Putting Analysis Rightfully Back into Analytic Philosophy

Michael Beaney

In *What is Analytic Philosophy*? [Glock (2008)] Hans-Johann Glock offers the first book-length discussion of the question of the nature of analytic philosophy. The book contains nine chapters, which may be divided into three groups. In the first two chapters Glock introduces his approach to the question and outlines the history of analytic philosophy. In chapters 3 to 7 he considers and rejects five parameters along which analytic philosophy might be defined. In the final two chapters he offers his own positive account and speculates on the future. Glock writes clearly, engagingly and knowledgeably, and his criticisms of other conceptions of analytic philosophy are frequently astute and illuminating. I found myself in broad agreement with most of what he says, and as an articulation of what is understood by 'analytic philosophy' at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it will be a point of reference for all subsequent accounts.

In chapter 1 Glock emphasizes that his concern is with what analytic philosophy currently is, not what its roots are or what it should be. I think it is misleading to suggest that analytic philosophy can be characterized without reference to its roots, and in fact, not only does Glock talk about its roots in the following chapter, but he also ends up characterizing analytic philosophy as an historical tradition rooted in the work of its various founders (and held together by family resemblances). There are historiographical issues here to which I will return in due course.

In chapter 2 Glock offers a 40-page survey of the history of analytic philosophy, the main purpose of which is to fix the "commonly acknowledged extension" of 'analytic philosophy', against which he can then measure conceptions of analytic philosophy in the chapters that follow [cf. p. 15]. I am not sure how commonly the extension he identifies would be acknowledged, but it includes at least most of what I would acknowledge in its core. In particular, Glock rightly recognizes Frege as a key founder of analytic philosophy. Russell's and Moore's rebellion against British idealism has been seen by some as the decisive event in the emergence of analytic philosophy, but in my view Frege's invention of quantificational logic and its use in his logicist project is no less important. On my own account, I also stress the intertwining – in creative tension – of two subtraditions of analytic philosophy: the Frege-Russell-Carnap-Quine strand, employing logical analysis, and the Moore-Wittgenstein-Ryle-Strawson strand, pursuing conceptual analysis [cf. e.g. Beaney (2006), (2007)]. Glock recognizes this distinction [cf. e.g. p. 33], and although Moore and Ryle do not appear on the cover of Glock's book alongside the other six just mentioned, they are not ignored in his survey.

In the middle chapters – chapters 3 to 7 – Glock considers five parameters along which attempts have been made to define analytic philosophy, all of which he rejects on the grounds of failing to accord with its 'commonly acknowledged extension'. I want to focus in the present paper on his argument in the first section of chapter 6, but let me briefly mention what he says in the rest of these chapters. In chapter 3 he rightly rejects attempts to define analytic philosophy either geographically or linguistically, especially in its supposed opposition to 'continental philosophy' (a term, I think, that we should really try to drop – or only use in scare quotes). As Glock points out, analytic philosophy has 'continental' roots in German-language philosophy, most notably, in neo-Kantianism and in the work of Frege and Wittgenstein. 'Continental philosophy' has often been regarded as more historicallyminded than analytic philosophy, but in chapter 4 Glock argues against the view that analytic philosophy can be characterized by either its supposed historiophobia or its tendency to anachronism in its treatment of past philosophers. In chapter 5 he criticizes attempts to define it by means of specific doctrines or topics. The rejection of metaphysics, for example, has sometimes been seen as characteristic of analytic philosophy, but this was only true of Wittgenstein's philosophy and logical positivism. In chapter 6 he discusses issues of method and style, and besides analysis (to which I will turn in a moment), he considers analytic philosophy's supposed scientific spirit, piecemeal approach, emphasis on 'clarity', and rationalism, rejecting all of them as in any way definitive. In chapter 7 he explores the extent to which analytic philosophy has been ethically and politically engaged, and argues that here, too, there is no way to find characteristic features.

In all these chapters I found much with which to agree. My two main criticisms concern the weakness of the 'historicism' he allows as legitimate in chapter 4, and his discussion of analysis in the first section of chapter 6. I shall focus on the latter here, since it is my view that seems to be Glock's main target, and I shall just make some brief comments on the former by way of conclusion. If we are to seek to characterize analytic philosophy, then the most obvious suggestion – as its very name implies – is to look at the methodology of analysis it employs. This is just what I have done in writing on analytic philosophy as part of a broader exploration of conceptions of analysis in the history of philosophy from the ancient Greeks onwards [see especially Beaney (2003), (2007)]. Glock acknowledges my account in the section

entitled 'Putting analysis back into analytic philosophy', yet he both fails to do justice to that account and commits a *non sequitur* in objecting to appeals to analysis.

Here is what I say at the beginning of section 6 of my article on 'Analysis' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

If anything characterizes 'analytic' philosophy, then it is presumably the emphasis placed on analysis. But as the foregoing sections have shown, there is a wide range of conceptions of analysis, so such a characterization says nothing that would distinguish analytic philosophy from much of what preceded it [Beaney (2003), \S 6]¹.

Section 6 of my article is entitled 'Conceptions of analysis in analytic philosophy and the introduction of the logical (transformative) conception', and occurs after an extensive discussion, in the preceding sections, of many earlier conceptions. I go on to outline the new forms of analysis that did indeed emerge in analytic philosophy, starting with Frege's use of logical analysis.

Here is what Glock says at the beginning of section 1 of chapter 6:

Many contemporary explanations of what analytic philosophy is are curiously silent on the issue of analysis. Yet the idea of putting the idea of analysis back into the definition of analytic philosophy is hardly far-fetched [p. 153].

He goes on to mention Monk's emphasis on the importance that analysis played in Russell's philosophy, and then turns to my article. Here is the whole of the passage in which he refers to that article, followed by the first statement of his objection:

Similarly, in his excellent survey of conceptions of analysis, Beaney writes: 'If anything characterizes "analytic" philosophy, then it is presumably the emphasis placed on analysis.' He recognizes that 'such a characterization says nothing that would distinguish analytic philosophy from much of what preceded it', simply because various types of analysis have played a central role since the dawn of the subject'[²]. Nevertheless, Beaney concludes:

analytic philosophy should really be seen as a set of interlocking subtraditions held together by a shared repertoire of conceptions of analysis upon which individual philosophers draw in different ways [Beaney (2003)].

The idea is *prima facie* compelling: analytic philosophy is tied to analysis, and its undeniable diversity is owed to diverse though largely overlapping conceptions of that single unifying method. But there remains a daunting obstacle to defining analytic philosophy as that kind of philosophy which employs the method of analysis. The term analysis and its cognates pervade the whole history of our subject [*Ibid*.].

The dialectic of the argument here requires clarification and critique ('deconstruction', in the vocabulary of a rival philosophical tradition). Glock starts by commending my account (for which I thank him), but within the space of a few lines he has twisted that account, through some conversational implicatures and simplifications, into a caricature which enables him to state his objection. Glock's use of the words 'recognizes' and 'Nevertheless' begins the process of caricature. The use of 'recognize' might seem harmless, but in being followed by 'Nevertheless', the suggestion is conveyed that even though I acknowledge the inadequacy of simply appealing to analysis in characterizing analytic philosophy, I go through with it, irrationally, nonetheless. The second half of the passage (after the statement of my conclusion) reinforces this conversational implicature, and has a similar dialectical structure: an apparent endorsement is swiftly followed by the implication of simple-mindedness. The motivating idea is "prima facie compelling", but of course to think that there is a single unifying method is just naive. All that then remains is to demonstrate this naivety - by showing that there is no single method of analysis employed by all and only those analytic philosophers in Glock's 'commonly acknowledged extension'.

In the light of my account, what is most objectionable in the second half of the passage is Glock's talk of "that single unifying method" and of "the method of analysis" (my italics). The whole point of my article is to stress and elucidate the multiplicity of conceptions of analysis in the history of philosophy, and not least, in the analytic tradition itself, while still showing that sense can be made of them through their historical connections. Indeed, it seems to me that Glock draws on my account in the rest of section 1 of chapter 6 (without further acknowledgement), in refuting the naïve view: many of the distinctions, examples and references can be found in my article. It is thus especially baffling to be saddled with the naive view, and to have my own account turned against itself. (Of course, Glock might reply that he was not intending to represent my own position, but merely to make explicit a view that someone might hold who thinks that analytic philosophy has something special to do with analysis. As I say, however, there is at least a conversational implicature that it is my account that is misguided, and that implicature must be firmly cancelled.)

Glock goes on to raise a dilemma for any account that seeks to define analytic philosophy by means of analysis. Either the method or conception of analysis is so broad that it includes more than just what is in the 'commonly acknowledged extension' of 'analytic philosophy', or else it is so narrow that it excludes some of what is in this 'commonly acknowledged extension'. The essential dilemma is first articulated in the introduction to his book: If analysis is understood literally, namely as the decomposition of complex phenomena into simpler constituents, it rules out the later Wittgenstein and Oxford linguistic philosophy, among others. But if it is understood widely enough to accommodate such cases, it will also capture figures ranging from Plato to continental philosophers such as Husserl [p. 18].

I must object here, however, to the assumption that 'analysis' basically means decomposition. As I show in my article, while this is one of the core meanings of 'analysis', there are others - one of them being what I call 'regressive analysis', the working back to first principles, premises or causes by means of which something can then be derived or explained (by a corresponding process of 'synthesis'). In fact, at the very beginning of chapter 2, in offering his own historical survey. Glock recognizes these two meanings (with due acknowledgement), and something of it is reflected in the distinction between conceptual analysis and logical analysis noted above. Here, too, though, there is a further dimension of my own account to which justice is not done by Glock. For alongside the decompositional and regressive modes of analysis, I also distinguish what I call the 'interpretive' (or 'transformative') mode, and as the full title of section 6 of my article suggests, it is this mode, manifested in the translating of problematic propositions into the language of quantificational logic and subject to variations as it evolved, that I argue is characteristic of at least the Frege-Russell-Carnap-Quine strand in analytic philosophy. Nothing of this is mentioned by Glock.

There is not the space here to rehearse the details of my article; but I hope that a reader of it would at least find the possibility of a satisfying account of analysis in analytic philosophy, and one which offers an obvious way out of the crude dilemma Glock poses. He alludes to the dilemma again in the second paragraph of section 1 of chapter 6, i.e., in the paragraph immediately after his caricature of my view [p. 154]. After a sketch of some of the different conceptions and methods of analysis in analytic philosophy in the rest of section 1, in combating this caricature, he restates the dilemma in concluding the section:

while weightier and more specific notions of analysis no longer cover the whole range of analytic philosophy, the less demanding and wider notions are too indiscriminating. Analysis, therefore, cannot be used to define analytic philosophy [pp. 159-60].

As it stands, however, this is a gross *non sequitur*. At the very least, the possibility remains open of defining analytic philosophy by means of a *disjunction* of specific notions of analysis. In the limiting case, this could be done by specifying the uniquely individuating conceptions of each of the analytic philosophers in the 'commonly acknowledged extension'. Of course,

this would only be helpful if those conceptions are connected and clarified within a detailed historical narrative and philosophical investigation. I have been engaged on just such a project. By seeing how conceptions of analysis developed from Frege's use of logical analysis, for example, we start to understand one strand in analytic philosophy.

This brings me to Glock's own positive account, for it seems to me that that account needs precisely the kind of filling-out that I have tried to do in my exploration of analysis in analytic philosophy. Having failed, quite predictably, to find any simple statement of necessary and sufficient conditions for analytic philosophy, Glock ends up realizing that it has to be understood historically, albeit supplemented by a "family resemblance perspective", as he puts it [p. 223]. What he offers in chapter 8, however, is little more than a schema for an account. Glock writes:

We learn most about analytic philosophy by regarding it as a tradition that is held together *both* by ties of influence *and* by a family of partially overlapping features. Methodological and stylistic ideas which are less general than clarity and argument play a particularly important role here. For example, most analytic philosophers rely on methods of sentential paraphrase and conceptual articulation, whether or not these methods are guided more by artificial logical calculi or more by the subtleties of ordinary use [p. 223].

These methods, however, are precisely methods of analysis. This makes his earlier repudiation of attempts to understand analytic philosophy by means of its analytic methodology quite bizarre. Clarification of this methodology is just what is needed to flesh out the historical account that Glock rightly recommends.

Let me conclude by commenting on Glock's historiographical views, for I suspect that these are responsible for his reluctance to offer anything more than a schematic account – all the possible content of which has been systematically extruded in the five middle chapters. In chapter 4 he distinguishes three forms of 'historicism', as he calls "any position that promotes historical thinking in philosophy and warns against ignoring or distorting the past" [p. 89]. The first is 'intrinsic historicism', according to which philosophy is intrinsically historical; the second is 'instrumental historicism', according to which study of the past is an indispensable means to philosophizing; and the third is 'weak historicism', according to which study of the past is merely useful in philosophizing [cf. p. 90]. He argues that the first is misguided, the second unproven, and the third correct. As I see it, however, by the end of his book he has offered an excellent illustration of the truth of the second. If we are going to understand analytic philosophy, and all the various ideas invoked in its practice (such as those of analysis, logic, reason, and so on), then we are going to have to study the past. Glock draws on his own extensive study of the past throughout the book; surprisingly, he seems not to appreciate its methodological significance for his metaphilosophical views.

In his final chapter, Glock considers the question of what is wrong with analytic philosophy, as it is currently practised, and its future prospects. He criticizes some of its scholastic, factionalist and exclusionary tendencies, and expresses some scepticism about the possibilities for rapprochement between analytic and 'continental' philosophy. Again, I am in agreement with much of what Glock says; but in looking to the future, I myself would stress the methodological importance of combining philosophical analysis, drawing on all the resources of the past, but especially from within the analytic tradition, and historical understanding, recognizing the connections between these resources and the conditions of their philosophical use. The emergence of history of analytic philosophy as a recognized field within the broader discipline of philosophy is a sign of maturer metaphilosophical views. In his own work, Glock has made substantial contributions to this field, and *What is Analytic Philosophy*? will ensure that the debate about the nature of good – and not just analytic – philosophy will continue in fruitful ways.

Department of Philosophy University of York York YO10 5DD, England, UK E-mail: Michael.beanev@york.ac.uk

NOTES

¹ In the revised 2007 version, the last few words read "from much of what has either preceded or developed alongside it".

In Glock's text, there seems to be a rogue inverted comma inserted after 'subject'.

References

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RESUMEN

En este artículo me concentro en la sección del libro de Glock titulada "Putting Analysis Back into Analytic Philosophy". Allí Glock critica la explicación del análisis que yo he ofrecido y muestro cómo la ha presentado de manera equivocada y cómo no logra hacer justicia al papel que el análisis desempeña en la filosofía analítica. Argumento que se requiere una apreciación adecuada del análisis para proporcionar la comprensión histórica de la filosofía analítica que Glock, con razón, recomienda.

PALABRAS CLAVE: análisis, historiografía, metodología, historia de la filosofía analítica.

ABSTRACT

In this paper I focus on the section of Glock's book entitled 'Putting Analysis Back into Analytic Philosophy'. Glock here criticizes the account of analysis that I have offered, and I show how he has misrepresented that account and fails to do justice to the role that analysis does indeed play in analytic philosophy. I argue that a proper appreciation of analysis is required to provide the historical understanding of analytic philosophy that Glock rightly recommends.

KEY WORDS: Analysis; Historiography; Methodology; History of Analytic Philosophy.