

In this essay I tell how my map of the philosophical landscape changed through my earlier years, and how I then saw the division between the Analytic and Continental philosophical camps when the time came to choose a graduate school. How I decided, though it will turn out that my vision of the options was not so complete.

My intellectual career appears to me in retrospect less as a journey to a known destination than a repeated attempt to draw better maps of an intellectual landscape that kept changing as new provinces arose from the sea and geological convulsions raised mountains and delved canyons where none had been before. Old concepts and methods keep having to be revised to fit the new environment.

In the summer of 1969 when I was leaving the Jesuits I worked as an intern for the city planning office for the city of Baltimore Maryland. I commuted to work in a used 1967 Ford Falcon, a reliable v-6 car that I had purchased with money from my father and a recommendation from a knowledgeable colleague. The day I left the Jesuits I drove my car and my scant luggage the short distance to Washington DC, where my parents were living for a time while my father volunteered to organize the Postal Service Management Institute.

A few days later I went on a camping trip with an old friend, the proverbial girl next-door from my childhood, who was living in Colorado at the time. We drove the Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway, down and around all the way to the Outer Banks in North Carolina where we stood where the Wright brothers flew, our clothes flapping in the wind. Returning to DC, I took my car up into Pennsylvania to attend my first yearly conference by the Danforth foundation, whose Kent fellowship would finance my graduate study.

A few weeks later I drove to New Haven, Connecticut to begin at study Yale. That choice of Yale was influenced by past study and determined many future paths. On the large scale I was presented with a choice between Analytic and Continental philosophy. My background had prepared me for the choice.

When I wrote about my years growing up, I emphasized my curiosity and eagerness for new horizons. I was always eager for the latest unknown, the latest border to cross. Especially if the view from the new qualified or questioned what I had taken for true before. I liked to think of myself as an explorer bringing back news of far countries to widen the world of my audience. This meant synthesis, not just news bulletins. I should use new insights and discoveries to broaden and deepen what we already knew. With this intellectual habit you might expect me to relish the constant change in my intellectual landscapes. But I had mixed reactions.

While I was easily enthused by major theory changes in science and by new types of art and architecture, after a while, a reaction would set in when I realized that the revolution was not as complete as it proclaimed itself to be, so that following the radical proposal to its conclusion would drastically impoverish life, so I set out blending the new to the old. For example in high

Teaching and Life 1, Philosophical maps and graduate schools

school I became very entranced with the modern slimmed-down functional architecture being built around my father's midtown Manhattan office and along Park Avenue. The purity, simplicity and skilled proportions of Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building fascinated me. The revolutionary slogans of Le Corbusier drew me on. But when it came to actually living and working in such a building, I felt a cold narrowness in the modernist project and I favored modern architects who avoided total purity and understood history and materials better, such as Alvar Alto and Frank Lloyd Wright. I first get excited by a revolution then end up blending old and new.

My early training was in classic greek, roman and medieval thought, a rich and varied tradition that renewed itself by revisiting and reinterpreting old texts. Training in the Jesuits aimed to inculcate a particular system. Courses were labeled by the content and the content was a series of proposition that we were to learn how to argue for and defend in the ferocious examination system.

The Thomistic synthesis we were being taught was not so medieval. it had been warped by contact with the 18th-century rationalism and again by French and Belgian philosophers working with Husserl's phenomenology. They sought to locate beyond judgements about finite beings, an openness to infinite being. I was never convinced and William Richardson's interpretation of Heidegger further convinced me that they were confusing the horizon of being in general with an horizon of infinite being. Nonetheless I was marked by the exposure to Husserl's analysis of internal time consciousness.

I had been encouraged to think of philosophy as divided between old (classical and medieval) and new (after 1500). My more conservative teachers mapped a philosophical landscape that consisted of a privileged field where various scholastic groups (Thomists, Scotists, Augustinians, et al.) disputed ontological and theological issues. Outside those walls nasty moderns were besieging us, but they could be fended off with a few standard responses. I doubt my teachers really believed this picture, but that was the official line. My more liberal teachers realized that outside the walls were serious challenges. Once I began taking courses at Fordham for my MA it became clear that philosophical landscape was even more contested than my liberal teachers realized:

Those "wake up" courses included one on medieval Islamic philosophy that had lasting influence on me. learning about Avicenna, Averroes and their compatriots revealed new ways of doing scholastic philosophy and opened up for me the world of Neoplatonic thinking, which continues to be an underground influence on my philosophy and religion. Other courses more directly challenged our orthodoxy, especially one on John Dewey which made pragmatism another underground influence that flowered later. Plus three courses from Quentin Lauer on Hegel that offered a full-scale systematic alternative to scholasticism.

Hegel and Heidegger had loomed large in my philosophical Landscape at Shrub Oak, providing alternatives to the official scholastic tracts. William Richardson quietly presented Heidegger's subversive questioning of the tradition. Though Hegel was not a presence at Shrub Oak, when we took graduate courses at Fordham, schedule constraints pushed me into a course on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which I did not

understand and for which I wrote my worst term paper ever. But that led to another course, on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which opened a new world to me.

At Yale, Hegel moved toward the center where I grappled with problems about modern selves and societies and I was being introduced to the poorly named "non-metaphysical" readings of Hegel.

At Chicago I came to appreciate what one could learn from Hegel's habits of mind and conceptual analyses. I saw how one could use Hegel without either having to sign on to or destroy his immense system.

Recently, I summarized to myself my long engagement with the two German philosophers in five theses.

1. Both Hegel and Heidegger stand firmly in the tradition stemming from Kant that refuses to see knowledge, perception, or reality as based on atomic elements each independent in itself and related only externally to other elements.
2. Heidegger aims important critiques at Hegel. They all miss their targets except for one, and it is crucial.
3. The most Hegelian-looking parts of Heidegger are the weakest and least convincing of his ideas.
4. Compared to Heidegger, Hegel provides a more adequate set of tools for dealing with issues about modern selves and society.
5. Both Hegel and Heidegger are guilty of excessive totalization, lumping together diverse intellectual and cultural movements and practices into a single sending of Being or shape of spirit, but Hegel's internally complex unities offer more insight into thought and society.

So I entered the larger philosophy world primed with rich tradition but always poking around on the edges of the system for novel alternatives. Modern philosophy opened with the proclamations of revolutionary new methods by Bacon, Descartes, and Locke that dismissed past thought. But what I was trained in emphasized continuity. Knowing the richness of the many traditions, I was less eager for revolutions in philosophy than in art or science. I was both excited and appalled by the radicalism of logical positivist or the deconstructive or whatever philosophical revolution of the year, but I never signed on, knowing that thought and life did not go on in such rarefied atmosphere.

In 1969 I faced the decision whether to study Analytic or Continental philosophy. Each of these proclaimed itself the revolution that would replace old traditions. There were more than two trends but the official organizational structure at the time tended to downplay smaller professional grouping such as devotees of American pragmatism or Catholic or process philosophy.

The terms Analytic and Continental were big at that time and are still used today. The two roads led to different graduate programs. "Analytic" designated a tendency to start on philosophical problems by analyzing their concepts and language, looking for clear criteria, and suspecting many questions were confused. Originating in the late 19th century with German and Austrian

thinkers who borrowed from and wrote against the NeoKantians and German Idealists, by the 1960s it dominated the most prestigious schools in the UK and USA.

“Continental” philosophy also originated in Germany but in a different group reacting to the Positivists, NeoKantians, and Idealist thought. It spread to America and somewhat to the UK -- the term “continental” is seen by most European thinkers as an American import. This school started from deep interpretations of conscious phenomena and saw philosophical questions as conditioned by history.

Analytic philosophy tended to be more aligned with the sciences, continental with the humanities. Early analytic philosophy was weak on social and political theory while continental was weak on science and intricacies of the logical analysis of language. Each side tried to get behind or beneath the other, claiming it posed more basic questions that put the other in doubt, and, to my mind, each side was right about the limitations of the other side.

Both tendencies shared basic concerns but answered those questions differently, sometimes only in style but often in content. Communication barriers were built because of differences in whom you read in graduate school, whom your teachers associated with, and what types of questions were considered of first importance.

Continental philosophers usually had a better historical background, since for analytic philosophers history was often domesticated into a series of partial insights and mistaken answers to contemporary questions, so analytic thinkers often missed the deep differences separating us from past philosophers. But continental thinkers often missed weaknesses in past thinkers because they treated them like scripture to be interpreted rather than as sparring partners in the analytic mode. Although continental innovators such as Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault brought radical new perspectives, most of the best scholarly study of past philosophers came from more analytically trained historians.

By today, 2022, the old labels are still used and philosophy is still divided, but there is also more genuine dialogue than had been the case in the 60s. For myself, I have come to think that the real difference is not between analytic and continental but along slightly different axis which cuts across both groups. Broadly speaking, it is a difference between people who follow Hume in seeking a base level of atomistic bits of experience vs those who follow Kant in seeking temporal synthesis as a key so that there is no separable atomic unit of experience.

At Fordham, while teaching and coaching debate, I began to study my way into analytic philosophy.

I read Wittgenstein, Carnap and the logical positivists, then Quine and Sellars who reacted against them in different ways. I read the history and philosophy of science (Popper, Hanson, Kuhn, Laudan, van Fraassen and others). I took a summer course at the University of Wisconsin with Paul Ziff on the philosophy of language, keying off books by Max Black, Ayer, and Wisdom. I also took advantage of Fordham’s strength in American pragmatism with Robert

Teaching and Life 1, Philosophical maps and graduate schools

Pollock lecturing to huge crowds and faculty colleagues working on Emerson, James, and Dewey. And I thought about how to tie this together with my growing interest in 19th and 20th century German philosophy, especially Hegel (who likely influenced my preference for Sellars over Quine).

I thought my Jesuit training plus my readings at Fordham had given me sufficient awareness of both movements to make an informed choice. I applied to Michigan and Yale. Michigan because it included wide-ranging analytic philosophy, not as Wittgensteinian as Cornell nor as Quinean as Harvard. I decided on Yale because it seemed to offer a richer exposure to the history of philosophy and because I could avoid signing on to one of the two dominant tendencies. I would learn soon that my knowledge of both the alternatives was way too narrow.