

**Aaron Preston, ed.** *Analytic Philosophy: An Interpretive History*. Routledge 2017. 290 pp. \$150.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781138800786); \$49.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781138800793).

Contemporary literature on the history of analytic philosophy (HAP) focuses mainly on particular figures and books or general narratives about certain restricted periods of the twentieth century. *Analytic Philosophy: An Interpretive History*, a collection of new essays edited by Aaron Preston, breaks with that practice: the question is not how individual figures fits into the story of analytic philosophy, but how exactly those figures made that tradition! Spoiler alert: the book makes a great contribution to the field, though the editor's goals and interpretative aims are not realized entirely.

Preston's attitude toward HAP is well-known from his earlier book (Continuum, 2007), where he argued that it is *a history of illusion*. The present volume might be seen as a form of continuation of that project with special case studies. The main line of argument, summarized in the preface, is that 'analytic philosophy appears to have been not merely shaped, but *created*, by interpretation—and a misinterpretation at that' (3-4). According to Preston, and some of the authors of the volume seem to accept his narrative to varying degrees, one cannot identify a specific and exactly determinable set of commitments, views, and presumably aims that were shared with the same intensity and depth by all philosophers commonly included in the analytic camp.

The problem is not that these figures were wrong, or were unable to join the other analytic philosophers due of their own faults, but because there was no such thing as *the* analytic camp, movement or tradition. 'It turns out, however,' argues Preston, 'that the traditional conception is radically false' (4). The analytic tradition was not just an illusion, as he claimed earlier, but it 'was, in short, interpreted into existence' (5), that is, it existed after all, as a contingent creation, especially an interpretation, or better, a misinterpretation, of what philosophers were doing.

This is a controversial thesis, possibly also having some consequences regarding the *existence* of those arguments that purported to show the (hoped or wished) dominance and superiority of the analytic tradition. If it is an illusion, a misinterpretation—one might even say after reading some of the essays that *analytic philosophy is just the monster of Frankenstein*—then one has to reconsider her commitments and wishes in joining that illusory group.

The volume consists of 18 essays (editor's introduction included), ordered chronologically and of roughly the same length. The fact that the individual chapters are usually between 10 and 15 pages, makes the volume even more attractive and there are almost no superfluous detours detracting the reader from the main topic. Or at least, not from the main topic—i.e., interpretation of the history of analytic philosophy—since only a few authors refer back directly to Preston's question and the task of history-writing and making. While this might be seen as a weakness of the volume, the situation is much more complicated.

Almost every paper (I will discuss exceptions below) has a definite goal: it starts by describing the received view of the given philosopher under discussion, and the dialectical line of the paper is focused on undercutting that view by considering philosophical and historical matters. One of the strengths of the volume is that many authors are using unpublished and rarely considered archive materials, and they draw a philosophical profile with their help. Thankfully they do not get lost in the details and these unpublished sources often clash with the secondary literature. Another strength of the volume is the deep and reflective consultation of the most recent literature on HAP.

There are two papers on Moore and how he should be read through the lens of metaphysics instead of the linguistic turn (Peter Hylton, Chapter 2 and Consuelo Preti, Chapter 8); one paper dealing exclusively with Russell (Rosalind Carey, Chapter 6), and one with Russell, Ryle, and phenomenology (James Chase and Jack Reynolds, Chapter 4). Ryle (especially his behaviorism) is the target of Michael Kremer (Chapter 12) as well. Wittgenstein is also presented inevitably in two

chapters: one for the *Tractatus* (Anat Biletzki, Chapter 7) and one for the later one (Duncan Richter, Chapter 8). Two rarely discussed figures appear on the scene: Frank Ramsey with his almost tradition-shaping pragmatism (Cheryl Misak, Chapter 9), and Ernest Nagel with his naturalism (Christopher Pincock, Chapter 11).

Besides Ryle, ordinary language philosophy is represented with a paper on P. F. Strawson (by Hans-Johann Glock, Chapter 14) and with one on Austin (Kelly Dean Jolley, Chapter 15). Quine, as one of the cornerstones of analytic philosophy, is depicted in Chapter 13 (Sean Morris) and contrasted with Donald Davidson in Chapter 16 (Lee Braver). The final chapter is devoted to the most contemporary individual figure—Michael Dummett’s tradition-shaping interpretation of Frege and its (meta)philosophical background (Anat Matar, Chapter 17).

There is much to learn from these chapters about HAP and individual philosophies. If I had to emphasize two of them, it would be Jolley’s chapter on Austin and Kremer’s paper on Ryle. The former argues for a novel interpretation of the notorious *Sense and Sensibilia* by taking seriously Austin’s intentions. Kremer’s chapter starts with a general introduction to the reading of Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind*, but as it turns out, it will be a reconstruction of a lost manuscript of Ryle, namely a former version of the famous book. Kremer reconstructs that version on the base of A. J. Ayer’s then-contemporary writings and argues that Ryle fixed many problems by learning from those who criticized Ayer, who in turn, was influenced by Ryle’s missing manuscript. What we see here is tradition-shaping behind the scenes.

The book contains 3 rather general essays, focusing not on individuals but instead on ideas and movements. Alan Richardson’s paper (Chapter 10) discusses how analytic philosophy was created on a logical empiricism—American scientific philosophy—British analysis school axis. Richardson argues that the early dominance of Russell’s scientific philosophy was weakened in Great Britain around the 1930s by Moore’s philosophical method, and thus logical empiricism faced interesting debates. In Richardson’s view, ‘with Quine all philosophical differences within the analytic camp became differences of degree of ontological extravagance and a bright thread of continuity was drawn through common sense, philosophy, and science’ (158).

Scott Soames’ chapter about ‘the changing role of language in analytic philosophy’ is an odd one. Firstly, even if it touches upon the theme of the collection, it does so on a high level of abstraction, and quite indirectly. The paper is rather a short introduction to the history of philosophy of language in the analytic tradition (another similar textbook-like paper is Richter’s on the late Wittgenstein), depicting Soames favourite writers, echoing many of the received views (about the logical empiricists, for example) that are ingeniously undermined by later chapters. It is just the icing on the cake that almost every footnote contains some references to Soames himself, though most of the footnotes are just collections of Soames self-references.

The collection’s final chapter, written by Sandra Lapointe (Chapter 18), is about the methodology of historiographies in general, applied to the case of the history of analytic philosophy. Lapointe raises important issues about how to ask historical questions, and also makes some tentative and insightful suggestions about how to answer them. Her chapter should have really started the volume, setting the contextual and methodological scene for the papers.

A few critical remarks are required. Unfortunately, though many of the papers are connected to each other, sometimes there are overlaps as well. There are no cross-references among the chapters, taking the hand of the reader and helping her through the volume. Neither the subtitles (sometimes there is a subtitle, sometimes just numbers, sometimes nothing just a flowing ten pages long paper) nor the references and quotation forms are united. Though there are no typos (quite a rare virtue recently in similar collections), the other mistakes and slip-ups in the formatting and editing are a bit disturbing.

Usually, a reviewer should not complain about what is missing from an otherwise complete volume, but in this case, a certain feeling of want could not be suppressed. HAP is not an entirely new topic: there are various accounts given by first-order analytic philosophers from the mid- and late twentieth century. Take Arthur Pap's 1949 *Elements of Analytic Philosophy*, James Urmson's 1956 *Philosophical Analysis*, G. J. Warnock's 1958 *English Philosophy since 1900*, Hans Reichenbach's 1951 *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, or A. J. Ayer's 1936 *Language, Truth, and Logic* and 1982 *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* – just to mention the most important ones. All of these works are primary sources for the tradition-shaping interpretation of analytic philosophy from its heyday, but apart from one or two passing mentions, none are treated or discussed in any detail. The reader might hope that a forthcoming volume of Preston will be devoted to these works.

Despite these little inconveniences in the formatting and the wish for some more materials, what is incorporated into the volume is first-rate: it is worth reading it more than once, or using it as a source for a new narrative of the history of analytic philosophy. The book must be on the shelves of everyone interested in the formation both of analytic philosophy and of the *story* of analytic philosophy.

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