*

The transition from the diverse philosophical content of *PR* just described was quick and started in 1948 with a number of issues in which analytic philosophy uncharacteristically takes centre stage. Vol. 57(3) came out in May. It starts with an Introduction by Max Black, one celebrating the translation of Gottlob Frege’s “Sense and Reference”, followed by the translation. The remaining articles and discussions of 57(3) are best characterized as critical philosophy, more specifically, mid-century analytic philosophy; indeed, the term ‘analytic(al) philosophy’ first becomes widespread in *PR* during this period. The next
two issues of Vol. 57 are largely the same, with 57(4) having Hans Reichenbach’s “Rationalism and Empiricism: An Inquiry into the Roots of Philosophical Error” as a centrepiece. The remaining part of Vol. 57 harks back to the older PR; 57(6) contains the work from the already mentioned symposium on Oriental Philosophy, along with the last full-length papers in modern Indian philosophy in the journal until at least 2015. The first part of the 1949 volume, 58(1), contains the work from a symposium on the relationship between logic and metaphysics, work that includes critical and speculative contributions. 58(1) also contains the last instalment of the regular review of French philosophy, one which reviews French Philosophy in the years 1946-1947. With the exception of 58(5), the remaining five parts of Vol. 58 are dominated by mid-century analytic philosophy. This volume includes prominent analytic philosophers such as Ernest Nagel, Oets K. Bouwsma, Norman Malcolm and Arthur Pap. The papers in 58(5) are speculative papers; these papers are the 1948 through to April 1949 addresses to the APA and comprise the last addresses of the APA to be published in PR.

Throughout the 1950s, the journal is strongly dominated by mid-century analytic philosophy and the history of Western philosophy. During 1950-1955, for example, roughly 65% of the full-length papers in the journal are mid-century analytic, roughly 25% are historical and roughly 10% (9 papers) can be classified as speculative; during the years 1944-1947, by contrast, roughly 30% of the papers can be classified as critical, including positivist, realist and (early) analytical, roughly 20% as historical and roughly 50% as speculative (see Appendix 1). The shift in PR’s contents appears to be not only away from speculative philosophy but also within critical philosophy. At this time, the term ‘mid-century analytic philosophy’ does come to seem to be an appropriate umbrella term that covers almost all of the critical philosophy in the journal.

Ethics in 1950s PR is also, by and large, analytic ethics. It does include meta-ethics and normative ethics. However, the focus of normative ethics is not current social concerns but, rather, issues such as whether to prefer utilitarianism or its rivals. Moreover, the tendency is to avoid using speculative claims in order to inform one’s ethics. John Rawls’s work in PR is illustrative of the spirit with which
normative issues are addressed in *PR*. He is explicit that his claim that justice should be thought of as fairness does not rest on substantive claims about human nature; his claim results from a conceptual analysis of what, as far as common sense is concerned, justice involves and does not address the question whether the conditions in which questions of justice arise are ever realized (1958, pp. 175-176). Rawls’s other contributions to *PR* in the 1950s (1951 and 1955) also aim to be non-speculative and make little by way of actual normative claims.

The isolated, post-1949 contributions by speculative philosophers include, among others, contributions by de Laguna (1951a and 1951b), Murphy (1952), George S. Sabine (1952), Burtt (1953) and Charles Hartshorne (1954). In some cases, the contributions by speculative philosophers make very clear concessions to analytic philosophy in their content; thus, for example, Burtt discusses (1953) a non-speculative aspect of his project of building bridges between different approaches to philosophy, namely that of clarifying the language used when different approaches to philosophy engage with each other.

The perspective the journal offers on philosophy in America fits its new content. Vol. 60(1), which appeared in 1951, includes three articles that were supposed to describe the main trends in what was then recent philosophy. One is by de Laguna (1951a) and supposedly represents the whole of speculative philosophy. De Laguna’s article gives scant place to many of the distinctive approaches found in *PR* in the 1930s and 1940s, thus helping to write them, and herself, out of history. Indeed, all but one of the figures she focuses on—Martin Heidegger—are dead by the end of 1952. Her survey presents the ideas of René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Georg F. Hegel and analytic philosophy as background to twentieth-century speculative philosophy and then discusses the work of Henri-Louis Bergson, George Santayana, Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, Charles Saunders Peirce and Dewey. Her discussion culminates in a discussion of Whitehead’s speculative philosophy, a philosophy which, she says, is second to none. Whitehead is a figure that is central to pre-1949 *PR* but whose presence is insubstantial in the journal in the 1950s. A second article covers critical philosophy; the article is Willard V. O. Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951). This article focuses on Quine’s ideas as well as on those of Rudolf Carnap, thus
placing the work of these two at the centre of the discussion of mid-century analytic philosophy. A third article, written by the analytic philosopher W. K. Frankena (1951), covers moral philosophy that was recent in 1951. Frankena tells us that moral philosophy has shifted towards analytic ethics and as a result is, aside from a resurgence of theological ethics, no longer speculative. He also writes that, with the shift to analytic moral philosophy, moral philosophy has become less normative and is basically only published in articles (1951, pp. 44-45 and 55). Frankena’s focus is, accordingly and despite his acknowledgment that analytic ethics will have to become more speculative and should be more normative, just on analytic ethics. This focus is misleading. Our discussion of the pre-1948 contents of PR indicates that Frankena is correct about the content of analytic ethics, but also that speculative ethics is alive and well at the time. Indeed, even the few speculative papers PR continues to publish in the 1950s include moral philosophy (see, e.g. Murphy (1952) and Sabine (1952)). In addition, the citations in Brightman (1947) show that American value theory and social philosophy, along with its treatment of theoretical and practical issues relating to justice, are doing well during the war both in and out of book form.

In 1952, a year after PR publishes its perspective on recent philosophy, its editors celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the journal with the following notice:

“The scope of the REVIEW,” wrote Schurman in a prefatory note to the first number, “will be as wide as philosophy in its broadest sense.” In their selection of papers for publication, the editors will continue to ensure that the REVIEW remains, as Schurman intended, “a free organ of general philosophy,” and not the instrument “of any institution, or of any sect, or of any interest” [PR, 1952, Vol. 61(4), p. 450].

To be clear, while PR was, prior to 1948, methodologically diverse, it was not pluralistic in every respect. It did not, largely due to the influence of the journal’s founder James E. Creighton (Auxier 2005), include many contributions from non-philosophers. So too, philosophers from some universities, especially philosophers from Cornell, do seem to be disproportionately represented in the pages of the journal,
something that continues in the 1950s. Women have some representation in the journal (e.g., in addition to work by the already mentioned de Laguna and Gilbert, we find work by Alice Ambrose (1933) and Hazel E. Barnes (1945)), but they are a small minority. And so on. We cannot, accordingly, identify the pluralism we have been discussing with the philosophical pluralism espoused by some American philosophers in the 1960s and 1970s; the latter pluralism was concerned with more than methodology (Kuklick 2006a). PR after the takeover was a narrow journal, but it also allowed for some diversity. In particular, the influence of pragmatism was present in the journal through the work of philosophers like Quine and Clarence I. Lewis.

iii. Context and effects of changes at the Philosophical Review

The literature already documents how, by mid-twentieth century, work in Mind was dominated by mid-century analytic philosophy (Warnock 1976 and Hamlyn 2003). JoP was, in the 1950s, still open to classical pragmatism in a way that PR no longer was, although pragmatism and mid-century analytic philosophy did account for the bulk of JoP’s content. The changes in PR’s content thus meant that, by 1950, only one of the three most influential philosophy journals in America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain provided real space for speculative philosophy, and the journal that did provide such space provided it predominantly to pragmatism.

Non-pragmatist speculative philosophy still had destinations in the 1950s, even if less prestigious ones than Mind, PR and JoP. The Review of Metaphysics provided additional room for speculative and analytic philosophy (it was founded in 1947 by Paul Weiss (Castiglione 2005) and we cannot but speculate about whether this was tied to the changes in PR). Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, which was founded in 1940, provided a home for phenomenology throughout the 1950s, though it also published pragmatist work and other speculative philosophy; it also published mid-century analytic philosophy. The journal Philosophy of Science was still a decade away from its disengagement from
social concerns and pragmatism (Don Howard 2003). Although the addresses of the APA are no longer published in PR after 1949, they are published by the APA and continue to be diverse in their content. Thus, for example, Albert E. Avey’s address (1949) is pragmatist, Richard McKeon’s address (1951a) is historical, Georgina Melvin’s address (1951) is a specialist paper on Soviet Jurisprudence that does not clearly belong to any particular school of philosophy and John H. Randall, Jr. makes a case for pluralism in philosophy (1956).

Given the influence of PR, JoP and Mind, it is plausible to suppose that they had a role in influencing the approaches and views, as well as the job prospects, of young academic philosophers in America at the time. Plausibly, the journals pushed young academics in the analytic direction, away from methodological pluralism. This effect is plausibly thought to have been strengthened by the substantial increase in the numbers of American students of philosophy going on to be academic philosophers during the period starting at the end of the Second World War through until the 1970s (see Soames (2008) for some indication of the numbers involved).

One thing the shift in PR’s editorial policy did not do, however, is to relieve built up demand for space by young analytic philosophers. They were not waiting in the wings. Philosophical Studies was founded in 1950, but had very thin volumes in its early years. Moreover, the analytic contributors to PR in the late 1940s and early 1950s were not junior scholars, with the exception of John Ladd (vol. 60(1)) and Rawls (vol. 60(2)). So, in addition to the contributions mentioned above, one finds papers by authors who had already studied with Moore and Wittgenstein in the 1930s or earlier, authors such as Ambrose (Schrader 2005a), Malcolm (Blair 2005), Charles L. Stevenson (Frankena 1979) and Margaret MacDonald (Waither 1995).

In addition, the move away from a pluralistic journal and from debates about how to address different approaches to philosophy does not bring PR in line with the real approaches and concerns of American philosophers. With regard to their approaches, the diversity in the contents of pre-1948 PR reflects the diversity among American philosophers, as is documented by authors writing at the time (see,
e.g. Brightman 1947 and Schneider 1946) and by more recent authors (see, e.g. Isaac (2011)). With regard to the concerns of American philosophers, Brightman (1947, p. 404), Brand Blanshard (1945) and the persistence of the discussion of methodological pluralism over time and in different journals (see, e.g. the papers by Marjorie Glicksman (1937), Rupert C. Lodge (1944) and McKeon (1951b) in JoP) all indicate that the issue of deciding between different approaches to philosophy was a central issue in American philosophy during and after the Second World War, with many authors supporting pluralism. Neill Gross (2008, ch. 5) and Bruce Kuklick (2004) provide further support for our conclusion; they note the explicit endorsement of pluralism emerging at Yale in the 1930s and 1940s, a period when Harvard comes to be dominated by critical philosophy.

3. **The Philosophical Review’s takeover: proximate causes**

There is still the question of what caused the sudden shift in the contents of *PR*. The speed of the shift, along with the continued flourishing of speculative philosophy outside of the pages of *PR*, suggests that editorial changes were its proximate causes. The suspicion is confirmed by taking a look at the changes in the editorship of *PR* in the late 1940s.

As we have noted, *PR*’s editors were, in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, drawn from the Sage School of Philosophy. Moreover, as Diane Villemaire makes clear (2002, p. 78), the School was a major centre of American speculative thought in 1945 but had become, by 1953, the strongest analytic department in America. At some point in the intervening period, then, control of *PR*’s content is taken over by philosophers who actively favoured mid-century analytic philosophy.

A closer look at the changes at the School indicates that the shift in control is likely to have taken place in 1947 or 1948, precisely the period during which we have seen that *PR*’s pluralism is dying out. Murphy joins the School in 1945 and serves as Chair of the School from 1946 until 1953 (Brogan, Doty and Ginascole, 2001). He initiates a series of hires that include prominent proponents of analytic
philosophy, namely Black and Malcolm (Villemaire 2002, p. 78). The hires also include Gregory Vlastos. Although Vlastos was a historian of philosophy, his approach to history included in its credentials the strong influence of Black and Malcolm (Shoemaker and Pereboom, 2014). Black is hired in 1946, Malcolm in 1947 and Vlastos in 1948 (Shoemaker and Pereboom, 2014). Two other, less prominent hires were Stuart M. Brown, hired in 1946 (Kretzmann et al. 1996), and William Doney, hired in 1949 (Dartmouth News 2005). Brown worked in the tradition of linguistic analysis (see, e.g. Brown, 1955) and Doney was a historian of modern philosophy (Dartmouth News 2005). Both appeared to be under the influence of Wittgenstein when he visited Cornell in 1949 (Pinch and Swedberg, 2013). Watts Cunningham and Sabine, both longstanding PR editors and appropriately described as speculative philosophers (see the references to Sabine above and below, and Watts Cunningham’s self-identification as an Absolute idealist (1948)), retired in 1948 and 1949, respectively (Black et al. 1968 and Brown et al. 1961, respectively). Presumably this, at least, diminished their influence on journal contents even though they continued to be named as journal editors immediately after their retirement. In any case, it seems that, by 1949, those philosophers who had been at the School prior to Murphy’s arrival—including not only Watts Cunningham and Sabine, but also the already discussed Burtt and the speculative philosopher of logic and science Harold R. Smart (see his 1934 and 1944)—had limited influence on the School (Villemaire 2002, Pinch and Swedberg 2013). Richard Robinson, who did analytic philosophy (see, e.g. Robinson 1941), was at the school prior to Murphy’s arrival but left in 1946 (Appendix II includes an overview of the changes in PR’s editors).

PR’s editors make use of external editorial consultants during most of the period we are concerned with here. Looking at the changes in those who serve as such consultants is also illuminating. PR’s front matter indicates that, in the years 1936-38, the consultants included Étienne Gilson, William A. Hammond, Nicolai Hartmann, Arthur Liebert and Arthur E. Taylor. Gilson was a Paris-based historian of medieval philosophy and Thomist (Murphy 2004). Hammond, who was at the Sage School until his retirement in 1930 and then moved to Washington, worked on ancient philosophy and aesthetics (Cornell
Taylor was an ethical theist with a British idealist past who was located in Edinburgh (Mander 2011, p. 87), Hartmann a realist with speculative tendencies who was located in Berlin (Peterson 2012) and Liebert a Neo-Kantian located in Prague (Moran 2012, pp. 2-3). The number of consultants diminishes substantially during the war years, with only Gilson and Taylor being mentioned in the front matter. No editorial consultants are mentioned between 1946 and 1950. However, in 1950, a long list of new consultants appear: Henry D. Aiken, Virgil C. Aldrich, Charles A. Baylis, George Boas, Cornelius Krusé and Walter T. Stace. Other than Krusé, who is a speculative philosopher at Wesleyan University, the list comprises committed analytic philosophers and a historian of ideas with an analytic penchant. Aiken was committed to ordinary language philosophy (Moreno-Davis 2005); Aldrich and Stace were, according to Beaney (2013, p. 45), made part of the analytic canon when their work was published in 1949 in *Readings in Philosophical Analysis* (edited by Herbert Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars) alongside work by Quine, Frege, Russell and Carnap.² Baylis (1931) takes Susanne K. Langer to share his view that philosophy is logical analysis and, unlike science, not concerned with the connection of facts, but nevertheless cannot resist promoting the view in reviewing her work; as for Boas, he primarily works in the history of ideas (Gombrich 1981), but what philosophy he published in the early 1950s bears the clear stamp of ordinary language philosophy along with naturalistic features (See, e.g. Boas 1952 and 1956).

An important complication for our story thus far is that, as we have noted, Murphy was not an analytic philosopher. However, his willingness to hire analytic philosophers, and perhaps to assist in *PR*’s transition³, might partly be explained by his already mentioned commitment to synthesizing critical and speculative approaches. It is also possible that the commitment to methodological pluralism by Cunningham (Black et al. 1968) and Burtt contributed to limiting the extent to which they resisted the changes Murphy introduced. Part of the explanation of why some speculative philosophers were still

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² Stace writes (1961, p. 6) that his “approach to philosophy is that of an empiricist and an analyst” and traces his methodology back to Moore. Thus, while he is concerned to uncover the nature of reality, the truths he aims to uncover are supposed to result from an analysis of available knowledge. Moreover, in this way, he shares the critical philosopher’s tendency to avoid substantive philosophical commitments.

³ *PR*’s front matter has Murphy as chief editor from 1950 until he leaves Cornell in 1953.
publishing in *PR* in the 1950s might be their location at Cornell. The reader may have noticed that Burtt, Murphy and Sabine were among these speculative philosophers.

4. **Revisiting the history of philosophy in America**

There are, as we noted in the introduction, a variety of pictures of the emergence of analytic philosophy in America. In what follows, we focus primarily on representative proponents of two kinds of pictures of this emergence. On the one hand, we contrast our picture with the (more or less purely internalist) ones provided by Scott Soames (2008) and Cheryl Misak (2013). Soames and Misak represent accounts according to which the philosophical merits of analytic philosophy and the welcoming, or at least compliant, nature of pre-1950s American philosophy facilitate the growth of mid-century analytic philosophy in America (related accounts are found in Kuklick (2006a), Isaac (2011) and Beaney (2013)).

On the other hand, we contrast our picture with the kind of (externalist) one provided by John McCumber (2001). McCumber here represents accounts according to which country-wide political forces serve to mould mid-century analytic philosophy (a related account is provided by Reisch (2005)).

In “Analytic philosophy in America” (2008), Soames tells us that tendencies in American philosophy prior to the emergence of American analytic philosophy in the 1950s and 1960s already included those characteristic of analytic philosophy. These tendencies included

- belief in the relevance of logic and language for philosophy, emphasis on precision and clarity of argumentation, suspicion of apriori metaphysics, and elevation of the goals of truth and knowledge over inspiration, moral uplift, and spiritual comfort -- plus a dose of professional specialization (2008, p. 453).

Given these tendencies, Soames tells us that
all that was needed for America to enter the stream of analytic philosophy was for the works of its philosophers to regularly, and in large numbers, enter the torrent flowing from its British and European sources (2008, p. 454).

Soames goes on to trace how, given the analytic friendly nature of American philosophy, analytic philosophy eventually triumphs in America. Three factors, according to Soames, lead above all others to the triumph (2008, p. 456). These, he writes, are

(i) the arrival from Europe of leading logicians, philosophers of science, logical positivists, and other analytic philosophers (ii) the transformation of the Harvard department led by Quine in the 1950s, and 60s, and (iii) the vast post-war expansion in higher education in America, which came to encompass a substantial drain in philosophical talent from Britain to the United States – including (for varying lengths of time) such figures as Paul Grice, Stuart Hampshire, J. O Urmson, and Philippa Foot (2008, p. 454).

A similar thesis about the emergence of analytic philosophy in America is put forward by Misak. According to Misak, when the positivists arrived in America, “they did not arrive in a land that was inhospitable to their view, nor did they need to uproot the view they found already planted there” (2013, p. 156). On the contrary, while she recognizes that positivists and pragmatists had their disagreements, she denies that these were about “fundamental breaches in philosophical view” (2013, p. 175). In her view, pragmatism and logical positivism flourished together after the arrival of the latter in America, so much so that the pragmatist epistemology and theory of truth are dominant in American analytic philosophy from the 1930s through until the 1950s (2013, pp. 156-7).

Misak also addresses the thought that the positivists who influenced mid-century American analytic philosophers and the analytic philosophers themselves were somehow less concerned with normative issues than pragmatists were and thus that this is where they were divided. She points out, on the contrary, that the positivists were concerned with normative issues and, indeed, believed that by
promoting scientific thought, they were working for a socially progressive world (2013, p. 168). She adds (2013, p. 175), citing Isaac (2011), that the claim that early analytic philosophy in America repudiated normative issues is dubious.

Contrary to Misak and Soames, however, our examination of PR and other sources from the 1940s and 1950s shows that mid-century American philosophers correctly recognized that speculative philosophy (including classical pragmatism) as well as critical philosophy (including analytic philosophy) stand in opposition. Moreover, we have seen that this recognition served as a systematic basis for influencing the trajectory of philosophy in America.

Looking at the figures which Misak identifies as pragmatists within the analytic tradition merely confirms our picture. These philosophers were opposed to speculative philosophy. Thus, for example, Lewis tells us that it “is not the business of philosophy, as it is of the natural sciences, to add to the sum total of phenomena with which men are acquainted” (1929, p. 2). Wilfrid Sellars describes himself as working against pragmatism with the help of the tools of critical realism (Olen 2009) and commits himself (1962, p. 3) to the view that philosophy does not aim to make a substantive contribution to what we know. Nelson Goodman sees himself as providing Carnapian rational reconstructions of our concepts (1951). PR’s choice of Quine as the representative of critical philosophy makes sense given Quine’s view (Hylton 2016), discernible also in his 1951 contribution to PR, that philosophical investigation of the nature of the world just amounts to the logical regimentation of our best scientific theories.

With regard to ethics, we agree with Misak and Isaac that some positivists were socially engaged, and we have seen that Misak and Isaac are correct that analytic philosophers of the 1940s and 1950s engage with ethical issues. But, by 1945, there are no longer any influential, socially engaged positivists (Kuklick 2006b). More importantly, recognizing that analytic philosophers engage with ethical issues is compatible with recognizing fundamental differences between the ways in which they and speculative philosophers do so. Moreover, as we have seen, authors writing during the period we are concerned with recognize that speculative philosophy’s ethics tends to be, while analytic ethics tends not to be, informed
by metaphysics or other substantive speculative claims. So too, we have seen that speculative philosophy’s ethics is correctly thought of as being more intimately tied to practice.

What Misak and Soames, as well as others (see, e.g. Baldwin 2001, Skorupski 1993, Thomas 2001 and Kuklick 2006a), also miss is not just the variety of approaches to philosophy in America at the time – which we have seen Isaac (2011) recognizes – but the openness of PR and other journals, and of many in the community they served, to such a variety. This methodological pluralism gives rise to further theoretical and practical tensions between some speculative philosophers and some analytic philosophers, tensions that manifest themselves in the changing contents of PR.

It thus seems that there is real tension between much philosophy in America, including classical pragmatism, on the one hand, and mid-century analytic philosophy and positivism on the other. This tension arises from fundamental disagreements about philosophical approach and is there even if Misak and Soames are correct about what analytic philosophers and positivists shared with many non-analytic American philosophers.

The failure to acknowledge the deep divisions between different approaches to philosophy in America leads, in turn, to a failure to see the variety of directions in which American philosophy might have developed. Pragmatism and analytic philosophy were but two approaches among many approaches in America; variants of speculative philosophy, for example, Whitehead’s process philosophy, varieties of pluralism, attempted syntheses between speculative and critical philosophy, and more were available. Whether or not developing these approaches beyond the way in which they were developed would have been a good thing—and we take no stand on this issue here—they all had substantial room for further development.

Soames also, and in this too he is not alone (see, e.g. Kuklick (2006a), Isaac (2011) and Beaney (2013)), tells a substantially incomplete story about how post-Second World War, analytic philosophy came to dominate American philosophy. The migration of the very small number of logical positivists to America aside, Soames’s story takes place after 1950. Beaney (2013) provides a more complete picture, one on which increased interaction between British and American philosophy after the war, along with
key publications, at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s, jointly give shape to analytic philosophy. Beaney further observes, in agreement with our observation regarding the use of the term ‘analytic philosophy’ in *PR*, that this term only came to be widely used in the 1950s. Our story, however, suggests that control of key journals prior to 1950 played an important role in the growth of analytic philosophy.

The speed of the shift in *PR*’s contents, along with the deliberate choice of the contents, further suggests that the involved individuals had a very clear view of what was, and what was not, analytic philosophy and thus that much of the identity it presented in the 1950s was already well-formed in the mid-1940s. At least from the perspective of our story, analytic philosophy’s triumph appears more akin to a premeditated, hostile takeover by key American and European players, than to the settling of foreign friends on philosophically unoccupied land or, though this no doubt also occurred, to the ongoing moulding of a discipline through discussion among like-minded thinkers.

Finally, while Soames is correct that the post-war expansion in numbers of philosophers helps to explain the availability of jobs in America for British philosophers, it does not, given the tensions we have noted and given the available alternatives to analytic philosophy, explain why so many of the new American recruits to philosophy picked analytic philosophy. In this context, one should keep in mind not only the very small number of logical positivists who moved to America but that proponents of other approaches to philosophy had also arrived on its shores, including phenomenologists, existentialists, Neo-Kantians and critical theorists.

Overall, then, the supposed affinity of pragmatism, positivism and analytic philosophy cannot explain how analytic philosophy came to be dominant in America. An appeal to this affinity fails to recognize all the relevant approaches to philosophy in America, the tensions between speculative and critical approaches, and is contrary to the use of marginalization in the process. On the other hand, the beginnings of an explanation of this marginalization and, as a result, of the shift in American philosophical allegiances in the 1950s can be found in the pluralism of many American philosophers with regard to philosophical approach, *PR*’s takeover by philosophers who were not pluralists about
philosophical approach, the occurrence of this takeover at the onset of substantial growth in American academic philosophy, and the limited availability of alternatives to PR that were similar to it in prestige and were welcoming to speculative philosophy.

McCumber (2001) identifies another factor that might help to explain the emergence of analytic philosophy in America, namely McCarthyism. McCumber argues that academic philosophers suffered disproportionately from McCarthyite forces and, at the same time, were prominent in supporting these forces. The attacks suffered by philosophers across America under McCarthyism, the way the discipline responded to these attacks and the broader political environment, led, according to McCumber, to a narrower vision of philosophy, one that focused on linguistic analysis and, indeed, primarily on the analysis of scientific claims. Along the way, the relatively socially engaged pragmatists in America suffered precisely because of their social engagement.

However, note that, as McCumber recognizes, McCarthyism only really begins to bite around about 1949, a year after the changes in PR commence and a few years after Murphy starts to change the character of the Sage School. A second feature of the story we tell is that it is in many ways local. Murphy’s acquisition by the School, the simultaneous retirement of Watts Cunningham and Sabine, the fact that PR was located at the School and that the new hires included the individuals it included are all local causes of the changes at PR and do not appear to result from contextual features of the situation. It thus seems unlikely that McCarthyism played an important role in changing PR. Instead, it seems that academic philosophy in America was already well on the way to changing through initiatives that were internal to it.

The above does not, of course, exclude supposing that PR’s promotion of a relatively narrow vision of philosophy in the 1950s contributed to the flourishing of academic philosophy then and later. Possibly, things would have been tougher for philosophy had PR in the 1950s remained pluralistic in the way it was in earlier years. In this context, it is worth noting that the only paper we have found in PR that dates from 1950 to 1955 and that appears to criticise McCarthyism, even if only obliquely, is by the
speculative philosopher Sabine (1952). The only explicit mention of McCarthy is in a paper according to which what we are doing in avowals such as “I feel bored” is not very different from what we are doing when we make factual claims such as “McCarthy is in Washington today” (Fleming 1955).

5. Discussion

Mid-century analytic philosophy represented itself as the champion of clear thinking and rigorous argumentation (Soames 2008). It is interesting that such an approach to philosophy should turn out to be characterized, at an institutional level and even if only in its control of PR, by a form of control over its rivals that bypasses discussion. It is no less interesting that, at the same time, mid-century American, speculative philosophy is trying to get to grips with the apparently irreconcilable differences between different approaches to philosophy and to do so with the help of reasoning. This attempt was not only one carried out at the theoretical level within the pages of PR and elsewhere, but one that was to some extent realized in the running of PR and, perhaps, in the tolerance with which analytic philosophy was treated.

Our account of the takeover of PR and of its effects raises several questions. One is to what extent our account leaves room for an internalist view of the emergence of American analytic philosophy and, more broadly, of analytic philosophy. Our aim has been to identify one strand in this emergence and we do not here claim to offer anything like a complete account of it. One could supplement our story with considerations that are similarly external as well as with accounts based on supposed affinities between some strands of pragmatism and mid-century analytic philosophy, or supposed relative merits of mid-century analytic philosophy. One could also, as already acknowledged, recognize a political dimension to the 1950s story. It is perhaps, however, premature to consider the extent to which the story of analytic philosophy should be external or internal. This is partly because of the relatively limited attention that has been paid to the kind of external explanation we have pursued here. Beyond our examination of the case of PR, there is (as far as we are aware) only the already noted examination of developments in Philosophy
of Science and our (Katzav and Vaesen, 2016) examination of the history of Mind, which shows that what occurred in PR also occurred in Mind, primarily due to editorial decisions by Moore in the 1920s and by Ryle in the 1950s.

A second question our study raises is how the kind of external account we have developed might be extended further. Attempts to do so might look at the development of philosophy teaching programmes, including the Sage School programme, and of academic societies, such as the APA. As for journals, the cases of Mind and of PR may be part of a broader pattern. Of particular interest is the case of JoP, an initial examination of which suggests that it quickly came to be dominated by analytic philosophy in the early 1960s.

A third question is what a pattern of institutionalized exclusion would, if established, say about the nature of analytic philosophy. It would at the very least suggest that analytic philosophy, in at least some of its most prominent phases, endorses implicit forms of exclusion, some of which in fact might follow from explicitly stated metaphilosophical commitments. Of course, in order to buttress the idea that exclusion is a feature diagnostic for some historical phase of analytic philosophy, one would need to address the objection that available rivals were as sectarian as it was, and this task entails making comparisons with other approaches to philosophy.

A fourth question is how the way for what occurred at PR was paved. Answering this question requires considering the earlier (internal and external) history of disagreements about methodological pluralism in America. Possibly significant here is the earlier proposal a group of new realists put to American philosophers in 1910 for the creation of a shared platform for American philosophers, one that included shared terminology, methods and doctrines, and was actively opposed by Cornell philosophers (Jewett 2012). One would also, among other things, have to consider the influence of British philosophy beyond its influence through the contents of the pages of Mind; analytic philosophy gained strength in Britain earlier than it did in America and, as is widely recognized, there were strong ties between philosophers in the two countries, with many American philosophers visiting, or studying at, Cambridge
and Oxford (see the examples given in Section 2.iii) and, accordingly, being exposed to what were Moore’s and Ryle’s relatively narrow visions of philosophy (Katzav and Vaesen, 2016).

Finally, one may consider in more detail how the emphasis of PR’s editors on certain philosophical approaches and certain individual philosophers shaped post-1948 American philosophy, including its ways of thinking of itself. With regard to individuals, for example, it seems that Quine’s 1951 contribution to PR propelled him to international fame (Murphey 2012, p. 81). More broadly, the omissions in PR not only helped to make extra space for analytic philosophy in America, they may also have contributed to developing its self-image. Plausibly, the view that analytic philosophy was just a natural development for American philosophy required forgetting the speculative alternatives to it or placing them, with classical pragmatism, in the past. Moreover, once this is done, one is much closer to thinking of the alternatives to analytic philosophy as being an affair of continental Europe.

Acknowledgements

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References


https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/18743 (Downloaded May 2016).


https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/18831 (Downloaded May 2016).


## APPENDIX I

**Classification of papers published in Philosophical Review for 1944-1947 and 1950-1955**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Critical</th>
<th>Speculative</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>G. Bergmann 56(1), M. Black 56(3), E. J. Nelson 56(5), L. W. Beck 56(6)</td>
<td>P. T. Raju 56(2), J. Collins 56(2), R. Demos 56(3), A. E. Murphy 56(4), K. Gilbert 56(5), J. A. Clark 56(6), H. N. Lee 56(6), D. W. Rogers 56(6)</td>
<td>A. Chroust 56(1), M. H. Thompson 56(3), H. Schneider 56(4), M. H. Fisch 56(4)</td>
<td>M. H. Fisch 56(4) could be classified as speculative, but is classified as history. M. ten Hoor 56(5) hard to straightforwardly classify. Surveys by...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Classifications</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>W. V. O. Quine 60(1), W. K. Frankena 60(1), J. Rawls 60(2), H. L. A. Hart 60(2), M. White 60(3), R. M. Chisholm 60(3), N. Malcolm 60(3), R. Robinson 60(4), A. I. Melden 60(4)</td>
<td>G. A. de Laguna 60(1) &amp; 60(2)</td>
<td></td>
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A. Lalande 56(1) and E. S. Brightman 56(4) is survey and thus not classified.

1955  |  J. Rawls 64(1), A. Smullyan 64(1), M. and A. Prior 64(1), E. V. Raab 64(1), R. W. Brandt 64(1), H. L. A. Hart 64(2), S. M. Brown Jr. 64(2), C. I. Lewis 64(2), D. G. Brown 64(3), F. L. Will 64(3), N. L. Wilson 64(3), P. Geach 64(4), D. Londey 64(4), A. Pap 64(4)  |  W. Sellars 64(3), E. D. Philips 64(4), T. Penelhum 64(4)  |  

APPENDIX II

*Philosophical Review*’s editors

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<tr>
<th>1936-1937 (from front matter of journal)</th>
<th>1945 (the faculty of the Sage School of Philosophy).</th>
<th>1949-50 (the faculty of the Sage School of Philosophy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>